

## **We, the Consumers of Information Warfare**

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*Cum hoc ergo propter hoc* is a kind of kind of logical fallacy. It is the false assumption that because two things have happened at a similar time or in a similar way, that they must be related. The error is often stated as “correlation does not mean causation”. One example which comes to mind is a Q&A session I watched in which Noam Chomsky took questions about U.S. intervention abroad. His argument seemed to be that American intervention is always bad because, well, America is bad to begin with, so therefore any of its endeavors must *necessarily* be bad. After presenting this a priori masterpiece, an audience member asked, “Well, what about Kosovo?” Without missing a beat, Mr. Chomsky said, “The U.S. caused the genocide in Kosovo.” He hurried to then clarify, after leaving us to un-ring that bell, that the NATO bombing campaign corresponded to a statistical upswing in the rate of genocide committed by Serbian forces. I don’t think I need to even illustrate this strenuous contortion of what-caused-what any further, but you may read Chomsky’s own “A Review of NATO’s War over Kosovo” appearing in *Z Magazine*, April-May 2001, for his complete position on this.

However, I don’t mean to go back to that time only to deride Chomsky’s misidentification of the source of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, or his many calls to halt any intervention there aimed at stopping it. Rather, I think of it as an object lesson for another cause-and-effect relationship that is staring us right in the face, brought more sharply into focus by the Occupy Wall Street protesters. The lesson is in why Chomsky’s message, ultimately, didn’t matter. Aside from being contrary to the opinions of a huge majority of the people in Kosovo - people, incidentally, who lived through and were actually there for the ‘cleansing’ of their ethnicity – Chomsky had very little mass media access for his message. Just as the lobbyist James Jatras makes occasional appearances on Fox Entertainment to deliver Serbia’s anti-intervention message to conservative audiences, so too does Noam Chomsky appear occasionally on Serbian media to deliver the same message to liberal audiences. In both cases, however, there was simply not a lot of money with which to buy media time for spreading the message (which is why you probably never heard of James Jatras in the first place).

And here we arrive at Wall Street, where the point is being made that moneyed interests have purchased Washington. This seems, at first, a long walk to make, but consider the cause and effect relationship between the media and the vote: In order to get elected within the current American political system, one must secure a huge amount of media time. This means a candidate must first secure a huge amount of cash. Of course, that cash does not come from We, the People- we don’t have that kind of coin. But part of the cause, which leads to the need for all this money in the first place, is us. We cannot overlook our place in the equation as the final consumers of all this media. Were it not the case, as it seems to be, that we are even somewhat content with the strip mall gift-wrapping service of self-assurance we call the American media, perhaps it could not be used so easily to purchase our votes. The basic formula for a campaign is simple: build a message, find loads of money, buy air time, and make sure your candidate doesn’t screw up too badly during debates. Certainly corporate greed is a

cause, along with the politicians' desire to return the back scratch, but the electorate's continued willingness to be passively influenced by their televisions will always be rewarded with the effect of moneyed interest buying the programming.