

## Ideology in Media Translation: Some Theoretical Perspectives

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### Abstract

*As media becomes more global and multilingual, understanding the impact of translation on news dissemination is crucial. Unlike traditional perspectives that view translation as a straightforward transfer between source and target texts, media translation operates within certain norms and practices. This article explores the role of ideology in media translation, emphasizing how translation is not merely a linguistic transfer but an ideological practice. Originating from the study of ideas, ideology has evolved to encompass frameworks of power and control, shaping how information is presented and interpreted across cultures. Through a theoretical lens, the article provides insights into the power dynamics embedded in media translation, affecting global communication and public perception. Such power dynamics shape narratives to align with specific cultural, political, or institutional agendas. Additionally, by analyzing some key theoretical insights from various scholars, the study examines the ethical dimensions of media translation. Therefore, through a synthesis of theoretical perspectives, this study challenges traditional notions of equivalence, positioning media translation as a transformative process, shaped by the interplay of ideology, power dynamics and ethics, while also offering critical insights into media literacy.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Translation Studies emerged as an independent academic discipline in the 1980s and has since experienced continuous growth worldwide. Over the years, it has developed into a dynamic field of research, adapting to new challenges and expanding its influence across various domains. Today, it remains a vital area of study in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, bringing together insights from multiple disciplines, including linguistics, literature, history, anthropology, psychology, and economics (Lefevere, 2003). As globalization accelerates and communication technologies evolve, the role of translation becomes increasingly central to facilitating cross-cultural interactions and understanding. This growing interconnectedness has elevated certain subfields within Translation Studies, particularly media translation, which plays an important role in disseminating information across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Against this backdrop, media translation emerges as a site of negotiation between ideology, ethical considerations, and power dynamics. This article aims to shed light on four key theoretical aspects related to ideology and media translation. First, it examines the concept of ideology, which has been given different definitions over time. Initially a neutral term, it later became associated with power, manipulation, and dominant worldviews. Second, it discusses translation as an ideological practice, emphasizing how translation is influenced by cultural beliefs, values, and political agendas. It highlights that translation is more than just language conversion; it involves choices that shape how information is perceived and understood across different cultures. Third, it tackles power dynamics in media translation and how ideologies, editorial policies, and political agendas shape the way news is presented to audiences. Fourth, it examines ethical considerations in media translation. Unlike literary translation, media translation faces unique ethical challenges due to external pressures like editorial policies and ideological influences. These factors shape the translator's role, raising concerns about objectivity and neutrality.

## **2. UNDERSTANDING IDEOLOGY**

The term ideology, originally coined in 1796 by Count Destutt de Tracy as a rationalist "science of ideas" focused on studying concepts and mental processes, has faced challenges in its definition and scope since its inception. While initially neutral, its meaning shifted over time, acquiring negative connotations. This change was influenced by Napoleon's political usage and later by Marxist interpretations, where ideology was associated with false consciousness and viewed as a tool for distortion, manipulation, or concealment (Munday, 2014). The study of ideology often starts by acknowledging the ambiguity surrounding the concept, which leads to considerable theoretical confusion in its analysis. This vagueness has persisted despite the evolution of the term from its neutral beginnings to its more controversial associations, particularly with false consciousness and manipulative power structures, as seen in Marxist theory and its broader political contexts (Van Dijk, 1998).

The concept of ideology, as it evolved, came to describe how dominant groups impose their worldview on subordinate classes. Those who accept this dominant ideology are seen as having false consciousness, as their beliefs and perceptions ultimately serve the interests of the ruling class rather than their own (Croteau et al, 2021). The notion of ideology as a tool for imposing the worldview of dominant groups aligns with Terry Eagleton's exploration of its multifaceted definitions. While ideology may foster false consciousness by legitimizing the ruling class's interests, Eagleton broadens the perspective, highlighting its role in shaping social meanings, power dynamics, and communication. This interplay of discourse and power reveals how ideology not only perpetuates dominance but also serves as a medium through which individuals interpret their social realities (Eagleton, 1991).

Stuart Hall (1996) in this regard argues that "by ideology I mean the mental frameworks —the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation — which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, figure out and render intelligible the way society works." So, the perspectives of Hall and Eagleton shed light on the dual role of ideology as both a mechanism of control and a means through which individuals and groups construct their understanding of the world. By intertwining power, representation, and social meaning, ideology functions as a lens that shapes societal values, reinforces existing hierarchies, and influences how people perceive and respond to the structures of society. Further emphasizing the multifaceted nature of ideology, van Dijk (1998) points out that ideologies not only shape societal understanding but also serve to justify and obscure individual and group perspectives and interests. As van Dijk suggests, the concept of ideology often carries negative connotations, highlighting how individuals tend to perceive their own beliefs as 'truth' while viewing opposing views as mere 'ideologies'. This perspective emphasizes the role of ideology not just as a framework of understanding but as a tool that reinforces social and political positions.

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The multifaceted role of ideology is also evident in its depiction as a powerful force of persuasion used by totalitarian regimes, presenting a comprehensive framework of ideas rooted in a singular, indisputable truth and often driven by self-justification. This concept gained prominence notably in the 20th century. In broader usage, ideology is sometimes equated with any collection of ideas or commonly serves as a straightforward term for significant political doctrines such as liberalism, conservatism, socialism, and fascism, as extensively documented in educational texts (Freeden, 2006).

The concept of ideology has been the subject of extensive debate and critique, with scholars examining its definitions, applications, and implications. While ideology is often understood as a structured system of beliefs or ideas that influence political and social thought, critics emphasize its deeply entrenched and self-perpetuating nature. Van Dijk (1998) captures this phenomenon succinctly in his assertion: "Ours is the Truth, Theirs is the Ideology." This statement reflects how individuals and groups often perceive their own beliefs as objective truths, while dismissing opposing views as ideological constructs. Such perspectives highlight the subjective and biased nature of how ideologies are understood and labeled.

One critique of ideology emphasizes the paradox that attempts to define or constrain it are themselves ideological acts. What many regard as the "obvious" or neutral definition of ideology is, in fact, shaped by the very ideological lens they aim to critique. As a result, efforts to simplify or confine the meaning of ideology often serve to expand its influence, embedding it further into the social, political, and intellectual structures it seeks to analyze. This dynamic reveals that ideology is not just a passive tool for organizing ideas but an active, evolving force that influences how individuals interpret the world. Attempts to "rein in" ideology often result in its unintended amplification, reinforcing its pervasive role in shaping human thought and interaction (Blakely, 2024). Blakely (2024) goes even further, claiming:

Because ideologies are fraught with danger, many try to steer clear of them altogether. Such people believe themselves to be 'non ideological' and 'not political'. However, the attempt to escape ideology by this route is a false solution to a real problem. We cannot opt to be 'ideology-free' because in doing so, we simply continue participating in the dominant ideologies without awareness. Society is itself a living artifact of various competing ideologies. To proclaim oneself beyond ideology is the surest sign that one is adrift in it (pp. 8-9).

Blakely argues that no one can truly escape ideology, as it is deeply embedded in society. People who believe they are free from ideology are often unaware that they are still influenced by dominant ideologies. This highlights the importance of recognizing how ideologies shape our thoughts and actions, rather than ignoring or denying their presence. Blakely's point encourages us to be more aware of these influences to better understand ourselves and the world around us.

Generally, understanding ideology involves recognizing its evolution from a neutral term to one laden with implications of control and distortion. Initially conceived as a study of ideas, ideology has since been shaped by political uses, notably by Marxists, who viewed it as a tool of dominance and false consciousness. Other perspectives, including Eagleton and Hall, focus on ideology's dual role: as a mechanism of control by dominant groups and as a framework for interpreting societal structures by individuals. Critically, ideologies not only shape beliefs but also justify and obscure perspectives, influencing how we perceive reality.

### **3. TRANSLATION AS AN IDEOLOGICAL PRACTICE**

Translation is more than converting words from one language to another. It is a process influenced by ideologies. When we translate, we make choices that reflect cultural beliefs, values, and perspectives. These choices can shape how ideas are perceived and understood by different audiences. Whether in news reporting, literature, or everyday communication, translation serves as a gateway where ideologies meet, influencing how information is presented and interpreted across cultures.

Translation is fundamentally an act of rewriting, where the original text is reshaped to fit a new linguistic and cultural context. Every rewriting, whether intentional or not, carries an ideological imprint and adheres to a specific literary framework, influencing how texts function within a society. As a form of manipulation, translation can serve dominant powers, yet it also plays a vital role in literary and cultural evolution. Through translation, new ideas, genres, and stylistic approaches emerge, fostering cross-cultural exchange and literary innovation. However, translation can also be a tool of suppression, restricting creativity and altering meaning to align with certain agendas (Lefevere, 1992). In fact, translation is better understood as a dynamic negotiation between texts and cultures, where meaning is continuously reshaped through interaction. This process involves multiple exchanges, not only of words but also of perspectives, values, and ideologies, with the translator acting as a key mediator in shaping these intercultural dialogues (Bassnett, 2002).

Lawrence Venuti (1995), in talking about the purpose of translation, argues:

The aim of translation is to bring back a cultural other as the same, the recognizable, even the familiar; and this aim always risks a wholesale domestication of the foreign text, often in highly self-conscious projects, where translation serves an appropriation of foreign cultures for domestic agendas, cultural, economic, political. Translation can be considered the communication of a foreign text, but it is always a communication limited by its address to a specific reading audience (p. 19).

So, Venuti claims that translation often seeks to make foreign texts feel relatable to a new audience by adapting cultural elements to local norms. He also believes that translation can be shaped by political, economic, or cultural goals. For him, translators must tailor their work to a specific audience's expectations, which may simplify or alter the original message. This means translations are always partial, filtered through the lens of the translator's priorities and the audience's worldview. This is why translation is more than a simple act of communication, it is a process that can introduce foreign influences, sometimes sparking resistance or controversy. Rather than being a neutral window into another culture, translation carries authority and can shape or even disrupt the way audiences perceive the original text (Lefevere, 2003).

Translation as an ideological practice is also evident in patronage, as the support provided by patrons reflects underlying power dynamics. Patronage refers to the external forces that exert control over the production, distribution, and reception of translated texts. In fact, Lefevere's concept of patronage highlights three forces shaping translation: ideological pressures (controlling what and how texts are translated to align with beliefs or power structures), economic factors (determining which texts are chosen based on profit or market demand), and status concerns (granting legitimacy through prestige, like awards or academic recognition). Together, these components influence which works are translated, how they're adapted, and their acceptance in a culture. Moreover, accepting patronage means that writers and rewriters work within the limits set by their patrons and are expected to support and legitimize their patrons' status and power (Lefevere, 1992). In this respect, Lefevere (2003) argues that "Translators tend to have relatively little freedom in their dealing with patrons, at least if they want to have their translations published."

In this context, patrons have the power to approve or block the publication of translations based on their preferences. For example, Jean de Brèche de Tours recognized that his translation of Hippocrates might provoke criticism from those who wanted to keep scientific knowledge restricted. Philemon Holland expressed similar concerns in the preface to his translation of Pliny (Lefevere, 2003). Similarly, Bible translation serves as a key example constrained by its specific purpose, cultural complexities, and ideological pressures. As a result, scholars specializing in Bible translation often develop theories restricted by their own cultural and ideological assumptions, leading to narrower perspectives (Tymoczko, 1999).

Given the points discussed, translation can be seen as a transformative act. The role of translation now challenges traditional views, highlighting its potential to transform rather than merely stabilize texts. While translation studies traditionally emphasized stability and equivalence, newer perspectives, such as polysystem theory, have emphasized the transformative nature of translation within different contexts (Bielsa, 2022).

Bielsa (2022) expands on her argument, claiming: “A view of translation as transformation cannot be successfully maintained without challenging at the same time widespread conventional notions of ‘translation proper’, which often unwittingly accompany a conception of translation as equivalence”. Thus, understanding translation as a transformation, rather than a simple substitution, challenges these conventional ideas and opens up new ways of thinking about how meaning and culture are conveyed across languages. Venuti (1995), in this regard, mentioned in his work “The Translator’s Invisibility” that: “Schleiermacher argued that ‘there are only two. Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him’ ”. In that movement, there is a clear transformation at play, as the translator’s approach shapes the relationship between the text, the author, and the reader. By either preserving the author’s voice and context or adapting the text to the reader’s cultural and linguistic expectations, the translation process becomes a form of transformation.

Similarly, Edwin Gentzler (2001) believes that translation is not simply a way to revive or perfectly replicate the original text. Instead, it is a process that exists between similarity and difference, both preserving aspects of the source text while also creating something distinct. For him, translation is both sameness (faithfulness to the original) and uniqueness (a new version with its own identity). In other words, translation is not an exact reproduction but rather a transformation that negotiates between maintaining the essence of the original and generating something new. Just as translation negotiates between sameness and difference, it is also influenced by the time and place in which the translator operates, further reinforcing the idea that translation is not a mere reproduction but a transformation shaped by external factors (Lefevere, 2003).

Generally, translation reflects the ideologies that shape how information is shared across cultures. In media translation, these influences become even more evident, affecting how news and messages are framed for different audiences. Understanding this connection helps us explore how translation plays a role in shaping public perception and global communication.

#### **4. MEDIA TRANSLATION AND POWER DYNAMICS**

Media translation is an important area of translation studies, a new discipline that has rapidly expanded over the past half-century. Originating primarily from linguistics and literary studies, the discipline of translation studies has evolved independently, drawing inspiration from diverse academic realms. Initially focusing on written texts, it has since broadened its scope to encompass audiovisual and multimedia content, as well as all forms of interpreted communication (Zanettin, 2021). In fact, Media studies has largely overlooked the crucial role of translation in international news production and transmission, focusing predominantly on monolingual perspectives despite using multilingual examples for comparative research.

Translation studies has only recently begun to address an area where journalists, rather than traditional translators, primarily engage in interlingual transfer. This neglects what is arguably one of the most impactful forms of translation in contemporary times (Bielsa, 2022).

The role of translation in news media goes beyond mere linguistic transfer; it actively shapes how information is produced and received across different cultures and contexts, often reflecting underlying power dynamics. As media industry becomes increasingly multilingual and interconnected, understanding the impact of translation on news dissemination is crucial. In this regard, Zanettin (2021) argues:

It is to a large extent through translation that we learn about people and events in distant locations, and any attempt to understand how foreign news is produced and received must take into account the extent to which interlingual translation is constitutive of it. However, translation also informs the production of local information in our increasingly multilingual and multicultural virtual and physical shared space. As digital communication has multiplied the occasions for translation in the news media, the study of how translation affects the way information is produced, disseminated, and interpreted has become of primary importance not only for academic research but also for practitioners, whether they be professional journalists or active citizens reading and producing the news in translation (p.2).

So, translation shapes how we access and interpret news, as it is not just a tool for reporting foreign events but also an essential part of local news production in multilingual societies. Unlike traditional views of translation as a direct transfer between source and target texts, media translation operates under distinct norms and practices. It challenges conventional notions of 'translation proper', often being conceptualized differently and referred to by alternative terms. Despite its role in shaping public discourse, news translation activities have historically been overlooked by both news producers and readers, remaining largely invisible in the field of media (Zanettin, 2021).

In translating news, Bielsa (2007) argues that “journalists must rewrite texts to make them suitable for their new context according to the rules and practices of the medium in which they work.” She further states that “News translation entails a considerable amount of transformation of the source text which results in the significantly different content of the target text” (Bielsa, 2007). So, in her analysis of news translation, Bielsa sheds light on the inherent power dynamics at play, where journalists reshape content to fit the norms and practices of their media platforms. This process involves substantial transformation from the original text, often leading to significant differences in the final news presentation. In this context, Schäffner and Bassnett (2010) claim that when examining different language versions of the ‘same’ text across various media platforms, noticeable changes often emerge that go beyond mere stylistic differences. These variations can be influenced by factors such as ideological shifts, cultural expectations, and editorial policies, all of which shape how the content is adapted and presented to different audiences.

In the same vein, Sattar Izwaini (2015) argues: “Media translation is not an impartial activity as it seems to be. In many cases, ideological impacts of media outlets are forced upon their translation products.” Therefore, the ideological influences of media organizations are imposed on their translated content. This dynamic reveals how translations can shape public perceptions and influence global discourse. Izwaini (2015) also believes that although the decision to translate a particular text is typically made by the commissioner or editorial board of a media outlet, the translator retains control over the textual manipulations within the translation itself. In other words, while translators may have control over linguistic and textual adjustments, their decisions are rarely made in isolation. External pressures, ranging from political agendas and

institutional policies to audience expectations, often shape the extent to which they can exercise this control. In some cases, translators might engage in self-censorship to align with ideological frameworks, while in others, they might consciously resist or subvert imposed narratives, and this highlights the power dynamics at play, where translation becomes a site of negotiation between institutional authority and translator agency.

As a result, global and local media organizations modify and reshape texts, creating the illusion that audiences around the world are engaging with the same events. However, in reality, what we see, hear, and read is often filtered through different cultural, political, and ideological lenses. Indeed, multiple localized versions and interpretations of global events emerge, each shaped by the perspectives and priorities of the media outlet producing them. This process influences how information is perceived and understood across different regions, reinforcing the idea that media translation is not just about language but also about framing narratives to align with specific agendas (Bielsa, 2007). This process of reshaping news is further reinforced by editorial decisions that determine which stories are included or omitted. Editors and sub-editors play a crucial role in selecting content that aligns with their publication's policies and appeals to their target audience, ensuring that the final narrative is tailored to specific ideological and commercial priorities. Schöffner and Bassnett (2010), in this respect, claim: "News stories for inclusion are selected by editors and sub-editors on the ground of their relevance to the newspaper's style. This means that articles chosen should adhere to the publication's policy and suit the target market."

Clearly, translators are not passive intermediaries; they hold the power to shape how a text is perceived, especially in media translation, where their choices can influence public opinion. Their work is shaped by various factors, including personal beliefs, cultural background, and attitudes toward the source and target languages. Power dynamics also play a crucial role, as translators may adapt or manipulate content to align with the ideological stance of the media outlet they work for. This can result in significant distortions, reinforcing dominant narratives or marginalizing alternative perspectives. In this way, translation in media is not merely a linguistic process but a powerful tool for shaping discourse and controlling the flow of information.

## **5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN MEDIA TRANSLATION**

Ethics can refer to moral rules or principles guiding our actions, such as the Code of Hammurabi or the Ten Commandments. It also encompasses systems of moral values or principles. The study of ethics, examining what is right or wrong, began with early moral codes, often tied to religious teachings. The earliest ethical writings are traced back to ancient Egypt and Babylonia. In Translation Studies, ethics is a crucial area that examines what is considered good or bad, right or wrong in the practice of translation. It explores the moral responsibilities of translators, the ethical implications of their choices, and the broader impact of translation on communication and society (Koskinen and Pokorn, 2021). While ethical considerations in Translation and Interpreting Studies (TIS) were sporadically addressed before the 1990s, it was only toward the end of the twentieth century that scholars began to engage with the subject in depth. Since then, interest in translation ethics has grown significantly, with scholars like Mona Baker and Christiane Nord incorporating ethical discussions into their updated works. The field continues to evolve, as reflected in the expanding body of literature on translation ethics, including Joseph Lambert's *Translation Ethics*, which highlights the dynamic and ever-changing nature of ethical challenges in translation (Lambert, 2023).

Moreover, ethics is divided into two main parts; theoretical and applied. Theoretical ethics focuses on big questions about morality, such as what "good" and "right" mean and whether moral rules are objective or just personal opinions. Indeed, it explores ideas like realism and relativism to understand how we justify ethical beliefs. Applied ethics, on the other hand, is

more practical. It looks at real-life issues and asks what actions are right or wrong. Instead of debating what "good" means, it focuses on how ethical principles apply to everyday situations. Media ethics, in this context, is a part of applied ethics that focuses on analyzing and applying ethical standards within journalism. It involves practical engagement and relies on impartial reasoning to ensure ethical decision-making in media practices (Ward, 2021).

Interestingly, ethical principles are not set in stone as Ward (2021) claims: "Even the boundaries of ethics change." So, what is considered right or wrong can shift as society changes and our understanding grows. He also states that "Ethics is the never-completed project of inventing and critiquing norms that guide interaction, define roles, and justify institutions." In this respect, what constitutes ethical behavior in media translation can shift over time, influenced by changing societal norms, technological advancements, and cultural shifts. As ethical boundaries evolve over time, so does our understanding of translation ethics, which extends beyond strict fidelity to encompass cultural and contextual interpretation. Indeed, what is considered "accurate" is determined by the norms of the target culture, meaning that even the most faithful or linguistically precise translations are shaped by local perspectives and values (Venuti, 1998).

Unlike literary or technical translation, where creativity or technical accuracy is the main focus, media translation deals with more ethical concerns such as bias, manipulation, and the duty to present information truthfully. Indeed, Georgios Floros (2013) argues:

Translation, both as discipline and practice, is broad enough to accommodate news translation as a separate form of translation without the need to renegotiate essentially its definition – if there is one which is agreed on. It also aims to stress that the particularity of news translation is constituted primarily through the norms governing it. As with any contemplation of norms, we therefore need to engage in a discussion of power relations and of the ethical. In other words, the generic difference of news translation concerns the particularities of its ethics (p. 929).

Floros' argument reinforces the idea that media translation is distinct from other forms of translation due to its strong ethical implications. Floros (2013) also states: "But unlike in most professions, the norms in news translation are fully dictated by journalists and the news industry." This suggests that media translation is not an independent process but is instead shaped by external forces such as editorial policies, ideological agendas, and industry standards. It seems evident that journalists and media organizations set the norms that govern news translation, often prioritizing narratives that align with institutional or political interests. As a result, translators may have limited autonomy in their work, as they must adhere to specific guidelines that influence how information is presented. This can ultimately affect the neutrality and objectivity of translated news, raising concerns about bias, manipulation, and the ethical responsibility of media translators.

More importantly, the study of translation is often framed through a series of binary oppositions that reflect its challenges. These include Jerome's word-for-word versus sense-for-sense approach, D'Ablancourt's contrast between a faithful and a beautiful translation, Schleiermacher's foreignizing versus domesticating strategies, and Venuti's notion of translator visibility versus invisibility. Each of these dichotomies highlights ethical concerns in translation: the tension between accuracy and artistic expression, the negotiation between source and target cultures, and the power dynamics between original text and translation. At its core, the question remains ethical as much as aesthetic—how can a translation preserve meaning without distorting it, and how can it avoid acts of appropriation or erasure that impact texts, authors, and cultures? (Hulme, 2018). Such dichotomies and tensions exist in media translation as well, where similar tensions arise between fidelity to the original message and adaptation to the target audience's cultural and linguistic norms. In media translation, these



dichotomies manifest in decisions about whether to retain cultural references or even political ideologies present in the original content.

It is also worth noting that new media technologies, particularly machine translation, pose significant ethical challenges, including confidentiality risks, lack of acknowledgment for human translators, and tensions between human and automated translation. When translation memories are shared or stored by tools like Google Translator Toolkit, sensitive information may be exposed, raising concerns about data privacy. Additionally, users of machine translation cannot verify whether the reused translations were shared with consent, nor can they credit the original translators. While SMT (Statistical Machine Translation) systems can produce translations that reflect human sensitivity, they operate purely on statistical models, lacking the ethical judgment necessary to consider the cultural and linguistic differences of target audiences (Kenny, 2011).

Generally, ethical considerations in media translation are shaped by moral frameworks, power structures, and industry-driven norms. Unlike other forms of translation, media translation is often constrained by ideological agendas, editorial policies, and institutional interests, which can impact neutrality and accuracy.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The theoretical perspectives explored in this study have demonstrated the role of ideology in shaping media translation, revealing that translation in media is far from being a neutral act. Instead, it is shaped by power dynamics, cultural frameworks, and institutional agendas that influence how information is framed and disseminated. By understanding translation as an ideological practice, we recognize the role translators and journalists play in shaping public perception. The choices they make, whether in terms of language, tone, or emphasis, can significantly influence how events and issues are understood across different cultures and contexts.

In this regard, media literacy becomes essential, as it equips audiences with the analytical skills needed to critically engage with translated content. By understanding the ideological forces at play, readers and viewers can better identify bias, manipulation, and selective framing in translated news and media reports. Strengthening media literacy can foster critical thinking and contribute to a more informed, independent, and discerning public capable of questioning and evaluating media narratives rather than passively consuming them.

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