

The genealogy of propaganda: The historical evolution of the concept and today's technologies for manipulating consciousness

**Oleksandr Stovpets, Yevhen Borinshtein, Kostiantyn Palshkov,
Halyna Madi and Pavlo Kozlenko***

Abstract: This article examines the origins of propaganda by analyzing the historical evolution of the concept, and contemporary techniques for manipulating public opinion. Particular attention is paid to the problem of defining propaganda, which has long remained a subject of debate in academic circles. It is shown that the main difficulty lies in distinguishing propaganda from other forms of persuasive communication, such as advertising, political lobbying, and public relations, which may employ similar methods of psychological and rhetorical influence. The study explores both critical and pragmatic interpretations, within which propaganda is understood either as a tool for manipulation, the imposition of opinions and perceptions, and control over narratives, or as an inalienable feature in the functioning of contemporary society and the political system. Specific focus is placed on the relationship between propaganda and the concepts of 'soft power' and 'public consensus engineering'. Finally, most relevant techniques and methods for influencing public and personal opinion are studied, including the replacement of concepts, appeals to emotions, to authority, and to the majority, the use of stereotypes and labels, as well as the de-contextualization of information. The conclusion is drawn that propaganda is a sophisticated and multifaceted phenomenon requiring further comprehensive interdisciplinary studying, as the means of disguising

* Oleksandr Stovpets; Halyna Madi (✉)

Department of Social Studies, Odessa National Maritime University, Odessa, Ukraine
Yevhen Borinshtein

Department of Philosophy, Sociology and Management of Sociocultural Activities,
South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University, Odessa, Ukraine

Kostiantyn Palshkov

Department of Legal Disciplines, Odessa State University of Internal Affairs, Odessa,
Ukraine

Pavlo Kozlenko

Odessa Holocaust Research Center, Odessa, Ukraine

e-mail: a.stovpets@gmail.com (corresponding author)

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propagandistic techniques (enhanced with digital technologies, social media, and algorithms) continue to evolve.

Keywords: information, influence, public opinion, advertising, constructive propaganda, destructive propaganda, manipulation

Introduction

The problem of identifying propaganda occupies a prominent place in contemporary humanities, situated at the intersection of philosophy, political science, sociology, and communication theory. Despite the long history of this phenomenon, dating back to the earliest civilizations, there is still no single, universally accepted definition of propaganda. The main difficulty lies in distinguishing propaganda from other forms of persuasive influence, such as advertising, public relations, and journalism.

The relevance of this study stems from the fact that, amid the constant growth of information flows and technological advancements, the potential to influence individual and public consciousness has expanded significantly. The use of visual media, social networks, the circulation of fake news and automated propaganda campaigns - taken together - increase the pressure on people's ability to critically comprehend the around reality. Under these conditions, there is a growing need for a theoretical reflection on the essence of propaganda, its forms, and mechanisms of influence on our minds and worldviews, as well as understanding how they evolve.

The purpose of this article is to examine the genealogy of the phenomenon of propaganda through the lens of historical-philosophical, dialectical, functional, and socio-communicative approaches, as well as to identify the key methods and techniques, which are still actual and widely used to manipulate public opinion and individual consciousness.

Methodology

The methodological framework of this study is based on the dialectical method, the comparative method, the structural-functional method, and the systemic approach. In particular, we use the dialectical method to examine the contradictions in interpretations of propaganda (in its constructive, neutral, and destructive dimensions). The comparative method is applied to the study of the genealogy of the term 'propaganda', to the analysis of its semantic layers, and to its comparison with certain non-Western analogues. The structural-

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functional method helps determine what social functions propaganda performs (from shaping public opinion and maintaining ideological attitudes to consolidating or, conversely, disorienting social communities), and how these functions are realized through specific mechanisms and practices. The systemic approach is applied for a comprehensive study of propaganda as a multidimensional socio-communicative phenomenon functioning in broad interrelation with the political, cultural, informational, and psychological environment; it allows propaganda to be viewed not isolated, but in the context of its interaction with other elements of the social system (with mass media, civil society, state institutions, consumers, public opinion, and technological infrastructure).

The problem of defining propaganda

Defining propaganda has always been a challenge. The main difficulty has been in distinguishing propaganda from other types of persuasion. First and foremost, it should be noted that any form of communication involves an element of persuasion to some degree. Advertising, political rhetoric, educational practices, and even the popularization of science - all of these are aimed at shaping certain ideas, attitudes, or patterns of behaviour. In this sense, propaganda is not a separate phenomenon: it belongs to a broader class of persuasive communication.

The phenomenon of propaganda dates back at least to the time of Darius the Great. There is the famous "Behistun Inscription" of the 6th century BC. This is a 400-line cuneiform text carved on a rock in western Iran, created by order of the Persian king Darius I in three languages - ancient Persian, Babylonian, and Elamite. This petroglyph justifies the legitimacy of Darius' rule, with the reinforcement of certain facts, and (probably) the omission of others.

Why is there a widespread belief that this historical monument is one of the earliest examples of propaganda? The fact is that Darius came to power as a result of a coup, having killed Bardiya (or the 'impostor Gaumata-Smerdis', as Darius himself claimed). It was critically important for Darius to prove that he was not merely a fortunate military commander, but the legitimate inheritor to the throne. Among other things, the Behistun Inscription recounts that Darius himself asserts his belonging to the royal dynasty. He states that eight in a row from his dynasty were kings before him, and he is the ninth. Darius also states that he is king by the grace of the god Ahura

Mazda, who granted him the kingship. Darius further lists many satrapies (provinces) under his rule and mentions the battles he successfully waged throughout the year, suppressing the uprisings that arose after the death of Cyrus the Great. However, Darius presumably belonged to a different branch of the Achaemenid dynasty, and his claims to kinship with Cyrus the Great still raise serious doubts among historians. Therefore, some studies suggest that one of the motivations behind the Behistun Inscription, created at Darius's initiative, was his desire to resolve his legitimacy problem. In particular, Albert Olmstead writes:

Such was the official version, followed by the Father of History and his Greek successors. Yet there are not lacking indications that it was not quite true to the facts. We have already observed that Darius belonged to the former imperial family only in the broader sense. (Olmstead 1938, 395)

But even if we assume that Darius I is telling the pure truth about his direct kinship with Cyrus the Great, immortalizing it in the rocks of today's Kermanshah Province in Iran, this does not change the essence of the matter. It is still a form of political propaganda, but not so much to legitimize his rise to power as to emphasize his greatness and his honourable place in the glorious Achaemenid dynasty.

Some researchers even say that the phenomenon of propaganda has been known since the time of the Babylonian king Hammurabi, in the 1750s BC. Thus, in the preamble to the *Code of Laws of Hammurabi*, it was said that these laws were created to establish justice in the country and to protect the weak from the strong. But in reality, the content of the laws themselves was mainly aimed at protecting the interests of the wealthy at the cost of the poor. This is an example of the so-called 'fake intention'. Norman Yoffee (2005), in his work *Myths of the Archaic State*, writes that the Code of Hammurabi was not actually used by Babylonian judges in practice (at least, we find no references to it in the judicial documents of that era). According to Yoffee, it was political propaganda aimed at winning over the minds of citizens in recently conquered city-states by presenting them an image of the ideal ruler. Thus, the Code of Hammurabi is used as a tool for self-presentation. Its preamble and epilogue create a literary framework of fairness support by the 'good shepherd', which stands in sharp contrast to the casuistic laws that uphold a rigid social hierarchy (Yoffee 2005).

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Anyway, since ancient times, elites have been using propaganda. And of course it's much more easier to do nowadays, when technical capabilities have grown incomparably, and the development of such sciences as psychology, sociology, political science, and philosophy contribute to the development of even more intellectually sophisticated technologies for influencing individual and mass consciousness.

A generalized view is that 'propaganda' is a specific type of communication aimed at shaping public opinion, persuading an audience, or promoting a particular agenda. In this context, information is often presented selectively and may be distorted in such a way as to steer people toward predetermined conclusions or perceptions. One of the distinctive tools used here is so-called 'loaded' language - a form of verbal influence designed not so much to elicit rational understanding as to provoke an emotional reaction. Such techniques are particularly prevalent in the media, where they help amplify the desired effect of the information being conveyed.

The Latin word *propaganda* literally means "something to be spread," from the Latin verb *prōpāgo*, which means "to spread". And in this sense, its semantics is close to "agitation". But this type of communication may have an ambiguous nature. This kind of explanation can be found in a number of dictionaries. Particularly, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2025):

The systematic dissemination of information, especially in a biased or misleading way, in order to promote a particular cause or point of view, often a political agenda. Also: information disseminated in this way; the means or media by which such ideas are disseminated. (Another possible meaning) An organization, scheme, or movement for the propagation of a particular doctrine, practice, etc.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* provides the following explanations:

Propaganda, dissemination of information - facts, arguments, rumours, half-truths, or lies - to influence public opinion. It is often conveyed through mass media. Propaganda is the more or less systematic effort to manipulate other people's beliefs, attitudes, or actions by means of symbols (words, gestures, banners, monuments, music, clothing, insignia, hairstyles, designs on coins and postage stamps, and so forth). [...] The word propaganda itself, as used in recent centuries, apparently derives from the title and work of the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide (Congregation for Propagation of the Faith), an organization of Roman Catholic cardinals founded in 1622 to carry on missionary work. To many Roman Catholics the word may therefore have, at least in missionary or ecclesiastical terms, a highly respectable connotation... (Smith 2026)

However, in the modern sense, propaganda is mostly understood as a pejorative word that refers to the practice of disseminating views, facts, arguments, opinions, rumours, theories, information (including distorted information, or deliberately false information) in order to shape the desired public opinion. It can be used to manipulate people's consciousness, or to spread and popularize a particular ideology or narrative.

At the same time, some of these non-English terms retain a generally neutral connotation. For example, in official Chinese Party discourse, the term *xuanchuan* refers to the Communist Party of China's practice of influencing domestic and international public opinion in favour of its policies. The term itself is formed by combining two words: *xuan*, which can be translated as "to declare, to proclaim", and *chuan* with an array of meanings, from "to transmit; to teach; to spread" to even "contaminate, infect" (i.e. to infiltrate certain ideas into people's minds). *Xuanchuan* as a specific informational, administrative, and educational practice first appears in the third-century historical text *Sanguozhi / Records of the Three Kingdoms*, where it was used to refer to the dissemination of military skills. In pre-modern times, the term was used in China to indicate the transfer of ideas and information by the ruling elites. They considered *Xuanchuan* was the best means of the state governance (Lin 2017, 455).

In a comparative study of terminology examining Western and Chinese understandings of propaganda, the following statement is made:

My first assumption is that xuanchuan culture in part operates as a substitute for the missing state religion to unify the nation in a quasi-religious way. One thing that religion and propaganda share in common is that both encourage and demand devotion. Xuanchuan, derived from Confucian teachings, can be seen as a kind of 'rationalized religion' like Confucianism itself... (Lin 2017, 458)

Such a specific use of the term *xuanchuan* can be explained by the features of the Confucian cultural tradition, which for centuries determined the development dynamics of the Sinitic civilization. And in the Western world, different practices of propaganda have been actively used for political consolidation and shaping of the 'nations' (Stovpets et al. 2023, 298). These examples show a variety of contexts applicable to propaganda.

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Thus, throughout the 20th century, the word “propaganda” in English gradually took on a consistently negative connotation and came to be associated primarily with manipulative influence. However, in its earlier usage, the term had a neutral meaning and referred to any materials aimed at disseminating certain views or ideological positions. As practice shows, a wide variety of forms and media channels can be used to spread such messages. Naturally, they have been changing with the invention of new visual means, including paintings, caricatures, posters, brochures, comics, movies, radio and television programs, websites, podcasts, video hosting, messengers, and social networks.

In the first quarter of the 21st century, with the advent of the digital age, fundamentally new mechanisms for disseminating propaganda have emerged. In particular, there has been an increasing use of bots and algorithmic systems capable of automatically generating content - ranging from outright fabrications to biased interpretations of news - and rapidly spreading it through social media, including with the use of emerging emotionally pre-trained artificial intelligence (Stovpets 2024, 69).

Differing views on propaganda in intellectual circles

Propaganda has also been conceptualized as a form of influence aimed at building a social consensus. When researchers began to study the impact of the media (newspapers and radio) almost a hundred years ago, a fierce debate broke out between them.

American minister and writer Everett Dean Martin (1929, 142) argued that “Propaganda is making puppets from us. We are moved by hidden strings which the propagandist manipulates.” On the contrary, advocating propaganda, Edward Bernays (1928, 9) writes:

We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society.

Harold Lasswell (1980) proposed a general understanding of propaganda: it is not merely about the transmission of ideas, but about purposeful activity - whether intellectual or practical - carried out by individuals or groups of people with the intention of altering the attitudes and behaviour of others. Such influence is inherently aimed at achieving predetermined results and, as a rule, relies on mechanisms of psychological influence. There is also a widespread view in academic

circles that propaganda is closely intertwined with a system of values and beliefs: communication in this context functions as an instrument of ‘soft power’, implemented through the development and systematic introduction of relevant conceptual frameworks.

For instance, both commercial advertising and public relations use the same methods (techniques) of psychological influence. So both advertising and PR can be considered as two types of propaganda, with the difference that PR is a political practice, while advertising often becomes a propaganda for irrational, excessive consumption, as it popularizes some commercial products or shapes the consumers' opinion about companies and their trademarks.

In post-war language of the mid-20th century, the term *propaganda* was mainly associated with the political (for example, nationalist, conservative, socialist and other) use of methods to promote a set of ideas. Later, in order to reduce this unfavourable tone of the term, political technologists avoided using the phrase “political propaganda” and instead suggested using the term “political marketing”. Nevertheless, its essential meaning has not changed, and mostly meant certain attempts (financed by governments and other political groups of influence) to persuade the public to support explicit and implicit interests. Sophisticated propaganda techniques were invented by pioneers of the newly formed field of public relations, such as Walter Lippmann, Edward Bernays, and Paul Lazarsfeld.

If we turn to the theory of journalism, the principles of fair journalism require that news reports be objective and provide readers with factual information, and analysis of the topic at the heart of the matter. Advertising, meanwhile, has undergone significant changes: from standard product promotions - to new types of latent advertising, in the form of sponsored articles in journalistic and even academic publications, in the form of broadcasts presented either as ‘news’ or as ‘expert opinions’. They mostly highlight issues from a very subjective and one-sided perspective, with the aim of persuading rather than informing. If the recipient of the information truly perceives paid advertising as a ‘journalistic report’, then the content that the advertiser is striving to convey is more easily taken on faith as ‘independent opinion’. Such advertising is considered a classic example of hidden commercial propaganda, as it is trying to appear as objective information. That is why the laws of different countries mostly require that advertising information, presented in the course of news reporting,

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must be labelled as 'prepaid advertising' or 'information provided for promotional purposes'.

Propaganda can also be used as part of governmental public awareness campaigns aimed at encouraging or eliminating certain behaviours. For instance, the 'road safety propaganda' is designed to inform people to always wear seat belts, obey the speed limit, not be distracted by phones while driving. Another example of governmentally inspired propaganda campaigns are the cases aimed at promoting a sober lifestyle, or requiring people not to smoke in public places, no littering, etc. These are examples of the so-called 'constructive propaganda'. However, quite often, propaganda is either harmful or even 'destructive', aimed at discrediting, misinforming, discriminating, and posing over-ideologization on people's life.

So why did this term acquire a strongly negative emotional coloration during the 20th century? This re-definition occurred mainly because both the Soviet Union, and the right-wing radical governments of the 1930s in Germany, Italy, and Japan openly used propaganda to incite hatred, xenophobia, and militarization. Over time, certain symbols became indispensable logos of this or that kind of propaganda (most famous are swastika, hammer and sickle).

Not much has changed in terms of meaning today: we can trace this unpleasant transformation in symbolism on the example of the Saint George's Ribbon, which has turned from a symbol of victory over fascism in the World War II - into a symbol of Russian aggression against Ukraine, occupation, annexation, and incitement to separatism in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Therefore, this symbol is now banned and officially prohibited in Ukraine, because it is associated with extremism along with the Nazi swastika and communist symbols (Ukraine's Parliament 2015; Ukraine's Parliament 2017).

An influencer may use propaganda to transform people's attitudes toward a particular matter, in order to alter people's behaviour in a way that is desirable for the interested group. In this sense, propaganda has a specific relationship with censorship. They use different mechanisms for handling information. In the case of censorship, manipulative goals are achieved without filling people's minds with edited or distorted information, but simply by preventing people from coming into contact with conflicting views (all such views are simply eliminated, blocked, suppressed, so they have no place in the public media space). Propaganda is more flexible than censorship because it is a form of persuasion that involves trying to change people's basic comprehension

through misrepresentation and disorientation, instead of honest persuasion and improving understanding of controversial issues.

How propaganda works: Examples of key techniques

Numerous methods (often grounded on social psychology research) are used to carry out propaganda. Many of these methods are based on deliberate logical fallacies, as propagandists use arguments that may look rather convincing but are not always accurate. Now, we shall look at some most powerful methods and techniques often used to deliver propaganda and disinformation.

Among these methods, there is *Argumentum ad hominem*, or ‘Getting personal’ case. *Ad hominem* is a Latin phrase that literally is translated as “to the person”, which means attacking the opponent, not his or her arguments (i.e. getting personal). This method is also called ‘poisoning the well’. In rhetoric, this technique is a pre-emptive attack, which consists in a negative description of the person being presented to the audience, with the intention of discrediting everything that may be said by this person in the future, in front of this audience. ‘Source poisoning’ is a special case of *argumentum ad hominem*, which is carried out by negatively portraying an opponent, before he or she enters the discussion.

Another technique is ‘appeal to authority’. This method seems to be the opposite of the one mentioned earlier. It consists in the manipulative use of public statements made by well-known and respected people, in favour of a certain position, or against some position, idea, argument, or someone’s actions.

‘Appeal to fear’ is another method. The person, using this propaganda technique, tries to gain support for his or her ideas or views by playing on the existing fears and prejudices of the audience. For example, Joseph Goebbels used Theodor Kaufmann’s radical book *Germany Must Perish!* to claim that ‘the Allies wanted to destroy the whole German nation’. Similarly, today Russian propagandists claim that ‘NATO wants to destroy Russia’, or ‘If Russia had not attacked Ukraine, then Ukraine would have attacked Russia’, and other similar nonsense. Some people in Russia believe in these deceptive affirmations while others are sceptical about them. And even long before the full scale invasion in 2022, inside Russia they used ‘appeal to fear’ method to justify the intensifying suppression of opposition. In particular, Russian policymakers reinforced the belief that the region was undergoing some form of democratic contagion when they

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referred to this phenomenon as the 'orange plague' or 'orange virus' (Ambrosio 2010, 376). Along with that, after 2013, Russian propaganda has introduced some figurative expressions, which were used to disguise incitement to separatism in eastern Ukraine: the separatist rebellions in Donbas were called by the Kremlin 'the Russian spring' (Banasik 2015, 20).

Another manipulative technique can be described as 'appeal to the people, to the majority'. It is a method of obtaining broad public support for a particular conclusion or statement, as a result of the propagandist's attempt to convince the target audience that such support is already available from the absolute majority, from the 'people'. This method involves stimulating the sentiments and passion of the common people. This encourages the audience to endorse certain controversial viewpoints or goods, by generating the illusion that everyone else is already thinking or acting the similar way, and now it's time for you to join the majority. On the one hand, the so-called 'herd instinct' is activated (you have to be like everyone else), and on the other hand, this approach capitalizes on people's natural tendency to side with the winners. In other words, technique of 'appealing to people' is employed to persuade the public that a particular idea reflects the unrestrained movement of the masses, and therefore it would be the best for separate listeners or viewers also to join it.

The use of prejudice, biases, *clichés*, stereotypes, etc. is another method of influence. This technique is also known in propaganda theory as "labelling", when someone is immediately labelled as a 'neoliberal', or a 'nationalist', 'fascist', 'Marxist', 'racist', 'inquisitor', 'loan-shark', 'traitor', or vice versa: 'patriot', 'hero', 'martyr', or other epithets. The use of such emotionally significant terms helps to form a certain attitude towards the person marked with the corresponding "label" - as a morally perfect or dishonourable person, as a virtuous person or a villain. Labeling can be viewed as a subtype of the logical fallacy: guilty - because associated with guilty. For example, in Soviet propaganda, even moderate, non-radical, and liberal-minded Ukrainian patriots were called nothing more than 'Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists', adding the label 'bourgeois', which at the time had an obviously negative anti-socialist connotation in society.

There is also a kind of manipulation named 'beautiful people', which became especially successful in the era of mass-media. This is a type of propaganda that is associated either with images of famous

people who are popular and loved in society, or with an indefinite circle of some little-known but attractive, beautiful, seemingly happy people. This technique works in two ways. First, it may encourage all other (ordinary) people to think like this: if our favourites (actors, singers, other celebrities) buy this product or follow a certain ideology, then we, following their example, will also be happy or successful if we consume a similar product or adhere to similar ideas. Second, an event successfully organized with the participation of little-known but visually attractive people will subconsciously encourage others to use a specific product that is now associated with that event (and those beautiful people).

In this sense, there is example of the election campaign of the thirtieth president of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, who, being a little-known politician at the time of his candidacy, following the advice of political strategist Bernays, invited the most popular actors and actresses of the time to breakfast at the White House. The fact was that the American public simply didn't know how to react to Coolidge as a potential president, since he had not expressed himself as a vice president. The breakfast of presidential candidate Coolidge (along with famous actors) was broadcast on television. So in 1924 the US citizens decided that the man from the White House, laughing and chatting with their favourite actors, simply could not be cold and unsympathetic, and his support in the elections grew incredibly after this PR campaign. A variation of this kind of manipulative practice is the well-known desire of politicians to be photographed or filmed with kids, showing themselves to be child-friendly and caring people, ideal family men, supporters of traditional values, etc.

'Replacement of concepts' is another effective manipulative trick. This deceitful technique in the theory and practice of propaganda is also associated with the name of salesman guru and PR expert Edward Bernays. The 'Lucky Strike' tobacco company commissioned him to create an advertising campaign to promote their product, and Bernays presented smoking as a symbol of 'feminine independence'. In 1929, he organized a huge action when women, walking the streets of New York, simultaneously lit cigarettes (and even cigars), as an 'act of freedom', as a symbol of women's emancipation. It was represented as a manifestation of women's equal rights to do what men do - smoke cigarettes, which were pompously called 'torches of freedom'. At the same time, this effect was reinforced by mass-media, as doctors paid by Bernays were discussing on TV the 'benefits of nicotine', including

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its 'beneficial effects on eating less sweets' (Amos & Haglund 2000, 4). It was thanks to this propaganda campaign that women's smoking became socially acceptable, first in the United States and later in other countries.

The image of a romantic and stylish woman with a cigarette was massively introduced in cinema and photography for many years during the so-called early decadence period. It was one of the first examples of contextual branding, in order to create and instil a false need among women - the need to smoke. Though, as some researchers note:

At the beginning of the 20th century few people could ever have imagined how such a stigmatised behaviour as female smoking would be transformed, with the aid of judicious marketing, into a socially acceptable and desirable practice. (Amos & Haglund 2000, 8)

Another persuasive method is known under the names 'Plain folks', or the 'Ordinary people', a 'common person', an 'average Joe', a 'plain Jane', or 'one of the lads'. This technique tries to assure the public that propagandists' statements fully correspond to the logic of average people ('normal' or 'simple' people). This approach is intended to gain trust of the target audience by communicating in anti-elite style, 'in a simple way'. The propagandist uses simple language and appropriate manners, trying to equate the desired view with that of the 'average person'. For example, propaganda can promote arguments in favour of unpopular socio-economic reforms like cutting unemployment aid, or raising the retirement age, or reducing healthcare expenses. To make its arguments more convincing, propaganda may picture on TV a 'common citizen' philosophizing on future reforms and saying statements, such as 'when times are tough, we all need to tighten our belts', or 'the government simply has to act in this way because of the financial situation in our country, and we all just have to be patient', and so on.

In sociology, there is a well-known concept - the Overton Window. This is a kind of manipulative technology for shifting discourse in order to change gradually the public opinion. As a result of such a shift, it sometimes happens that something previously seemed unthinkable, radically unacceptable - invisibly passes into category of 'possible' (probable, but highly undesirable). If a message is beyond the perception of an individual or group, most techniques will cause psychological reactive resistance: simply presenting the argument

doesn't make the message receptive enough. There are two methods of expanding the boundaries of perception. First, you can take an extreme position from the beginning, which will then make a more moderate position much more acceptable. It's the same principle as if you want to sell something for a certain price, set a higher price, and then make a 'discount'. Alternatively, you can make your own position more moderate by lowering it to the point of acceptability, and then slowly move to the desired position over time (giving a certain time to the targeted audience to get used to new, previously unacceptable ideas).

The last technique (among those being studied in this research) is named 'de-contextualisation', i.e. extracting statements out of their context. Selective quote extraction is often used to change or distort the meaning of certain statements, expressions, or texts. It may also be intended to discredit an opponent or an opposing political view. It is a manipulative technique where a whole text is taken, and a passage is removed from it so as to misrepresent its genuine ideas. This is called contextomy, quoting out of context, and can be either intentional or accidental (the latter happens if a person doesn't get the point and skips something important to the explanation, thinking it's not essential or relevant).

As a type of manipulation, out-of-context citation differs: it may take the form of a so-called 'false attribution' (fake citation); another case is that the out-of-context quote is still attributed to the correct source, but the meaning of the quoted material is distorted by artificially shortening and isolating it from the overall context. A destructive effect of using this manipulative technique has become an object of special research, where we find the following:

A contextomized quotation not only prompts audiences to form a false impression of the source's intentions, but can contaminate subsequent interpretation of the quote when it is restored to its original context. (McGlone 2005, 511)

Among the examples of 'de-contextualization', we could draw the attention to several ones. One is rather famous: it's the Churchill's statement that 'democracy is the worst form of government ... but mankind has not yet invented a better one, and all other forms are even worse' (he specifies). But sometimes the whole statement is replaced by a truncated version, in which it looks like 'Churchill believes, democracy is the worst form of government' (i.e. the following clarifying part of his statement is eliminated, and this completely

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changes the semantics of the entire phrase). The original phrase in Winston Churchill's speech (11 November 1947) in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom was:

...Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time...
(International Churchill Society 2016)

In a more recent discourse, an example from Russian propaganda and disinformation can be provided. Let's take the full statement, from an interview, where the U.S. State Department official Victoria Nuland (2013) said:

Since Ukraine's independence in 1991, the United States has supported Ukrainians as they build democratic skills and institutions, as they promote civic participation and good governance, all of which are preconditions for Ukraine to achieve its European aspirations. We've invested over \$5 billion to assist Ukraine in these and other goals that will ensure a secure and prosperous and democratic Ukraine.

This was said by V. Nuland (as Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs) on December 13, 2013. Later, in April 2014, in an interview with CNN, Victoria Nuland confirmed this figure, clarifying that the funds were not allocated to organize protests, but for the development of democratic institutions, the fight against corruption, and other government programs throughout Ukraine's 22 years of independence. However, the Russian media cut out the words "since Ukraine's independence in 1991", in order to give to the mass reader an impression that the US had thrown this five billion dollars in a one-time payment in 2013, for example, to organize the anti-government protests 2013-2014 (also known as the 'Revolution of Dignity').

Here we have discussed only a part of the propaganda techniques and manipulation methods, but in fact there are many more. And their arsenal is constantly being enriched. AI instruments, the emergence of emotionally pre-trained neural networks, rapid development of machine learning will probably exacerbate the situation when it will become increasingly difficult to distinguish propaganda from unbiased reporting.

Conclusion

In many cases, our thoughts, beliefs, and values are not our own. They are concepts without a clear source of origin, but ones that have been

instilled in our minds and have taken root in our consciousness (both at the individual and collective levels). And such a state of affairs is the result of successful propaganda, which is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that still lacks a clear-cut set of criteria for determining. The main difficulty in conceptualizing it lies in the need to draw a distinction between propaganda and other forms of public communication, which may resort to similar methods of influencing the audience.

An analysis of the historical development of this phenomenon has shown that propaganda has existed since ancient times, and was originally used by ruling elites to legitimize their power and shape public attitudes. At the same time, its content and forms have been evolving depending on the level of technological development and the specifics of the cultural context. In the 20th century, there was a significant shift in the perception of propaganda: from a relatively neutral term, it became a concept with a distinctly negative connotation, which was due to its active use by totalitarian regimes.

Propaganda is closely linked to fields such as advertising and public relations, as they employ similar psychological and communicative techniques to influence people. Propaganda can also camouflage itself as journalism. However, unlike objective classical journalism, propaganda is characterized by the selective presentation of information aimed at shaping a predetermined perception.

A study of the mechanisms underlying propaganda reveals that its effectiveness is largely driven by the use of various manipulative techniques based on logical fallacies and the peculiarities of human perception. Among the most common methods are appeals to authority, appeals to fear, ad hominem attacks, the majority effect, the use of stereotypes and labels, and contextomies, i.e. the de-contextualization of information. These methods primarily target the emotional sphere, reducing the level of critical perception of information.

Thus, propaganda serves as a powerful tool for shaping public opinion. In some cases, propaganda can fulfil constructive functions (mainly, in social campaigns promoting healthy lifestyles or ecological protection). But for the most part, it is used for destructive purposes, including the manipulation of consciousness to encourage overconsumption, promoting harmful products, disinformation to change people's minds, populism, the incitement of hatred, xenophobia, intolerance, and ideological pressure on the opponents.

The genealogy of propaganda: The historical evolution of the concept and today's technologies for manipulating consciousness

The need for further comprehensive study of this phenomenon and the development of more effective mechanisms for its critical assessment is driven by the factors of digitalization. In today's technological environment, propaganda is taking on new forms and gaining new capabilities, amplified by the use of automated systems, algorithms, and neural networks, which significantly increases the scale of its impact on individual and mass consciousness.

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