

The Propaganda War

Propaganda disseminated via media outlets to the people

Propaganda is the process of conditioning a populous into believing information, that is typically biased or misleading, to serve a political cause or promote a point of view. This process consists of a tripartite composition involving an author, a medium and an audience. When one speaks of state propaganda, the author is the state (government), the medium is the media (newspapers, television, radio) and the audience is the public to whom it is intended for (civic groups, ethnic groups, faith groups, idealist groups). The consensus is that propaganda is more widespread in authoritarian states where the regime typically owns and controls the press, in contrast with liberal democracies and open societies where the press is ostensibly free and independent. However, as history points out, democracies do not shun away per se from practicing propaganda; not least when they see fit to concoct false pretexts for war to serve their geopolitical motives. Scenarios wherein uninvolved entities deliberately get blamed for terror attacks staged by government agencies are coined as 'false flag operations'. This term derives from naval warfare in times when, for deceit and tactical warfare, belligerent vessels flew flags other than their true battle flag moments prior to engaging the enemy in combat. Precedents of nascent modern state propaganda can be documented as far back as the 15th century, when Johannes Gutenberg pioneered the printing press. This enabled for text and images to be put into print. The invention of the radio by Guglielmo Marconi, in 1901, brought forth instant broadcasting where persuasive speech, psychology and scaremongering mind control techniques formed the synthesis to drive a live audience on a wider scale, often by using loaded messages to produce an emotional, rather than a rational, response to the information presented of which the impact thereof was most infamously demonstrated in the 1930s and 1940s by the German National Socialists. The aftermath of World War II saw a boom of technological innovation and economic expansion which coalesced into a revolution in broadcasting, in the United States and in Great Britain, where television sets became commonplace in homes. By the 1950s, television was the primary medium for influencing public opinion. Anything ranging from advertising products and services to affecting trends in politics and economics, television made more of an impact than any other medium could deliver. This feat is accomplished by television's inherent ability to harmonize oral communication with animated imagery to achieve the resultant visual impact, with tendencies to trigger off cognitive illusions—a state of drifting mindlessness in which the mind conjures up the illusion of teleporting oneself inside the broadcast. Before the internet became trendy, newspaper sales dwindled and demand for radio declined, the politico-media complex exploited television's popularity to spread propaganda. By the turn of the 21st century, the tide shifted, as people increasingly opted to divest from television for the internet. Television carries certain drawbacks insofar that it offers a limited scope of channels to select from and the audience is subjected to restrictions imposed on what gets aired. The generation of the 21st century demands more from technology than to participate in inflexible, one-dimensional paradigms. It wants to lead, share files, upload statuses, leave comments, simultaneously interact across multiple continents, et cetera. Fashion trends have rendered news reports on television, radio, and, in newspapers outdated in the world of today. We spend so much of our time browsing the web that information technology has become an integral part of our lives; and, this technology is nurturing the world with information on an unprecedented scale. The propaganda war rages on.