Modern American Propaganda: An Institutional History

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ABSTRACT

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The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy is the primary government institution in charge of overt, foreign-directed propaganda. This paper argues that the institutional culture of this institution was born and came to fruition in the period 1941-1953, and has not significantly changed since. That institutional culture includes a fierce adherence to a "strategy of truth," with aesthetic norms being reserved and largely unemotional as a result of positioning themselves in moral and aesthetic opposition to Nazi and early Cold War Communist propaganda. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's decision to staff these nascent institutions with artists, poets, playwrights and journalists – rather than political scientists, advertising executives, and soldiers – was a second key explanatory reason for the birth of these particular norms. Then and now, overt U.S. propagandists are ardently internationalist and interventionist, convinced that U.S. political, social, economic and moral leadership is, on balance, good for the world – not just the United States. Specifically, they believe that U.S. leadership advances economic and political freedoms, as well as human rights, and have never seriously challenged these assumptions, even in periods in which Americans writ large were unconvinced. Despite evidence to the contrary, U.S. propaganda still rests on an assumption that in the marketplace of ideas, the "best" ideas will find their way to the top, thereby leading to a focus on rational and logical styles of argumentation. While some aspects of this institutional culture, such as an ethical commitment to the truth, are laudable and worth maintaining, other aspects, such as an aversion to social science research, have hindered the institution's

effectiveness. In this paper, I explore historical and scholarly meanings for the term propaganda before advancing my own definition. Then, I explain the institutional history of modern day propaganda. Finally, I offer suggestions on how to better adapt modern American propaganda to the 21st century.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	**Meaning**
ACPD	Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting Services
CPI	Committee on Public Information
DOS	Department of State
FIS	Foreign Information Service
IIA	International Information Administration
IIS	Interim International Information Service
NEC	National Emergency Council
OCCCRBAR	Office of the Coordinator of Commercial and Cultural Relations
OCD	Office of Civilian Defense
OCOI	Office of the Coordinator of Information
OEM	Office of Emergency Management
OEX	Office of Educational Exchange
OFF	Office of Facts and Figures
OGR	Office of Government Reports
OIAA	Office of Inter-American Affairs
OIC	Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs
OIE	Office of International Information and Educational Exchange
OII	Office of International Information

OPA   Office of Public Affairs

OSS   Office of Special Services

OWI   Office of War Information

PWB   Psychological Warfare Branch

PWC   Psychological Warfare Committee

PWE   (UK) Political Warfare Executive

USIA   U.S. Information Agency

USIIA   *See IIA*

VOA   Voice of America

Introduction

When Julia Erdely was 15, she stepped off a cramped train car in which dead bodies had been stacked off to the side. Already separated from her family, she waited in line, not understanding what was happening. A Polish man in a pinstriped suit approached and, in Yiddish, cryptically told her: "You're 18." The line slowly moved forward. At the front of the line, a Nazi guard was directing the line into two. When she approached him, he only asked her age. "Eighteen," said the 15 year old. One word, as it turned out, saved her life: those under eighteen were immediately sent to the gas chambers of Auschwitz, while adults were sent to labor camps.[1]

Fifty-three years later, she told her story to an auditorium full of high school students in Illinois. I sat next to my best friend, Ron – Julia's grandson, and after the event, reflecting on what she had said, I burst into tears at the realization that Ron's entire existence depended on a single word that his grandmother had spoken so long ago. That one word gave life to a person for whom I cared deeply, and this fact was terrifying. Though I had always been fascinated with language and words, Julia's story gave me a newfound understanding that they were more than just interesting, but also potentially dangerous, and requiring of care and management.

Words carry power. Sometimes, even a single word can mean the difference between life or death. This power imbues our use of words with a moral responsibility, none more so than in the case of those who speak on behalf of powerful governments, whose military and economic might can shape the fate of billions, spark wars or win the peace. As a U.S. government

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[1] Julia Erdely, "Interview with July Erdely," July 28, 1995, from the series *Survivors of the Shoah*, Visual History Foundation, Audio, 34:08.

propagandist, I try to be thoughtful and deliberate about the words I use, and to use those words to help reshape the world into one I consider "better." Namely, a world that embraces liberal democratic values including the respect for, and protection of, universal human rights.

I am not alone in this. My colleagues, I will argue, work from a shared ethical framework that can be clearly traced to the period 1941-1953, when many millions of individuals fell under the sway of genocidal Nazis and totalitarian Communists. Ardently internationalist, we remain convinced by those events of the enduring need for American soft-power – and occasionally hard-power – intervention around the world to maintain the post-war legal, ethical, moral, economic, and political order. This soft-power intervention is the focus of this study.

American soft power today is consciously advanced abroad most forcefully by the U.S. Department of State and its Bureau of Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy. Embedded in every U.S. Embassy and most Consulates around the world, the Bureau's propagandists work to advance political and economic freedom, and respect for and implementation of human rights norms and laws. We also, of course, work to advance U.S. interests and influence, but we do so, I argue, within a particular framework of values focused on truth-telling, and advancing political and economic freedoms around the world.

Understanding the common negative associations associated with the term "propaganda," as terms of art we call ourselves *public affairs officers*, *public diplomacy officers*, *cultural affairs officers*, *information officers*, *spokespersons*, and *press officers*, but in truth we ply in propaganda. Propaganda, though, is just a tool – one much like a chainsaw. Powerful and with inherent dangers, it can be used for good – chopping down trees to build homes for the homeless – or evil.

In summary, my argument follows: modern-day American propaganda institutions and practices were born during World War II and fully formed by the end of the Korean War. The twelve years from 1941-1953 confronted the United States government with existential threats in the form of totalitarian governments who were willing to unethically use propaganda to advance their aims, purposefully and consciously fabricating lies to justify their actions. How, then, would liberal democracies like the United States respond? Would it be possible to chart an ethical course for propaganda, and could such propaganda even be effective? If so, to what extent do the lessons those early American propagandists learned, or the norms they established, continue to live on today among American government propagandists who follow in their professional footsteps?

I argue that those forces countering the United States at the time helped us develop a uniquely American style of propaganda, with its own set of ethical norms, values, and aesthetics, in direct response to Nazi and Communist propaganda of the time. For better *and* for worse, the United States continues to practice this 1953-era propaganda today. The particular problems caused by using a 1953 toolset to confront the problems of the 21st century requires a deep examination of those foundational norms, values and aesthetics. Given significant shifts in the global information environment, policy makers must now make a conscious decision to maintain, discard, or modify them. This is essential to ensure that American government propagandists can continue to work effectively to both advance U.S. interests, and hopefully to continue help building a "better" world for all people.

To make this argument, we must first understand what the term *propaganda* actually means – at least with respect to my argument. **Chapter 1** will explore the meanings of propaganda as they have evolved and changed over time, with a focus on the 20th century and the birth of propaganda studies as a discrete area of inquiry. In this chapter, my sources will include

propaganda theorists beginning with public relations specialist Edward Bernays and political scientist Harold Lasswell, who were essential contributors to the first serious studies on the subject in the 1920s and 1930s. Moving through the 20th century, I will explore how mid-century theorists like French sociologist Jacques Ellul and late 20th century scholars like linguist Noam Chomsky redefined the term for their times. I also argue that the term propaganda – much like equally far-reaching concepts such as liberalism, socialism, and communication – will never have one complete and authoritative definition, but instead that propaganda theorists must explicitly re-define it for their specific purposes in any formal inquiry. In that light, Chapter 1 will conclude with my own definition of propaganda, as well as my definition of *ethical* propaganda.

Having defined our terms, in **Chapter 2** I argue that the U.S. government's modern propaganda organs and institutions – as well as their embedded norms, values, ethics, and aesthetics – were born and grew to adulthood in the period 1941-1953, with significant contributions from the administrations of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Dwight Eisenhower. Of note, I am only making this case with respect to *overt, foreign-directed* propaganda. The subject of covert, foreign-directed propaganda is beyond the scope of this research, while formal domestic propaganda efforts were legally silenced in the 1940s.

Many scholars of history and propaganda might ask, why not begin this history in World War I? This period, after all, saw the first instance of a centralized, U.S. government propaganda office: the Committee on Public Information (CPI). I argue that although this was our first institutional instance of semi-scientific propaganda aimed at mass audiences, those authorizing it, and those executing it, did not believe that it was a phenomenon that needed to exist outside of wartime. As such, the ethical norms they ascribed to it were completely different, as it was not seen as something that could exist within the norms of peacetime democracy. CPI Director George

Creel, for example, wielded censorship against the press like a club, which was very different from the almost entirely voluntary nature of press censorship in World War II. Not until the end of that war did U.S. government, political scientists, politicians and academics broadly agree on the need for a permanent "forever war" against totalitarianism, a propaganda apparatus that would live forever, partially in service to the values underpinning liberal democracy.

Created in direct response to Axis propaganda efforts, and then evolved to counter early Cold War Soviet propaganda, these institutions reached full adulthood by the end of the Korean War. To make this case, I will explore the internal memos of, and executive orders related to, the World War II-era Office of War Information, its precursor offices and agencies, and its successor offices in the State Department and the later U.S. Information Agency. Several of the key players in this history will speak for themselves through their own writings, memoirs, and biographies. I will also use reports from the Congressionally-mandated U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, and its precursor commissions, to demonstrate how a particularly American institutional culture of propaganda was born.

The overt propaganda offices and agencies established in the 1940s were directed by artists, poets, authors, and journalists, rather than, for the most part, advertisers, political scientists, and soldiers. This choice – made directly by President Roosevelt – would have profound consequences for the ethical values and norms employed both in that period, and in the present day. Playwright Robert Sherwood essentially created the first World War II-era foreign-directed, overt propaganda office in the form of the Foreign Information Service, and continued directing it when it was renamed and re-housed as the Overseas Branch of the Office of War Information (OWI). CBS journalist Elmer Davis brought his media ethics to the OWI – the government's first centralized production and coordinating hub for propaganda – when he became its first director. Poet and

Librarian of Congress Archibald MacLeish first headed the War Department's Office of Facts and Figures before becoming an assistant director at the OWI. Journalist Lowell Mellett headed the short-lived Office of Government Reports before taking over OWI's Motion Picture propaganda bureau. Newspaper publisher Gardner Powell also found a role as an OWI assistant director.

Following the war, OWI's propaganda functions were transferred to the Department of State's new Bureau of Public Affairs. First headed by MacLeish, journalist Edward Barrett took over its leadership in the crucial period from 1950-1952. One year later, Congress established the U.S. government's first permanent peacetime agency for overt, foreign-directed propaganda, the U.S. Information Agency (USIA). Once again, it was a journalist who led the charge: radio and film executive Theodore Streibert became USIA's first director. Bringing along with them the values of artists and writers, these propagandists centered their work around a "strategy of truth," and consciously framed the restrained aesthetic of their propaganda in direct opposition to that of the sometimes shrill and emotional Nazi and Communist propaganda. Despite significant changes to American society and values, and the information environment in which we operate, I argue that the norms, values and aesthetics of this period's propaganda continue largely unchanged today.

In **Chapter 3,** I will tell the story of the United States Information Agency (USIA), examining each decade in turn to demonstrate that the American institutional culture of propaganda established by 1953 did not significantly change over time. While some aspects of the work, such as the relative focus on long- versus short-term goals, attention paid to elite versus mass audiences, and the respect paid to propagandists by senior policymakers changed over time, at its root, the fundamentals remained the same. This did not change even in 1999, when USIA was absorbed into the Department of State.

In **Chapter 4**, I will explore the results of a survey on my fellow propagandists, in which I test the hypotheses offered in Chapter 2. To what extent, for example, do 21st century American propagandists continue to embrace the 1940s articulation of the "strategy of truth?" To what extent do they shy away from propaganda that aesthetically evokes the artistic norms of Communism or Nazism? How do they balance that which is effective versus what is ethical? How do they balance U.S. interests against the promotion of our underlying democratic values, when these come into conflict? What propaganda techniques and methods do they believe to be effective, regardless of what social science has to say on the subject? And to what extent do they continue to accept the post-war, internationalist consensus that the United States *must* remain a key player in the world, and that our intervention leads to results that are, on balance, good?

In the **final chapter**, I will explore how the 21st century information environment has almost entirely transformed when compared to the world in which these norms were born. There are a number of problems that these changes pose to the effectiveness of our propaganda; we may, in fact, be using that chainsaw long after the point when a 3D laser cutter is actually required. In this concluding chapter, I will examine the methods used by modern American propagandists and the assumptions they are built upon, and will question whether some of those assumptions or practices need to be amended or abandoned – or alternatively, whether they continue to stand the test of time.

The institutional culture of U.S. propaganda, I argue, got stuck in the early Cold War period, and became dislodged from changes occurring in America's psyche, its understanding of itself, and of its proper place in the world. It continues to represent an idealistic 1950s vision of America that no longer truly exists (if it ever existed at all) beyond which the United States has already evolved new and more complicated understandings of our moral identity. Our

propagandists lightly acknowledge these changes in a variety of ways, but do not fundamentally challenge the assumptions of the positive impact of American moral hegemony on the world. Are U.S. government propagandists then somehow committed, in their "strategy of truth," only to the small and convenient truths, while ignoring larger truths about our nation, government, and society? If so, is this ethical? If American propaganda never fully wrestled with the moral ambiguity and uncertainty that Americans have often grappled with about our place in the world from the 1960s onward, can that propaganda genuinely and ethically represent *America?* Chapter 5 will attempt to answer these questions, and provide some suggestions for how modern propaganda may need to adapt to the modern information space.

For example, propagandists in the 1940s and 1950s made a conscious and deliberate choice to focus on rational rather than emotional appeals to foreign audiences. In part, this was driven by a reaction to fascist and Communist propaganda, which combined emotional appeals with false narratives to advance their interests. In part, it was also an attempt to portray propaganda as "serious" to a foreign policy establishment which largely rejected emotional reasoning as inappropriate. However, given what neuroscientists and psychologists now understand about the effectiveness of various persuasion methods, it may now be time to reexamine this unstated prohibition against emotion-forward government propaganda.

Having covered what will be outlined in the following chapters, there are a number of important questions that this thesis will not address, which should be made explicit. This thesis is not:

(1) an examination of the history or ethics of covert propaganda or, by extension, an argument about the ethical norms of U.S. government propaganda *as a whole*. Rather, I narrowly focus on foreign-directed, overt propaganda;

(2) an examination of the *effectiveness* of any particular method of propaganda, so much as a study of the *types* and *methods* of propaganda that U.S. government overt propagandists *believe* to be both ethical and effective. The effectiveness of any particular propaganda campaign or practice is, first, dependent entirely on context, and second, extremely difficult to measure;

(3) an examination of propaganda whose target audiences were American citizens and/or soldiers, either by the U.S. government or by foreign powers. As alluded to earlier, American government propaganda against its own citizens is actually prohibited by the Smith-Mundt Act (1948), while the nature of foreign government propaganda is a fascinating, but entirely separate area of inquiry;

(4) an examination of propaganda, covert or overt, directed at foreign *soldiers,* rather than at foreign *civilians*. Though our civilian-directed propaganda institutions were born of war, early propagandists successfully argued to make those institutions permanent by noting the importance of winning the hearts and minds of civilian audiences in peacetime, hoping to avoid future wars;

(5) an examination of propaganda by states other than the United States, though at times I will briefly discuss them and their propaganda for comparative purposes;

(6) an examination of propaganda by non-democracies, as I am primarily interested in exploring the contours of *ethical* propaganda, while non-democratic states have few incentives to behave ethically when propagandizing their or other citizens;

(7) an examination of institutional censorship, although censorship may be considered the converse of propaganda, given that what we *refuse to allow to be said* can be just as important to understanding our message as what we *insist on saying*.

Beyond these questions unaddressed, I believe it is also important to articulate one key assumption I am making about the validity of my sources. Namely, that over the decades, the marching orders and internal memoranda found in official U.S. government archives, along with the speeches, memoirs, and Congressional testimony by key U.S. propagandists, accurately reflects the thoughts and values of those writing them. Essentially, I am forced to assume that these individuals were honest brokers, not countermanding documents written to please the written record with later verbal orders that violated their spirit. To some extent, the writings of those who have already left government help effectively make this case: at a certain point, there would be no significant reason to dissemble, other than to maintain one's virtuous appearance. But more importantly, here I can invoke my own experience as a twenty-first century government propagandist. My fellow co-workers, I have found, are honest and earnest. They take extremely seriously the law, executive orders, and internal policy memoranda, and make good faith efforts to hew not only to their letter but their spirit. In fourteen years of service, I have never once been asked to lie for my country, and am convinced that my colleagues would uniformly view such a request as beyond the pale. I have faith then, but no objectively provable evidence, that my propaganda forebears were similarly motivated, and am convinced as such by the memoirs of those who continued to champion the "strategy of truth" longer after their government service had ended.

It is my hope that my fellow propagandists – whom I consider to be highly ethical, idealistic, and highly competent professionals, will benefit from this examination of the history of the cultural blinders we all wear. If I did not fundamentally believe in the positive transformative

potential of the United States government to incrementally remake the world, reduce suffering, and create peace – despite significant evidence to the contrary – I would not continue in this line of work. It is my belief that by making our propaganda more effective – while continuing to center it in a clear ethical framework appropriate to the 21st century – that we can continue to make the world "better," one day at a time.

1   A Historiography of (Ethical) Propaganda

1.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the origins and historical uses of the word propaganda*, as well as how 20ᵗʰ century scholars understood the term. Those uninterested in this particular story need only understand the definition I am using in this paper: the selective and intentional use of information via mass media by a politically, socially, or economically powerful institution to attempt to persuade a specific audience to believe or do something in particular.*

Propaganda, for English speakers at least, is a dirty word, but it hasn't always been this way. From its origins in the early 17ᵗʰ century, in fact, it maintained a neutral connotation, at first closely associated with religious proselytizing. The term only gained a uniformly negative valence at the close of the First World War, when the American public began to suspect that government propagandists had manipulated them with overly emotional and sometimes false information, to lure them into a war they now began to regret.

Despite the commonly held negative perception, I use the term deliberately to describe the activities of the Department of State's Bureau of Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy, which manages outreach to, and persuasion of, mass audiences in 181 countries around the world. This requires some explanation, as many of my public affairs colleagues within the Department of State would likely flinch as such a characterization, perhaps unaware of the fact that their forebears openly and consciously described themselves as propagandists, including in on the record, Congressional testimony.

In this chapter, I will explore the history of the term propaganda and how it has been understood over time by scholars, rather than the general public *or even by U.S. government propagandists*, who have typically worked at a remove from theory. Second, I will explore the question of whether propaganda can ever be *ethical*, and if so, what the characteristics of such propaganda might be. My answer, in short, is an unqualified yes, which hopefully brings some comfort to my fellow propagandists, whom I see as deeply committed to clear, but often unspoken, ethical professional standards. Finally, I will compare various propaganda scholars' definitions of the both propaganda and *ethical* propaganda, and propose my own definition for use within the scope of this paper.

1.2   Early Uses and Understandings of the Term

Almost every historian of propaganda begins with the same origin story.[1] In 1622, Pope Gregory XV issued a papal bull[2] called the *Inscrutabili Divinae,* which established the "Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide," or, in English, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Its mission was to win back those lapsed Catholics who had converted to Protestantism during the Reformation.[3] Latin language enthusiasts will note that in its original usage, these forms of *propaganda* had largely agricultural meanings, underscoring the later connotation of planting, cultivating, and propagating ideas and metaphors.[4] Colloquially, the Catholic group soon became

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[1] Use of the term *propaganda* actually goes back further. Propaganda scholar Nicholas Cull notes that "Ignatius Loyala reintroduce[d] the term in 1538 or so in his formula for the Jesuit Order," and that it was further used 'in the later 1500s within the Vatican." Nicholas Cull in personal email with the author, May 2022.

[2] A papal bull is a type of decree issued by a Catholic pope, named after the lead seal used to authenticate it. The seal is called a *bulla* in Latin.

[3] Guilday, Peter, "The Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide," *Catholic Historical Review* 6, no. 4 (Jan 1921): 480.

[4] Cunningham, Stanley, *The Idea of Propaganda: A Reconstruction*, (Westport. Praeger Publishers, 2002): 16.

known as "the propaganda," and for the next two hundred years the term was largely synonymous with evangelical persuasion.[5]

By the middle of the 19th century, however, the term had started to expand in meanings, not all of them positive. The 1842 edition of *Brande's Dictionary of Science*, for example, defined propaganda as "a term of reproach to secret associations for the spread of opinions and principles which are viewed by most governments with horror and aversion."[6] That is to say, by this period it was already being used as a synonym for what we think of as disinformation, though not yet associated with *government* activity.

From 1850-1900, the *New York Times* published the term "propaganda" over 1,500 times, though the vast majority of those instances referred specifically to religious proselytizing, typically Catholic, though occasionally Mormon or Muslim. Other articles used it in other senses, concordant with what modern readers would understand as "lobbying" or "policy advocacy," but treated it as a neutral descriptive term.[7] From 1900-1910, however, the *New York Times*' use of the term began to shift, often associating the term with violent activities and political movements, though still maintaining its earlier uses as religious propaganda and political advocacy.[8]

In late December, 1919, however, *propaganda* came to see a much closer association to Communism, with dozens of *New York Times* articles connecting the two, likely a result of Lenin's

[5] Reeves, Nicholas, *The Power of Film Propaganda: Myth or Reality?*, (London. Cassell, 1999): 11-12.
[6] Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda*, 11-12.
[7] Exemplar *New York Times* articles include "A Propaganda for Monometallism," May 31, 1895; "The Teetotal Propaganda," May 17, 1896; "The Islamic Propaganda," May 28, 1893; "Carlist Propaganda in France," September 10, 1898; "The Cremation Propaganda," April 21, 1874; "Catholic Propaganda in the East," February 28, 1895; and "Young Armenians Enrolling in a Revolutionary Propaganda," October 23, 1895.
[8] Exemplar *New York Times* articles include "The Anarchist Propaganda," August 5, 1900; "The Socialist Propaganda," April 8, 1907; "Mutinous Propaganda in the Austrian Army," March 28, 1903; and "Propaganda by Explosion," May 24, 1905.

use of the terms *agitprop* and *propaganda* as central to his revolutionary project.[9] In the early 1920s, however, despite a still strong semantic relationship in *Times* articles between Communism and propaganda, its use began to expand in the wake of World War I. *Times* authors now clearly understood propaganda to have a link to other terms like *insidious*, *dangerous*, *credulity*, *half-truths*, *forged*, *slandered,* and *malice*, as well as to "provoking racial passions," and "poison[ing] the sources of intelligence.[10] By 1923, however, the term had already been so overused by as a term of derision by various opposing camps that one *Times* writer complained that "the distinction between propaganda and information is logically almost impossible to draw."[11]

Meanwhile, *Times* readers, through their experience with the World War I-era Committee on Public Information (a U.S. propaganda agency), were now hyper-aware of foreign government attempts to persuade them, with various *Times* articles charting League of Nations, Polish, German, French, and Russian government attempts to sway American public opinion.[12] This was reflected in dramatically increased coverage of the term beginning in the run up to World War I. The attention paid continued to rise in use of the term *propaganda* through the end of World War II, immediately after which the *New York Times'* use of the term plunged dramatically, bottoming out in the 1970s-1990s before a brief uptick during the Second Gulf War.

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[9] Exemplar *New York Times* articles using the term *propaganda* include "Lenin Selling Jewels for Red Propaganda," December 24, 1919; "Martens Linked With Reds' Plot," December 28, 1919; "Reds Seek War With America," December 30, 1919; "American Refugee Leads Mexico Reds," December 26, 1919; "Wide Plot of Reds to Spread Chaos in This Country," December 26, 1919; and "German Confesses Plotting in Mexico," December 27, 1919.

[10] "Propaganda in Japan," *The New York Times*, November 27, 1921, 47.

[11] "Praiseworthy Propaganda*, The New York Times*, April 23, 1923, 14.

[12] "Clumsy Propaganda," *The New York Times*, March 26, 1921, 11; "No Official Propaganda," *The New York Times*, March 1, 1923, 14; "Propaganda and Politics," October 16, 1921, 26; "Propaganda by Teaching," January 9, 1921, 26.

Figure 1-1: *New York Times* Mentions of Keyword Terms, 1851-Present
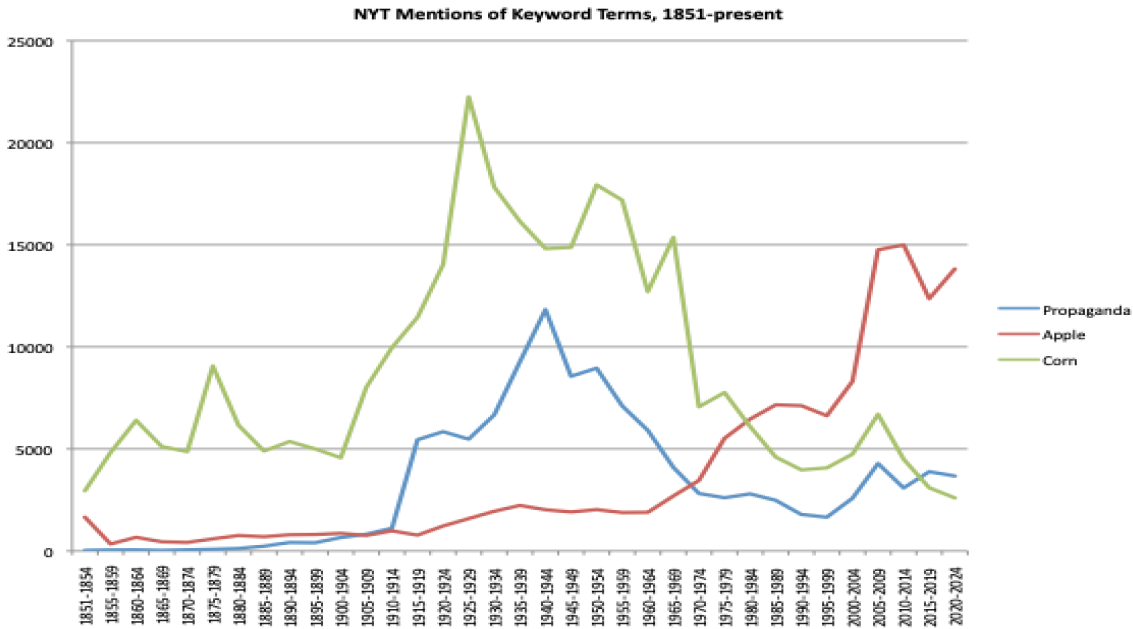
Note: A comparison of the frequency of the terms propaganda, apple, *and* corn *over time within the* New York Times. *Dummy terms* apple *and* corn *were used to differentiate between a* general *increase in number of stories or words printed, versus actual frequency of use. Though both* propaganda *and* corn *saw relative spikes at similar times,* apple *saw no such increase, implying that greater coverage of these terms was not simply a matter of an increase in news stories overall.*

By the end of World War I, the term propaganda had acquired a negative sheen, as Americans began to re-examine the information and arguments that had been used by the government propaganda bureau, the Committee on Public Information (CPI), to persuade them to back U.S. entry into the war.[13] This cynical valence continues to last to the present day, with most native speakers of English considering the term to be equivalent to terms like *disinformation*, *lying*, or *manipulation*.

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[13] Bernays, Edward, *Propaganda,* (New York. Liverlight Publishing Corporation, 1928): 21. For a thorough discussion of the CPI, please see thesis Chapter 2.

Figure 1-2: Synonyms and Related Words for Propaganda

1.3   Early Propaganda Studies and Scholars

Several of the consulting propagandists in the CPI went on to relative success in advertising, public relations, or social science. Many of them, however, deeply disagreed with each other on the lessons learned from the experience, the nature and definition of propaganda, the ability of propagandists to meaningfully persuade publics, the dangers that propaganda posed to democracy, the ethics of employing propaganda, and its necessity to maintaining public order. They clashed on how to conceive of propaganda, with differing focuses on its content, impact, intent, and techniques as central to propaganda's definition. These academic arguments would not greatly impact the *public perception* of the word propaganda, although they would open up new avenues of research, and expose the fundamental difficulties in providing an objective definition

of the term that would satisfy all parties in all contexts. Next, I will explore some of those key voices in the historical, academic debate.

Edward Bernays

Edward Bernays was one of several key figures in the field of propaganda in the 1920s and 1930s, and is often credited with inventing the field of public relations. Though some of his claims were overblown, he was a revolutionary thinker, many of whose ideas have survived to the present day. He outlined what is today called the "magic bullet" theory of propaganda in his seminal 1928 work *Propaganda*, arguing that propagandists were an "invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country," which "pull the wires which control the public mind, … harness old social forces, and contrive new ways to bind and guide the world."[14] Importantly, however, he caveated this with an optimistic belief that the public, broadly speaking, could easily see through blatant lies, and that propaganda could not make people want things that were manifestly not in their interest.[15]

Bernays did not see propaganda as a negative, so much as *inevitable*, going so far as to call it "an important element in democratic society" because it reduced the confusion associated with living in an increasingly complex and technological world down to a few realistic and meaningful choices.[16] As a result, he saw propaganda not only as a *right*, but an actual *responsibility* for those interested in maintaining the democratic project. Propaganda, he believed, was the only means of focusing the attention of the public on the specific information required to make meaningful electoral choices.[17] Previewing a larger political conflict which would likely

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[14] Bernays, *Propaganda,* 9.
[15] Bernays, *Propaganda*, 39-41, 108.
[16] Bernays, *Propaganda*, 9.
[17] Bernays, *Propaganda*, 22, 26-27.

never be truly resolved, Bernays also argued that propaganda should not simply be limited to the exigencies of wartime, but should rather be a permanent peacetime endeavor.[18]

Like most later propaganda theorists, he agreed that propaganda was born of, necessitated and made possible by the birth of a mass communications society.[19] Mass communications, he argued, connected people to ideas and ideologies they were not prepared to intellectually manage given their "local and sectional limitations." Those same mass communications technologies simultaneously provided propagandists with the means to reach those individuals with a clarifying message.[20]

In this way, Bernays somewhat was somewhat prescient, foreseeing social scientist Leon Festinger's 1957 cognitive dissonance theory.[21] That theory argues that when individuals are confronted with multiple conflicting beliefs, an inner drive for ideological harmony causes us to look for solutions that can reduce or eliminate that dissonance. Propaganda, Bernays argued, could provide precisely those solutions. Accordingly, he was also one of the first propaganda scholars to clearly connect social science research directly to the endeavor. That said, with social science still in its infancy, many of Bernays' beliefs were based on gut feelings rather than hard data. Though seemingly obvious as propaganda tools today, Bernays was an early innovator of techniques like audience analysis, the study and use of implicit associations when making word choices, and the necessity of taking the message to wherever the people happened to be.[22]

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[18] Bernays, *Propaganda*, 28.
[19] Cunningham, *The Idea of Propaganda*, 18-19.
[20] Bernays, *Propaganda*, 12-13
[21] Festinger, Leon, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, (Stanford. Stanford University Press, 1985).
[22] Bernays, *Propaganda* 39-41, 48, 50-51, 150.

Well aware of the negative connotations of the term at the time of publication, Bernays further argued, like a plurality of scholars after him, that propaganda itself was value-neutral. The ethicality of any particular propaganda, he wrote, "depend[ed] upon the merit of the cause urged, and the correctness of the information propaganda." In this Bernays established the ethical criteria of *reasonable ends* and *truth* as central to propaganda's evaluation, though this was essentially where his ethical analysis stopped.[23] Fortunately for other later scholars, there were still many important ethical questions left to explore.

Walter Lippmann

A contemporary of Bernays, Lippmann at first shared his elitist views toward society, arguing in his 1922 work *Public Opinion* that "the mass of absolutely illiterate, feeble–minded, grossly neurotic, undernourished and frustrated individuals is very considerable, much more considerable there is reason to think than we generally suppose."[24] Based on this presumption, he agreed that propaganda was necessary to the maintenance of a democratic society, channeling Hamilton and Madison's fears of mob rule overcoming democratic institutions.[25] This was not entirely due to an inherent intelligence or higher level of rationality among these elite propagandists – or what he termed a "relative faculty of discrimination – but also due to their privileged access to key context and information afforded them by their elite positions.[26] Thus, per Lippmann, the question of who should become a propagandist was essentially a sociological one.

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[23] Bernays, *Propaganda*, 20, 45.
[24] Lippmann, Walter, *Public Opinion*, (New York. Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1922): 75.
[25] Hamilton, Alexander *or* James Madison, "Federalist No. 55," *New York Packet* (Feb, 1788); accessed on May 16, 2022 at https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/text-51-60#s-lg-box-wrapper-25493431
[26] Lippmann, Walter, "The Phantom Public," in *Propaganda*, ed. Robert Jackall, (New York. New York University Press, 1995): 53.

His analysis, however, of whether propaganda could be successful rested more on the methods of individual psychology. In agreement with Bernays, Lippmann argued that a successful propagandist needed to know both their target audience as well as their capacity for understanding a given level of complexity.[27] But going beyond Bernays, Lippmann clearly articulated ideas later proven by research about the ways in which deeply-held ideas can be intertwined with our sense of identity, and thus highly resistant to challenge.[28]

Lippmann also further developed Bernays' ideas of the inevitability of propaganda in a highly technological society, writing that "because the human mind is unable to image the actual complexity of the world, we reduce it through simplification and representative symbols. This fact of the human mind is ultimately what makes propaganda possible, as it plays in the space between actual reality and perceived reality."[29] It is of note that by 1919, Lippmann had become significantly more skeptical of the dangers of propaganda to democracy.[30] Following Bernays and Lippmann, however, it would take another World War to inspire further scholarly work to significantly advance the field.

Harold Elsten

Intrigued by the question of whether propaganda could co-exist comfortably with democracy, during World War II scholars like Harold Elsten began exploring what that might look

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[27] Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 69.
[28] Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 95.
[29] Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 14.
[30] Sproule, J. Michael*, Propaganda and Democracy: The American Experience of Media and Mass Persuasion,* (Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1997): 19.

like, providing some of the first serious research into the ethics of propaganda.[31] Adding to Bernays' formulation of *reasonable ends* and *truth*, Elsten added that ethical, democratic propaganda needed to hew to several additional factors. First, it needed to respect the inherent and equal dignity of all people, avoiding arousing negative passions against any group. Second, it should focus on promoting equality of opportunity rather than equal outcomes. Third, it must not privilege any group of citizens over another, and fourth, it must not try to monopolize the communications space or censor alternative narratives. Unlike totalitarian propaganda, Elsten argued, democratic propaganda should try to meet the people on their own terms, rather than setting the terms. As to propaganda's sister, censorship, he believed that it was only justified when speech was being used to undermine or destroy democracy itself.

Leonard Doob

Other key scholars of the period, meanwhile, were busily focused on developing propaganda studies into a somewhat empirical science. They tested various aspects of message context and content to determine which combinations were the most persuasive. Eventually, these scholars, like Leonard Doob, would go on to found the academic field of Communications.

Doob, who worked with the U.S. propaganda organization the Office of War Information (OWI) during World War II, published his theories on propaganda in his seminal *Public Opinion and Propaganda* (1948). Focused on how to break down propaganda into manageable parts to be studied empirically, Doob proposed a six-aspect framework for studying communication: 1) who, 2) says what, 3) with what perceptual impact, 4) with what initial response, 5) leading to

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[31] Elsten, Harold, "Mass Communications and American Democracy," in *Print, Radio and Film in a Democracy: Ten Papers on the Administration of Mass Communications in the Public Interest*, ed. Douglas Waples, (Chicago. The University of Chicago Press, 1942), 3, 29.

what changes in the audience, 6) leading to which actions by the audience.[32] Oddly, he did not include the key question of *to whom*, which became central to his contemporary Harold Lasswell's research (see below).

Doob was also one of the first to attempt to seriously tease apart the distinction between *education* and *propaganda*, at least in a way that treated propaganda as a value-neutral term.[33] Responding to educator and psychologist Everett Martin, who argued that "education aims at independence of judgment [while] propaganda offers ready-made opinions for the unthinking herd," Doob saw the story as significantly more complex.[34] Instead, he argued that education and propaganda were intimately tangled, with propaganda determined *relativistically,* and primarily by the ends in mind: namely, "ends considered unscientific or of doubtful value in a society at a particular time."[35]

Foreshadowing a later significant thinker, Jacques Ellul, Doob was one of the first to argue that propaganda need not be an *intentional* activity, but that individuals could easily be unwitting propagandists. This contrasted with his contemporary Harold Lasswell, who disagreed with Doob's thesis that such propaganda "can be the consequence of social or economic events in which intentional propaganda has played little or no part," such as unintentionally sharing symbols favored by Communists when such symbols were not recognized by the sharer.[36]

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[32] Doob, Leonard, *Public Opinion and Propaganda* (Hamden. Archon Books, 1966): 258
[33] Smith, Ted, *Propaganda: A Pluralistic Perspective,* (New York. Praeger*,* 1989): 14; Sproule, *Propaganda and Democracy*, 49.
[34] Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda*, 242.
[35] Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda*, 240.
[36] Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda*, 249.

Carl Hovland

Hovland was a research psychologist recruited to develop techniques for attitude change and persuasion during World War II in the OWI. Notably, he was among the first to seriously challenge the prevailing view that propaganda could have sizeable persuasive effects. He went on to become one of the leading psychological researchers on the science of persuasion, discovering the "sleeper effect," for example, which showed that a particular propaganda intervention may have no immediate impact, but that effects might appear after some period of time. He is also credited with developing groupthink theory, as well as social judgment theory, which holds that your ability to be persuaded by a certain group depends on the extent to which you see yourself as belonging to that group.

One of his major wartime contributions was empirically debunking Bernays' "magic bullet" theory, by showing that even films developed specifically as pre-battle propaganda for U.S. soldiers had no impact on their willingness to fight. One of his major studies focused on studying the impacts of film propaganda on U.S. soldiers. Propaganda, he concluded, could effectively *inform*, but could not necessarily *persuade*. Instead, he argued, propaganda was most likely to be effective if it conformed to five separate factors: 1) it speaks to an individuals needs and wants *at the moment*; 2) it does not conflict with valued group norms; 3) it comes from a trusted source; 4) it packages the message in an form acceptable to the audience; and 5) it informs the audience how to act and how to overcome any possible obstacles to the desired action.[37] Hovland pushed

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[37] Hovland, Carl, Carl Iver, Arthur A Lumsdaine, and Fred D Sheffield, *Experiments on Mass Communication: Volume III*, (Princeton. Princeton University Press, 1949): 54; Qualter, Terence, *Opinion Control in the Democracies*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 80-81.

propaganda researchers to question the previous assumption that it was possible to study the mass audience as a whole, divorced from individual experiences, histories, and psychologies.

Harold Lasswell

Somewhat of a Renaissance man, Harold Lasswell bridged the gap between scientist and philosopher, considering both how to define propaganda in a way that allowed it to be empirically studied, but also questioning how to construct an ethical propaganda that made sense in a democracy. Credited with the first use of the term "democratic propaganda," Lasswell to some extent channeled Bernays in his belief that "Americans should stop worrying and learn to love mass persuasion as nothing more than a technique of modern governance that could serve a benevolent purpose."[38] Or, in his own words, "men are often poor judges of their own interests, flitting from one alternative to the next without solid reason, or clinging timorously to the fragments of some mossy rock of ages."[39] Deeply impacted by widespread public disappointment in the 1920s over the outcomes of post-war European democratization, Lasswell was convinced that democracy itself required ardent defenders.[40]

Lasswell, like Bernays, was also convinced that propaganda was inevitable. From his perspective, the primary ethical question for propagandists was whether to do their work overtly or covertly, but he believed that this was also a moot point. When practicing genuinely democratic propaganda, he wrote, "there is nothing to be gained by concealment, and there is a certain loss of prestige for all that is said, when secrecy is attempted."[41] He also argued that propagandists should

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[38] Bennett, Todd, *One World, Big Screen: Hollywood, the Allies, and World War II*, (Chapel Hill. The University of North Carolina Press, 2012): 29-30.

[39] Lasswell, Harold, "Propaganda," in *Propaganda*, ed. Robert Jackall, (New York. New York University Press, 1995): 24.

[40] Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War,* (New York. Garland Publishing, Inc, 1972): 3-5.

[41] Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, 15.

drive public policy, rather than responding to it.[42] This was, in fact, a major sticking point that later led to significant disruption in the OWI and the firing of many of its senior leaders.[43]

On the social science side, Lasswell came up with one of the most widely accepted 20th century definitions of communication, which shared many features with the definition provided by Doob: *who* says *what* to *whom*, with *what affect,* and later adding *in which channel*.[44] Unlike Doob, however, he believed that propaganda by definitional had to be conscious and intentional, with clear objectives in mind, even if those objectives were not met.[45] Propaganda, Lasswell wrote, was "the manipulation of symbols as a means of influencing attitudes on controversial matters."[46]

With respect to ethics, he agreed with his contemporaries that "propaganda as a mere tool is no more moral or immoral than a pump handle."[47] Unlike his contemporaries, though, he saw no particular ethical issues with misinformation as propaganda; rather, he simply dismissed lies as *ineffective*.[48] Finally, he previewed significant later scholarly debates by arguing, as propaganda theorist Jacques Ellul did twenty years later, that propaganda's aims are always about *behavioral* change, rather than simply about changing ideas or attitudes.[49]

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[42] Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, 27.

[43] This story is discussed in depth in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Lasswell *also* argued that propaganda should embrace "clarity and vividness," which was central to another fight within OWI between Gardner Cowles and Archibald MacLeish. See Chapter 2.

[44] Cunningham, *The Idea of Propaganda*, 82. Lasswell, Harold, "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society," in *Reader in Public Opinion and Communication*, ed. Bernard Berelson and Morris Janowitz, (New York. The Free Press, 1967): 178.

[45] Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda*, 249. Lasswell, Harold, "Propaganda," in *Propaganda*, ed. Robert Jackall, 18.

[46] Lasswell, "Communications Research and Politics," in *Print, Radio and Film in a Democracy,* 106

[47] Lasswell, "Propaganda," in *Propaganda*, ed. Robert Jackall, 18.

[48] Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, 206.

[49] Lasswell, "Propaganda," in *Propaganda*, ed. Robert Jackall, 25.

1.4   Later Social Science Perspectives

Perhaps sensing the negative perception of the term *propaganda* during the early Cold War period, few social science researchers of the era focused explicitly on what made propaganda effective. In fact, despite an overall increase in academic publishing, studies with the term *propaganda* in their title actually decreased in the immediate post war period (See Figure 3). Instead, within the burgeoning academic field of Communications, many experiments measured either how to successfully persuade individuals on a one-to-one basis, *or* looked at the overall impact of mass communications on society, without a particular focus on *persuasion*.

Figure 1-3: Book and Scholarly Article Mentions of Keyword Terms, 1850-Present
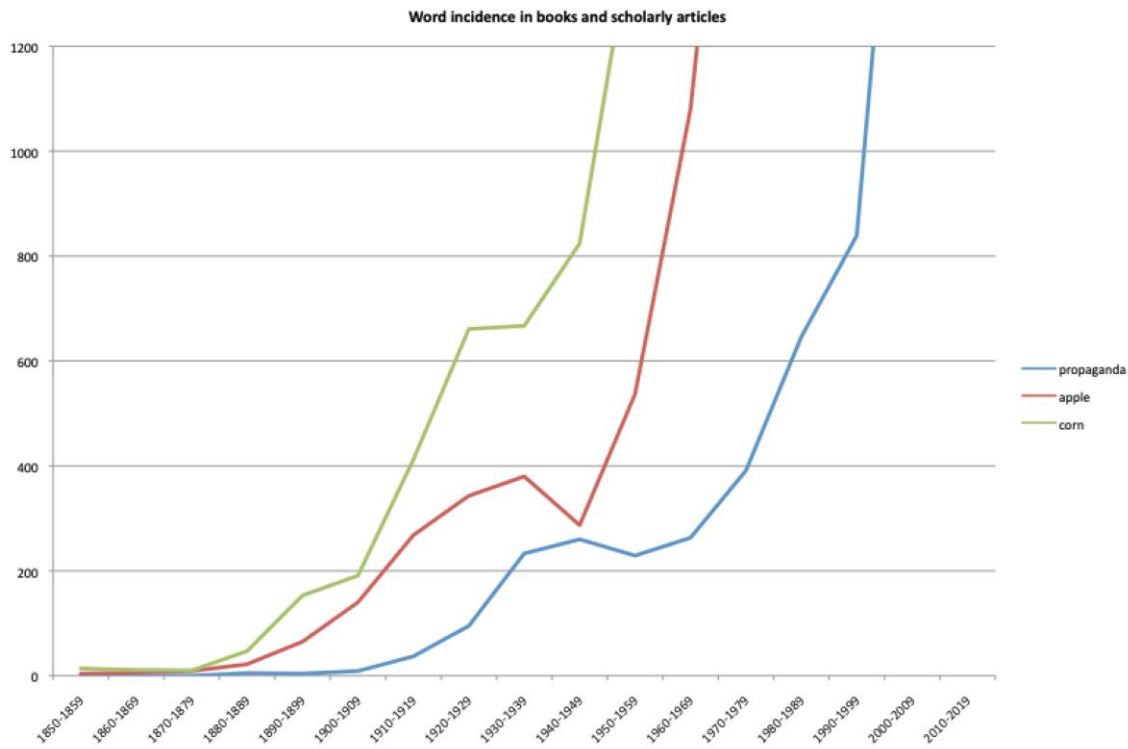
Source: Data retrieved from Google Scholar for books and scholarly articles including propaganda, apple, or corn *in their title. Scale is set to show the post-war drop in publishing on propaganda, as fluctuations in growth are later overshadowed by the overall dramatic growth in publishing on all topics.*

Joseph Klapper

One researcher to buck this trend was Joseph Klapper, whose 1960 work *The Effects of Mass Communication* centered the question of how to persuade mass audiences through mass communications technologies. Building on Hovland, Klapper's work primarily examined laboratory studies, but used these results to attempt to extrapolate a theory of how and under what conditions mass media could be used for effective propaganda.

Klapper's research findings buttressed Hovland's ideas that "the effects of mass communications are likely to differ, depending on whether the communication is or is not in accord with the norms of the groups to which the audience belongs." It also expanded on Hovland's work debunking "magic bullet" theory, arguing that mass communication on its own was not sufficient to lead to persuasion, but rather depended on a network of "mediating factors and influences."[50] Klapper's work highlighted the fact that "persuasive mass communication functions far more frequently as an agent of reinforcement than an agent of change," with actual opinion *changes* being rare.[51] According to Klapper, then, propagandists should primarily spend their time preaching to the choir, rather than trying to win new converts.[52]

Klapper's work did, however, highlight a new and previously understudied audience for propagandists: youth. His research revealed that it was significantly easier to create *new* attitudes than it was to change existing ones. He was also the first to establish that the most effective form of argumentation, at least according to experimental research, was to present both sides of an argument *while also* attacking the contrary viewpoint. Other important findings included the importance of making conclusions explicit rather than implicit, the effectiveness of having audiences make a *public* commitment to a desired behavior, framing desired behaviors as ways of meeting an audience's existing perceived needs, and making use of the bandwagon effect, the idea that "everybody else is doing it."[53] In short, Klapper revealed that there was no meaningful answer

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[50] Klapper, Joseph, *The Effects of Mass Communication*, (Glencoe. The Free Press, 1960) 6-8.
[51] Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Communication*, 15.
[52] Lenin recognized, at least, the need for entirely different strategies for the converts and the crowd, reserving *propaganda* for the converted, and using *agitprop* for the crowd.   It is unclear the extent to which Lenin's contemporaries were able to win new converts using *agitprop*, a significantly more challenging endeavor.
[53] Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Communication*, 45.

to the question of whether a certain type of propaganda was "effective" – it depended entirely upon the context, audience and methods.[54]

1.5   Ellul: A Conundrum Ahead of His Time

French philosopher, sociologist, and Christian anarchist Jacques Ellul shook the foundations of propaganda studies in 1962 with his book *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. Very few people seemed to notice, however, until the 1970s and particularly the 1980s, when his radical challenge to orthodox thinking about propaganda finally began to be understood. Rather than simply analyzing what was commonly understood to *be* propaganda, Ellul sought to articulate an actual *theory* of propaganda.

Prior to Ellul, propaganda had been framed as something that powerful men (this was, after all, the 1960s) did to less powerful audiences. Orthodox debates included whether this was necessarily conscious and intentional, or also possibly unintentional; whether to focus on techniques, content, or outcomes; and how, when and why propaganda was effective. Ellul rejected this entire framework, along with the idea that propaganda could be broken down into constituent parts and studied under laboratory conditions.[55]   Instead, he proposed that propaganda was a sociological phenomenon – as opposed to an individual or small group act.[56]

There were, however, aspects of previous scholarship that he embraced, such as the inevitability of propaganda in the context of mass communications, the idea that such propaganda was substantively different than the forms of persuasion present in the pre-industrial era, and the idea that study in the modern fields of psychology and sociology were required to properly

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[54] Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Communication*, 2.
[55] Ellul, Jacques, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, (New York. Vintage Books, 1973): 19-20.
[56] Ellul, *Propaganda*, *xvii*, 7.

understand it.[57] Ellul also rejected the World War I-era popular (but not scholarly) consensus that

propaganda could make individuals do things against their own interest, and instead argued that

propaganda was a joint, consensual – if often unconscious – construction requiring the efforts of

both the propagandist and the propagandee.[58] He also argued that while propaganda could not be

broken down into parts, it was possible to separately analyze various sub-species of propaganda,

for example differentiating totalitarian from democratic propaganda.[59]

Ellul's analysis had some serious shortcomings, however. He often defined the

phenomenon as if it only included *successful* attempts at persuasion, and his various definitions of

the term *sociological propaganda*, or his synonym *pre-propaganda*, often seem a better match to

terms like *socialization*, *education*, *acculturation* or *inculcation*.[60] He also, confusingly, describes

mass audiences at times as passive instruments, and at other times as active agents in their own

propaganda processes, without fully reckoning with this contradiction.[61] Last, Ellul presumes the

existence of an authentic, pre-existing self, constituted of a network of ingrained and innate beliefs

and preferences which were in no way shaped by the society that individual grew up in: a self that

somehow exists outside of society, and whose purity can only be corrupted by it.[62]

Essentially, Ellul proposed a model in which psychological processes were fused into a

larger sociological context to try to explain a broad phenomenon of persuasive activities and their

outcomes. His work was a radical rethinking of the concept of propaganda, and of the appropriate

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[57] Ellul, *Propaganda*, *xv-xvi,* 15, 19-20, 63, 93, 110, 114, 125.
[58] Ellul, *Propaganda*, 27, 38, 62-64, 79, 114, 118, 138.
[59] Ellul, *Propaganda*, 12, 22, 32, 61, 133, 234-243.
[60] Ellul, *Propaganda*, 11, 19-20, 62-66, 75, 241.
[61] Ellul, *Propaganda*, 61, 75, 80, 118.
[62] Ellul, *Propaganda*, 169-173.

way for scholars to engage the topic.[63] Ellul's work would influence scholars in the decades to come, though other than Noam Chomsky, few significant propaganda theorists would *fully* embrace Ellul's vision until the 21st century.

Figure 1-4: Google Scholar Citations of Jacques Ellul: 1962-Present
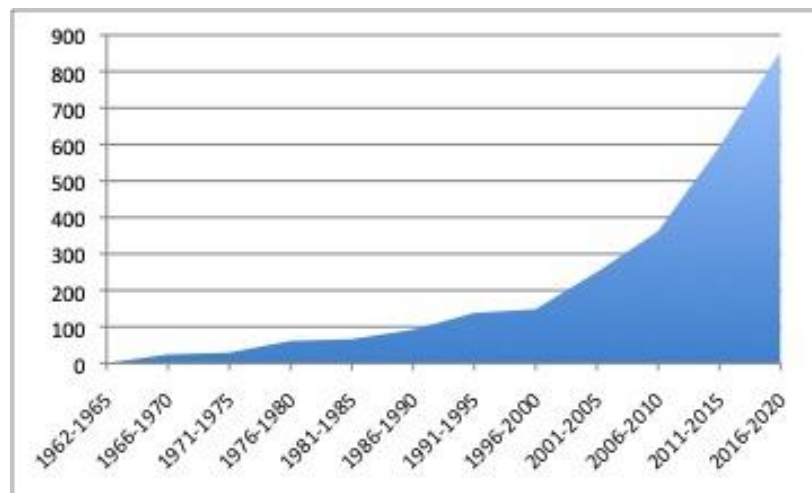
1.6   The 1980s: A New Academic Interest in Propaganda

After propaganda was largely ignored by the academic community from the 1950s to the 1970s, academics such as political scientist Terence Qualter, the communications scholars Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, and sociologists David Altheide and John Johnson relaunched the field's inquiries into propaganda with their respective works *Opinion Control in the Democracies* (1985), *Propaganda and Persuasion* (1986), and *Bureaucratic Propaganda (*1980).   Qualter provided an exposition on the history of thought regarding the practicality of mass democracy over

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[63] Though uncited in Ellul's bibliography, his approach parallels the groundbreaking work of political scientist David Easton, often credited as the first to apply systems theory to the realm of political science, in his 1953 work *The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science*. Ellul stated in *Jacques Ellul on Politics, Technology, and Christianity* (2005) that he did not speak English, and was therefore likely unfamiliar with Easton's work, which appears not to have been translated into French up to the present day.

elite-led democracy, and tried to provide definitions for the terms *fact, lie* and *opinion*, which had previously been treated as obvious by propaganda scholars.[64]

Picking up where Lippmann and Hovland left off, he argued that focusing on persuasive *techniques* was irrelevant unless combined with an understanding of the individual context and psychology of the person to be propagandized.[65] Qualter rejected magic bullet theory, embraced an understanding of cognitive dissonance as essential to propaganda, and, like Lasswell, centered the idea of *intent* within his definition of propaganda.[66] Reviewing the works of other scholars including Ellul, Altheide and Johnson (see below), Qualter further fleshed out the reasons why he, like Bernays, Lasswell, and Ellul, believed propaganda was both *inevitable* and *essential* to a democracy.[67] His largest contribution, however, was reframing attention away from active propaganda towards subtle forms of censorship, arguing that "withholding information [is more influential than propaganda at] provok[ing] change in established, socially supportive attitudes," and that "the media do not apparently have much effect in telling us what to think, but they are astonishingly effective in limiting the things we shall think about." In this, he and Ellul helped pave the way for later works by scholars like Noam Chomsky, who argued that media inattention to certain stories was much more damaging to democracy than active propaganda measures.

Altheide and Johnson, meanwhile, provided the world with one of the first genuinely new ideas about propaganda in two decades. Namely, that in addition to the "traditional" form of propaganda in which elite actors try to persuade mass audiences, that *institutions* also engaged in a parallel and entirely separate form of propaganda, which they called "bureaucratic

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[64] Qualter, Terence, *Opinion Control in the Democracies*, (New York. St. Martin's Press, 1985): 11, 20, 34, 115.
[65] Qualter, *Opinion Control*, 46-47.
[66] Qualter, *Opinion Control*, 75, 80-81, 120.
[67] Qualter, *Opinion Control,* 124-5, 139-140, 231-5,

propaganda."[68] The entire purpose of that propaganda was existential in nature: to convince those making funding decisions, directly or indirectly, to continue to finance the institution's operations. Altheide and Johnson provided important context for Ellul's theory of *sociological propaganda*, by elucidating a plausible mechanism by which this informational propaganda might actually be transferred through institutions based on their innate desire for survival. Altheide and Johnson also foreshadowed later arguments from Chomsky about the means, mechanisms, and reasons for which the mass media could act propagandistically.[69] Finally, Jowett and O'Donnell's *Propaganda and Persuasion* tried to articulate the essential difference between those two terms. They find their answer not in content, techniques, or outcome, but rather in *purpose*. Propaganda, they argued, "is essentially self-serving," while persuasion is ostensibly motivated by, and leads to benefits for, both the persuader and the persuaded.[70]

Later, other authors – particularly in the field of communications, which had largely ignored propaganda studies – also began to engage these questions. Communications scholars Michael Sproule published *Propaganda and Democracy: The American Experience of Media and Mass Persuasion* in 1997, followed by his colleague Philip Taylor's *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda* in 2003. Sproule's book provided an excellent summary of the field of propaganda studies through the 20th century, and divided early propaganda into ideologically-motivated categories, including humanism, professionalism, scientism, and polemical.[71] Taylor

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[68] The annual, Congressionally-mandated reports of the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy are an excellent case in point. From 1948 until the early 1970s, reports focused on assessing areas for improvement among American propaganda institutions, and averaged 10-15 pages. By the late 1970s, these reports took on the role of Congressional *advocacy* for additional funding, and quickly ballooned to over 200 pages.
[69] Altheide, David and John Johnson, *Bureaucratic Propaganda* (Boston, Allyn & Bacon, 1980), *xii, xiii*, 3, 5, 11-17, 22, 29, 40-42, 46, 57, 68, 229.
[70] Cunningham, 85.
[71] Sproule, J. Michael, "Social Responses to Twentieth-Century Propaganda," in *Propaganda: A Pluralistic Perspective,* ed. Ted Smith (New York. Praeger, 1989): 10.

retold much of that same historical narrative, while embracing Qualter's formulation of *intent* and *benefit to the propagandist* as central to propaganda's definition. He also further articulated the idea of "democratic propaganda," advancing Lasswell and Elsten's work, and like most 20th century scholars, argued that propaganda itself was value-neutral.[72]

1.7   Chomsky: Another Disrupter

Almost thirty years after Ellul's seminal work, linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky published yet another genuinely disruptive work, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, with his co-author Edward Herman in 1988.[73] Similar to Ellul, Chomsky was frustrated that his academic colleagues seemed to be missing the propaganda forest for the trees. Though scholars such as Jowett, O'Donnell, Qualter, Altheide and Johnson had incorporated some aspects of Ellul's work into their studies, their analysis and framing still essentially treated propaganda as an intentional activity comprised of discrete units of propaganda, with a clear division between propagandist and propagandee.

Chomsky, like Ellul, rejected this notion, arguing that the only appropriate frame of reference to study propaganda was a whole-of-society perspective. Here, from 30,000 feet, Chomsky told the story of how mass media institutions had been co-opted, he argued, to propagandistically serve elite interests, almost incidental to the views, beliefs, or intent of any individual actor within the system.[74] Though Chomsky and Herman provide no bibliography, their work also appears to build not only on Ellul but also upon Altheide and Johnson's 1980 concept

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[72] Taylor, Philip, *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda* (Manchester. Manchester University Press, 2003): 3, 6, 184.

[73] Chomsky's abridged 1991 follow up, *Media Control*, is so excruciatingly terrible that it should be avoided at all costs.

[74] Chomsky, Noam and Edward Herman, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of Mass Media*, (New York. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1988): *xiv,* 1, 22, 31, 298.

of propaganda as an *emergent property* of a larger capitalist system, rather than orthodox ideas of propaganda as a set of isolable, individual decisions.[75]

The weaknesses of other of Chomsky and Herman's arguments comes into stark relief for two reasons, however. First, though both are motivated by a passionate belief that anarcho-syndicalism, rather than capitalism, should be the organizing principle behind human society, they provide no means, mechanisms, or advice on how to move away from the problems they identify.[76] Second, many of their claims have not survived first contact with the 21st century.[77] Chomsky and Herman argued that oligarchic control of the media was the *source* of problematic propaganda and the reason that mass audiences were consistently duped as to the truth; yet in a social media world in which anyone with a modicum of flair can attract millions of viewers to her point of view, social fractures, wage disparities, disillusion with democracy, and war itself have expanded, rather than contracted as Chomsky's analysis would have predicted.

1.8 The Question of Ethics and Morality in Propaganda

Well over a dozen scholars have moved beyond attempting to define propaganda itself, to an inquiry into when, whether, and under what circumstances certain forms of propaganda might be ethical. These individuals came overwhelmingly from the field of communications, though also include experts in philosophy, sociology, anthropology, political science, and rhetoric. The overwhelming majority of these studies did not begin until the 1990s, with a new golden age of ethical research into propaganda occurring in the early 2000s. By the 2010s, deep dives into the ethics of persuasive communication were becoming a standard part of that field's textbooks.

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[75] Altheide and Johnson, *Bureaucratic Propaganda*, 3, 11, 17.
[76] Chomsky and Herman, *Manufacturing Consent*, 4, 12, 14, 19, 26.
[77] Chomsky and Herman, *Manufacturing Consent*, *xiv*, 4, 172.

Before I begin describing the ethical controversies in propaganda, however, I want to make clear why I refer exclusively to *ethical*, rather than *moral* issues. Many moral philosophers, political scientists and historians conflate the terms ethics and morals when discussing the ethics of international relations, but I am intentionally keeping the two separate. Though in a given system, what is perceived to be *ethical* and what is perceived to be *moral* often almost entirely overlap, the two concepts are distinct.

Ethics, in the sense that I am using it, refers to a system of rules or procedures that attempt to lead to the highest overall utility within a system, or the highest overall justice, or level of equality or fairness. Sometimes, what is *ethical* may conflict with what is *moral*. King Solomon's proposal to divide a child in two, for example, may have been ethical in that it leads to equal outcomes for both aggrieved parties, but could hardly be considered *moral.*

A less extreme example might be a lawyer defending, and winning the case against a murderer she knows to be guilty. While ethically bound to provide the best possible defense for her client, it is unlikely that the family of the victim would consider the act *moral*. It's in this same sense that I seek to articulate an *ethical code* for public diplomacy practitioners. As with a lawyer and her client, we share the same responsibility to be *ethical* vis-a-vis our work the government; this rarely causes us concern, given that though the overwhelming majority of the time the ethical choice for us will also be a moral (or at least morally neutral) choice. When we, as government propagandists, have a *moral* conflict with a choice we are being asked to make, however, the only *ethical* choice is to resign.

1.9   The Question of Ethics: A Scholarly Perspective

A few scholars, such as philosopher Richard Paul and educational psychologist Linda Elder, approach propaganda from the broader public perspective, and declare it essentially unethical. Their purpose, however, lies primarily in helping audiences develop the critical thinking skills necessary to identify disinformation and misinformation, not in developing a larger theory of propaganda, or in helping propagandists become more successful at their work. Instead, their 2008 work *The Thinker's Guide for Conscientious Citizens on How to Detect Media Bias* echoes the 1930s era Institute for Propaganda Analysis, by highlighting *techniques* sometimes used by propagandists, such as name calling, card stacking, and bandwagoning.[78]

Communications scholar Ted Smith began his 1989 compilation of essays *Propaganda: A Pluralistic Perspective* with an overview of various ideological perspectives held among various groups of early propagandists, and explored their differing ethical standards. The Humanists, he writes, saw propaganda as inherently dangerous to democracy, and likely to be captured by economic elites. In this light, they agreed with Paul and Elder, arguing that propaganda was inherently unethical. The Professionals, like Bernays and his colleague Ivy Lee, argued that propaganda was a helpful part of the marketplace of ideas, and that only a brief *professional* code of ethical conduct was required, focusing on truth-telling and disclosing the source of information. The Scientists, meanwhile, saw propaganda as ethically neutral, and focused on empirical studies using content-analysis.[79]

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[78] Paul, Richard and Linda Elder*, The Thinker's Guide for Conscientious Citizens on How to Detect Media Bias & Propaganda in National and World News*, (Santa Barbara: Foundation for Critical Thinking Press, 2008): 5, 8, 12; Cunningham, *The idea of propaganda*, 100; Sproule, *Propaganda and Democracy*, 2-6.
[79] Smith, *Propaganda,* 10-16.

After a further exploration of the history of propaganda and its definitions, Smith concludes that propaganda engages "the systematic use of irrational and often [but not always] unethical techniques of persuasion."[80] Most of what he defines as unethical focuses on, like Paul and Elder, *techniques*, rather than context, audience, or content. He cites, for example, historical revisionism, selective truths that avoid pertinent facts, misuse of statistics, applying different standards to different groups, and name calling as unethical instances of propaganda.[81] Other writers in his book, however, also cite *relevance* and *totality of truth* as the primary arbiters of propaganda ethics.[82]

Realpolitik philosopher Felix Oppenheim, meanwhile, argued in 1991 that propaganda was essentially an amoral phenomenon, which could only be judged in light of a state's ethical obligation to act in its own material best interest. In Oppenheim's reading, the truth of any propagandistic statement, or the techniques used in advancing the claim, were irrelevant to its ethicality. So long as a lie genuinely advanced a material interest, it was permissible.[83]

Directly challenging Oppenheim, political scientist Joel Rosenthal argued in 1996 that foreign-policy driven propaganda could not be judged by a national interest-based rubric alone. Rather, any such ethical checklist needed to consider "(1) how to balance justice and order; (2) how to balance moral commitments with political realities; and (3) how to relate the insights of philosophy and history to contemporary problems … while avoiding the perils of moralism and absolutism on the one hand and empty relativism on the other."[84] Here, again, however, Rosenthal

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[80] Smith, *Propaganda*, 80.
[81] Smith, *Propaganda*, 80.
[82] Kennamer, J. David, "Deceptive Advertising and the Power of Suggestion," in *Propaganda and Democracy*, Ted Smith, (New York: Praeger, 1989): 141.
[83] Oppenheim, Felix, *The Place of Morality in Foreign Policy*, (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1991): *x*, 8.
[84] Rosenthal, Joel, "Introduction: Ethics through the Cold War and After," in *Ethics and International Affairs: A Readers*, ed. Joel Rosenthal, (Washington, DC. George Washington University Press, 1996): 1-2.

largely avoids narrowly focusing on specific *techniques* as the primary ethical guideline. In this, I, as well as the following scholars, side with Rosenthal.

Philosopher Randal Marlin, in his 2003 *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion* applied Kantian ethics to the problem, and from Kant derived two specific rules. First, that what is ethical must be something we can accept every other nation engaging in as well, and second, that it must "show respect for people as ends in themselves rather than simply as a means to ends of our own."[85] After examining the traditions of utilitarianism, Marlin arrives at four basic ethical questions of his own to be asked in each instance: 1) What is the motivation, and what are the outcomes?; 2) Is the scope reasonable compared to the desired ends?; 3) Is it emotionally manipulative?; and 4) Does the audience consent?[86] In all of this, it is important to note that he treats propaganda as a *neutral* tool, whose ethics can only be determined through examination.

Philosopher Stanley Cunningham, however, disagreed strongly with this point, arguing in his 2002 work *The Idea of Propaganda* that propaganda is *a priori* an unethical activity, as Cunningham's definition centers on what he believes is its inherently deceptive nature. He argued that "propaganda … exploits information; it poses as knowledge; it generates belief systems and tenacious convictions; it skews perceptions; it systematically disregards superior epistemic values such as truth and understanding; it corrupts reasoning and the respect for evidence, rigor, and procedural safeguards [and is therefore] inherently a profoundly unethical state of social affairs."[87] Though Cunningham provides a truly masterful historiography of the idea of propaganda,

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[85] Marlin, Randal, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion*, (Peterborough. Broadview Press, Ltd., 2003): 139.
[86] Marlin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion,* 168.
[87] Cunningham, Stanley, *The Idea of Propaganda*, 4.

ultimately, however, his *definition* of propaganda is so far afield of my own that I do not come to the same conclusions.

Eight years later, communications scholar Denis McQuail proposed yet another ethical rubric for propaganda, this time based on a compilation of principles found in codes for journalists. This included nine key, though vaguely defined, points: 1) truthfulness of information; 2) clarity of information; 3) acknowledgment of the responsibility involved in forming public opinion; 4) respecting established standards for gathering and presenting information; 5) respecting the integrity of sources; 6) a prohibition on race-, sex-, ethnicity-, or religious-based discrimination; 7) respect for individual privacy; and 8) the prohibition of bribes or any other benefits.

1.10   A Definition of Propaganda

It should be clear at this point that there are dozens of legitimate ways of defining the term propaganda, varying primarily based on first premises as well as somewhat arbitrary choices as to which potential aspects to include or exclude. Let us examine, then, the specific definitions provided by various scholars over time to try to find a common ground (see Appendices A and G). Thereafter, I will provide my own definition. My essential argument is that there will never be one widely accepted, universal definition of the term, and that it is the responsibility of propaganda scholars to clearly define their terms at the outset of their work, such that readers understand what, precisely, is being discussed.

The differences in definitions provided by the eighteen scholars identified in Appendix A can be broken down into roughly four categories: 1) the area of emphasis and framing of scholarly study; 2) value judgments made about propaganda; 3) relevant mechanics and attributes of propaganda; and 4) propaganda's outcomes.

Table 1-1: Differences in Definitions of Propaganda by Category

Scholarly Emphasis	1) The mass audience can be studied as a collective (sociological approach) OR the mass audience must be studied as a collection of individuals (psychological approach); 2) A focus on tactics or behaviors OR a focus on outcomes OR a focus on context; 3) Seen as identical to, overlapping with, or distinct from other concepts such as education, advertising, and persuasion. 4) A timeless phenomenon OR one enabled my mass society.
Value Judgments	1) Seen as inherently unethical; 2) Seen as amoral, with contextual ethics; 3) Seen as necessary and beneficial.
Mechanics and Attributes	1) Deliberate, conscious, and intentional OR this is irrelevant; 2) A top-down endeavor versus OR a two-way, mutualistic endeavor; 3) Systematic OR disorganized and organic; 4) Always untruthful OR sometimes untruthful; 5) Concealed OR overt source; 6) Powerful institutional driver OR mass phenomenon; 7) Relies on specific, defined methods OR methods are irrelevant.
Outcomes	1) Harms the target OR may or may not harm the target OR beneficial to the target; 2) Always successful OR sometimes successful.

Based on only the above matrix, there are almost 24 million mathematically possible, distinct definitions for the term propaganda, none of which seem any more objectively correct than any other. So how shall we make sense of this? Another way to try to define propaganda might be to divide the practice of communication down into a sort of taxonomic key (see Figure 2). Obviously, such a key should not be taken too literally, as certain sub-types of communication are not clearly the descendants of other sub-types. That said, such a framework can help simultaneously express the complications of any definition, while also forcing scholars to be precise about what definition they choose to use for any given purpose. It is important, however, to understand that any such key applied to non-empirical systems such as communication must necessarily be *only* a metaphor, not an authoritative guide.

Figure 1-5: The Author's Location of *Modern, American* Propaganda

A Metaphorical, Not To Be Taken Literally Taxonomic Key to Propaganda
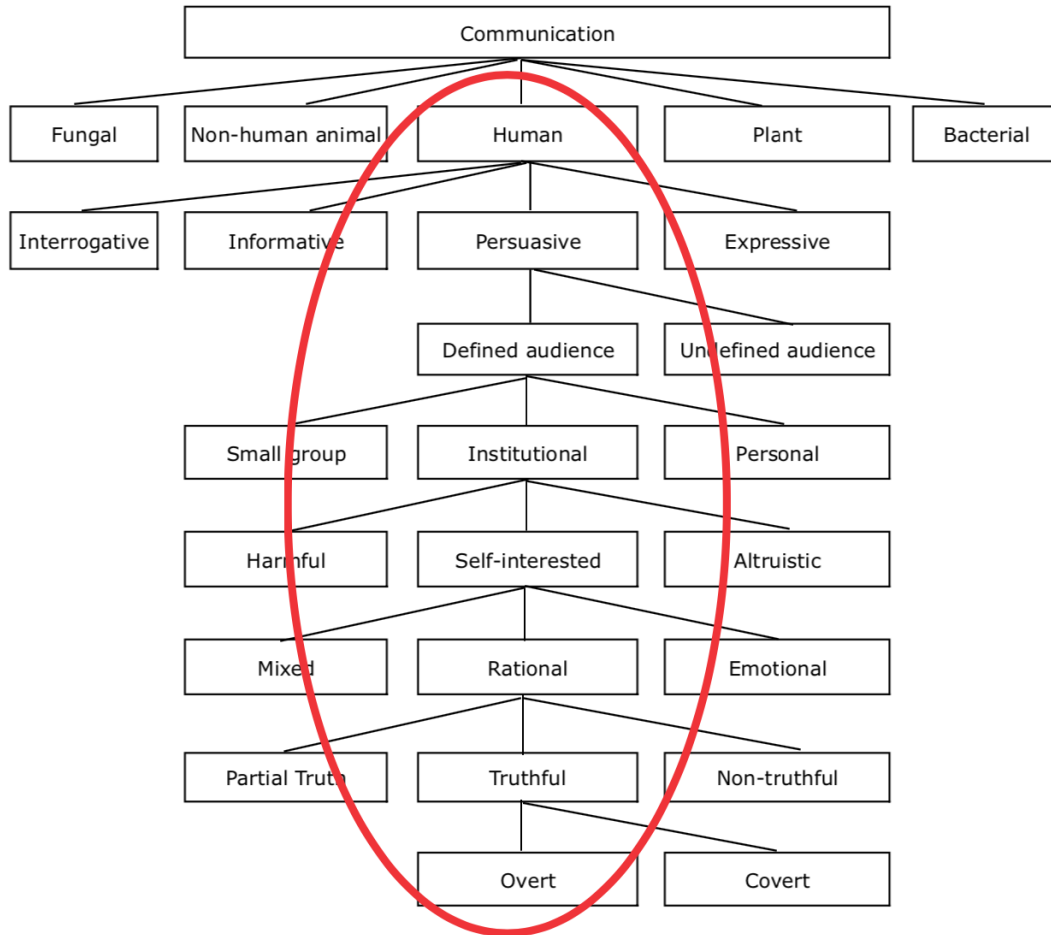
Again, emphasizing that such a key should not be taken *literally*, using the above framework, I am ready to propose and explain my definition of propaganda. The red circle shows an example of one possible way to define propaganda, but a red line could be drawn and justified around almost any combination of the above.

First, I side with those theorists who define propaganda as *value-neutral*. Like a chainsaw, propaganda has inherent dangers associated with it, but can ultimately be used to benefit or harm individuals, groups, and societies. I do not presume that falsehood is essential to propaganda, nor

do I believe that specific techniques are useful in its definition. I agree with most of the scholars cited earlier that propaganda is essentially a modern phenomenon enabled by mass communications technology, and that most pre-20th century activities sometimes so labeled are instead *propagandistic,* but not propaganda in a useful sense of the term. I agree that, depending on the context, education, advertising and persuasion can all be forms of propaganda, and in contrast to Ellul and Chomsky, I define propaganda both as *consciously intentional* and *as a top-down* activity. Unlike Ellul and some other scholars, I do not agree that propaganda must be *successful* to be so defined.

My definition of propaganda, *for the purpose of this research*, is as follows: **the selective and intentional use of information via mass media by a politically, socially, or economically powerful institution to attempt to persuade a specific audience to believe or do something in particular.**

1.11   A Definition of *Ethical* Propaganda

Having chosen to define propaganda as a value-neutral proposition, it is still important, however, to differentiate between *ethical* and *unethical* propaganda. Almost as many scholars have attempted to tackle this problem as have attempted to define propaganda itself. A few propositions, however, seem to be common threads.

A. Truth: Almost all definitions of an ethical propaganda (or inferring from definitions of unethical propaganda) center themselves on the essential truthfulness of a message. There is, however, widespread acknowledgement of the fact that truth itself is somewhat subjective, and that a speaker cannot reasonably provide "the whole" truth of any given matter, given time and resource limitations. In that sense, ethicists have focused on

whether the propagandist gives the *relevant* truth to the audience, namely, all the information a "reasonable person" would conclude that an audience would want to know about a subject in order to make up their own mind. Cunningham further holds that it is not enough to simply *tell* the truth; the propagandist must dearly hold truth as a cherished value in order for the activity to be ethical (which he deems impossible.) Interestingly, Ellul argues precisely the opposite, that to be an effective propagandist, one must "abandon their confidence in the truth." [88]

B. Duty of Care: Sometimes focused on a duty of care to society, sometimes on the individual, and sometimes on both, ethicists posit that the propaganda should not negatively impact the propagandee, at least from the viewpoint of a neutral, third-party observer. This would include inciting any form of group-directed hatred or social division. Chomsky extends this analysis to any propaganda that advances the interests of the powerful, but this is not a commonly held view. Others, like Qualter, argue that this duty of care centers on propaganda that specifically advances democratic, rather than totalitarian forms of government.

C. Overt Source: Several ethicists, as far back as Bernays and Ivy Lee, have posited that identifying the source of information is another clear ethical guideline. Non-scholarly propagandists, like Thomas Sorensen, however, have often disagreed.[89]

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[88] Barrett, Edward, *Truth is Our* Weapon, (New York. Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1953): *ix,* 131; Bernays, Edward, *Propaganda* 20-27, 44-46; Borchers, Timothy, *Persuasion in the Media Age*, (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2005): 88; Cunningham, *The Idea of Propaganda*, 13, 52, 115, 124, 136, 140; Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, *xii-xv*; Ellul, *Propaganda*, 56, 235-6; Elsten, "Mass Communications," 3; Henderson, Gae Lyn and M.J. Braun, "Introduction," in *Propaganda and Rhetoric in Democracy*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2016), 4; Larson, Charles U, *Persuasion: Reception and Responsibility,* (Boston. Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010): 41-69; Qualter, *Opinion Control*, 112-120; Marlin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion;* 139-150; Rubin, Bernard, *Propaganda and the Public Opinion: Strategies of Persuasion*, (Middletown. Xerox Education Publishers, 1973): 15.
[89] Bernays, *Propaganda*, 46; Sproule, *Propaganda and Democracy*, 55; Sorensen, Thomas, *The Word War: The Story of American Propaganda*, (New York. Harper & Row, 1968): 64-65; Larson, *Persuasion*, 41-69; Rubin, *Propaganda and the Public Opinion*, 8.

D. Acknowledging Other Points of View: Some scholars, such as Henderson and Elston, have argued that an ethical propagandist must acknowledge the existence of other arguments, or at least make no attempt to censor them.[90]

E. Cultivates Reason: Cunningham, Smith and others have also argued that an ethical propaganda must not undermine the ability to logically reason, and must have as its goal understanding rather than confusion.[91]

F. Relevant Emotions: Larson argues that to the extent that a propagandist engages emotional reasoning, that the emotions must be relevant to the cause in mind; for example, it would be unethical to propagandize against a proposed dam project by inciting hatred against the Korean-American owners, but it *would* be ethical to incite anger about the likely loss of property.[92]

Essentially, I agree with all of the above formulations. Ethical propaganda, in my view, is propaganda whose core values include **truth**, **beneficence, reason, open information, and relevance.** This, however, requires further explanation. I argue that it is possible to ethically tell the truth without telling the "whole" truth, an activity which is largely impossible. Further, I argue that within the context of an open information society, it is not ethically mandated to present all possible points of view; this becomes ethically more complicated, though, in a society with high levels of government control over information.

Third, I argue that ethical propaganda can easily have the interests of the propaganda institution at heart, *so long as* the propaganda can also reasonably be believed to lead to positive

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[90] Henderson, "Introduction," 13; Elsten, "Mass Communications," 3.
[91] Cunningham, *The Idea of Propaganda*, 4, 81, 98; Smith, *Propaganda*, 80.
[92] Larson, *Persuasion*, 41-69.

outcomes for those being propagandized. In this light, for example, a democratic propagandist's propaganda on behalf of democratic values would be considered ethical, so long as she is convinced that these values and systems of governance are an improvement over the current system. Fourth, ethical propaganda should embrace reason and be deeply skeptical of emotional appeals, though there are also some ethical uses of emotion in persuasion, so long as they bring clarity, rather than confusion to the issue at hand. Fifth, a propagandist cannot act ethically except within a society with freedom of information, because the lack of free information itself creates a state in which the principle of reason is violated. Finally, any emotionally persuasive appeals used should be *relevant* to the question at hand.

1.12   21st Century Definitions of Propaganda

The scholars surveyed to this point have primarily been of the 20th century, with some work within the early 21st century. However, the world has dramatically changed. As the internet and social media became all-pervasive forms of communication, the idea of information gatekeepers, in the form of major media stations and newspapers, became largely irrelevant. Any ethical standards they applied were rendered similarly meaningless as major internet and social media firms at first embraced a libertarian model of communication, assuming that the best arguments would rise to the top. Instead, the world became increasingly polarized as thousands of fringe thinkers found larger audiences, adapting propagandistic techniques to their work. In a semi-anarchic information space without even the pretense of fact checking, a respect for truth, or ethical standards, to what extent do the propaganda theories of those like Ellul and Chomsky still apply?

As of yet, we are still waiting for a groundbreaking theoretician of propaganda, likely one born into this social media world, to seriously grapple with these questions, and provide us with

clarity on new and hopefully better ways to engage with these questions. In the meanwhile, the overwhelming majority of the work done to date has focused on easier questions, such as tactics used by internet propagandists, and strategies for internet users to recognize or avoid that propaganda. As a product of the 20th century, I am manifestly not the thinker to answer those larger questions, but I am hopeful that this work may find its way into her hands one day, to provide a road map to a better understanding.

2   The Origins of Modern American Propaganda

2.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the World War II origins of overt, foreign-directed propaganda institutions, the birth of a uniquely American institutional culture among propagandists, and how that culture coalesced in 1953 into the first permanent, peacetime American propaganda institution: the United States Information Agency.

With Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine, the post-war, U.S.-led international order is being challenged at a level not seen since the heights of the Cold War. Putin, who famously said that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century, can best be understood as a revanchist leader determined to resurrect the Russian empire, even at the cost of political and economic relations with the West.[1] Concordantly, a creeping loss of Russian media freedom over the past few decades has been capped by new, explicit censorship laws criminalizing free expression and thought, in ways reminiscent of Russia's Soviet forebears. Meanwhile, a rising China recapitulates Kremlin propaganda narratives, as it seeks to extend political, economic, and military control further and further afield.[2] The Cold War, it seems, is back.

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[1] This argument is cogently made by scholars such as Masha Gessen in *The Future is* History, Fiona Hill in *Mr. Putin,* Anne Applebaum in *Twilight of Democracy*, Madeleine Albright in *Fascism*, Timothy Snyder in *The Road to Unfreedom*, and Serhii Plokhy in *The Frontline*, among others.

[2] For more on this point, see Henry Kissinger's *On China*, Michael Pillsbury's *The Hundred-Year Marathon*, Robert Spalding's *War Without Rules*, and Ian Easton's *The Final Struggle*.

The Cold War, however, was in many ways a misnomer. Hot proxy wars and other deadly conflicts were a constant feature of this timeline, in places including most of Africa, South and Central America, the Middle East, and South, East and Southeast Asia. In point of fact, the only places in which the Cold War remained relatively "cold" were the developed nations of North America, Europe, and Oceania.[3] But in refraining – through a combination of luck and leadership – from bringing the world to nuclear annihilation, we see at least one important victory: one which, hopefully, we can continue to maintain during this Second Cold War.

To the extent that the first Cold War was actually "cold," what we mean to say is that its combatants engaged in a *propaganda* war rather than a military war. To some extent, we can say that the American propagandists were the "victors" in that fight, given the collapse of the Soviet Union and several decades of American hegemony thereafter – though certainly, propaganda was not the only important tool used.[4] To ensure that we are well prepared to fight and win this modern propaganda war, we would be well advised to examine how the United States waged the first one. How did American propagandists tackle the challenge of combating totalitarian propaganda at the outset of the first Cold War? How were its propaganda institutions formed, and what were their

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[3] See Westad, Odd Arne, *The Cold War: A World History*, (New York: Basic Books, 2019).

[4] Though native speakers of Spanish frequently object to the use in English of the terms "America" and "American" when referring exclusively to the United States, in English, these are the accepted short-form demonyms. English has no equivalent term to the Spanish *estadounidense*. The Spanish term *América* is a lexical false friend, not a cognate.

animating values and practices? Did American propaganda succeed in its mission in those first confusing years, and if not, can we learn lessons from those failures? To help answer those questions, I will present the institutional history of these Cold War propaganda institutions, what early propaganda leaders learned about their craft, and explore the difficult decisions that had to be made to create a uniquely *American* brand of propaganda.

2.2   How Did We Get Here?

At the very outset of American propaganda during World War II and the early Cold War years, a number of key questions about the nature and scope of that propaganda had to be answered, and by 1953, for the most part, they *were* answered. An exclusive focus on foreign, rather than domestic, propaganda assuaged Congressional fears that propaganda would be weaponized to keep a given political party in power. Congress would consistently make the choice to underfund American propaganda compared to its Communist competitors, due to their deep skepticism about the moral righteousness of propaganda, alongside an ongoing undercurrent of isolationist belief that persuading foreign publics was irrelevant to Fortress America.

Overt American propagandists would embrace a "strategy of truth," eschewing convenient lies which were considered morally problematic and undermining of their credibility. They would strongly prefer sober, journalistic language over powerfully emotional, even strident language. Long-term cultural goals were made central, with short-term persuasion goals seen as a sop to both Congress and the need to annually justify budgets. Propaganda would be government-led rather than privately funded, and ultimately located (until 1999) in a quasi-independent agency with close ties to the State Department, rather than in a number of different proposed forms and locations. Critically assessing how these specific answers to these questions of *how shall we propagandize*

were answered, I argue, is essential to understanding how U.S. propaganda succeeded and failed in the early Cold War years. Understanding *that* is critical to ensuring that current U.S. propagandists are well-equipped to the task of fighting the next Cold War.

In this paper, I will show that these questions were answered in the context of two wars: World War II and the early Cold War – specifically, the period from 1941 to 1953. In particular, modern American propaganda was conceived in a number of competing organizations, coalescing in the 1942 birth of the Office of War Information (OWI), which I locate as the origin of our modern propaganda practices. Critical to the understanding of this history is not just the *what*, but the *who*. While other scholars of this period, such as historian Holly Cowan Shulman, have made mention of the fact that the founders of modern American propaganda were poets, playwrights, and journalists, I argue that this choice of *who* early American propagandists were is central to *how* these questions were answered. The language these early propagandists used to talk about their work, and the values they expressed therein – deeply rooted in their professional backgrounds – have been repeated over and over by successive propaganda leaders and practitioners, both in word and in deed. In this sense, they are the founding fathers of modern American propaganda.[5] In an alternate timeline in which early American propagandists were political scientists, advertising executives, and military officers, those early propaganda efforts would likely have been very different, and it is highly plausible that we would be at a very different place in history today.

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[5] I use the term "fathers" deliberately. Though women have been nominally allowed to serve in the Department of State since 1922, opportunities for genuine leadership roles were few and far between at both State and the United States Information Agency (USIA). The first female Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, Carole Laise Bunker, was not appointed until 1973, and the first female Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, began her role only in 1997. In its 46 years of existence, USIA quite literally never had a female director before it merged with the State Department in 1999.

2.3   Terms and Scope

It is important to note that I am specifically excluding *several* important kinds of American propaganda in this discussion.   Military public affairs officers, for example, took and continue to take center stage with foreign audiences during times of active military conflict. The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and their successor agency's CIA officers presumably were also operating in the same propaganda space as the propagandists I discuss here.   But the modes, operating assumptions, ethics, and practices of these two sets of American propagandists are so fundamentally different from those of the early *overt* propagandists – and modern-day State Department public affairs officers – that they require a separate treatment beyond the scope of this paper. I will argue that these 'species' of propaganda diverged within a year of the birth of modern American propaganda, and have remained fundamentally incompatible ever since, operating in separate, parallel spaces, largely unaware of each other's existence. In particular, the 'strategy of truth' that has almost without exception animated *overt* U.S. government propaganda since the early 1940s has not been a consistent component of either military or intelligence service propaganda.

In this light, when discussing this 'strategy of truth,' a term coined by early modern American propagandists, I do not mean to claim that *all* American propaganda has been truthful, sober, or respectful of the human dignity of its audience.[6]   A direct comparison of "honest" American propaganda to "dishonest" Soviet propaganda is, for example, to some extent disingenuous, given that the Soviets never treated white (overt) and black (covert) propaganda as separate entities, but rather as simply tools in the same toolbox. What is unique about American propaganda is that it has, almost since the institutional birth of American propaganda, obsessively

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[6] MacLeish, Archibald, *A Time to Act: Selected Addresses,* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1943): 28.

separated black and white propaganda into entirely different institutions, between which there is little to no awareness or coordination.

Though I have been an overt State Department propagandist for 14 years, I have never once been aware of even a single CIA propaganda campaign, nor am I aware of any of their propaganda goals. There is, at least at the working level, a profoundly strong firewall between America's overt and covert propaganda practitioners. When tracing the history of overt American propaganda – which we politely call *public diplomacy* – I am tracing the institutional history of one particular *type* of propaganda, namely overt and foreign directed, without claiming that it is representative of *all* American propaganda. To the extent that any statements made in this work appear to be making such sweeping claims, I sincerely apologize in advance for the oversight. Certainly, from the perspective of foreign audiences, it is impossible to differentiate between the various types of American government propaganda. Nevertheless, the operating assumptions and institutional cultures at work are extraordinarily different.

2.4 The Origins of American Propaganda

The story of American propaganda writ large goes back at least as far as the Revolutionary War, but I argue that the roots of *modern*, overt American institutional government propaganda are firmly situated in the period 1941-1953.[7] This propaganda can be characterized as being: (1) public rather than private sector; (2) permanent rather than temporary; (3) truthful rather than dishonest; (4) overt rather than covert, (5) generally sober and rationalist rather than strident and emotional; (6) respectful of the intelligence of its audience, rather than dismissive; (7) generally

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[7] See Berger, Carl, *Broadsides and Bayonets: the Propaganda War of the American Revolution*, (Philadelphia. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961): 21.

more persuasive rather than purely informational; (8) rooted in narrative rather than dialogue format; (9) internationalist *and* interventionist rather than isolationist; (10) firewalled from censorship activities, rather than combined; (11) presumptive that increased exposure leads to increased liking; (12) based on on-the-job learning, gut feelings and past practices, rather than skills-based training or a foundation in the social sciences of persuasion; (13) unwilling to ask audiences to put themselves in harm's way to advance policy goals; and (14) evangelical about democracy, rather than focused exclusively on more limited or transactional goals. Understanding how American propaganda came to be so characterized requires unearthing the complicated history of the United States' propaganda *institutions* in World War II and the early Cold War, and exploring the biographies and values of those who led these institutions.

In this chapter, I will explore the numerous World War II propaganda institutions established by the United States government, how they coalesced into the single Office of War Information, and how and why the decision was made to separate covert from overt propaganda. To do so, I will cite the writings and Congressional testimony of senior wartime propagandists including Robert Sherwood, Edward Barrett, Elmer Davis, Wallace Carroll, Wilson Dizard, James Warburg, and others engaged by the U.S. government to document their work, such as the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, in the first decade following the war. In so doing, we will better understand key factions who actively *fought* for competing answers to the questions central to this paper, and learn who ultimately won and lost those ideological battles, and how.

In the next chapter, we will hear from senior U.S. propagandists of the early 1950s to see how the U.S. government ultimately agreed to create a freestanding, permanent propaganda institution in the form of the United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1953. Key propagandists of this period such as Thomas Sorensen and John Henderson, and period academics

like Ronald Rubin, help illuminate the key battles over U.S. propaganda in the early Cold War period. Further insights come from a number of Congressional committee reports on U.S. propaganda institutions and practices, along with published criticisms from the private sector and academics on what they believed ought to change.

To preview my argument, I hope to show how modern American propaganda was born and came to adulthood in the period of 1941-1953, and to assess how specific choices made vis-à-vis ethics, practices, and the hidden assumptions about, prioritizations of, and preferences for certain *types* of propaganda impacted early propaganda efforts. While the *location* of propaganda within the U.S. government changed several times during this period, this did not significantly influence what I define as the core features of this propaganda: that it is a *permanent,* publicly run persuasion activity which largely eschews emotional language and argumentation to advance democratic ideology. Interwoven within these core features are other aspects that fluctuate over time, including: (1) a preference for long-term over short-term planning and goals; (2) the relative power given to propagandists abroad to determine their agenda in line with foreign policy's overall policy goals; (3) the relative importance of persuading versus informing; (4) whether policy makers invite propagandists to the discussion table; (5) and a preference for persuading elite opinion leaders versus reaching mass audiences. But even these features, I argue, have fluctuated within a fairly narrow boundary, in which the answer to those questions is always *both*, but in changing proportions.

Most of the core features outlined above are now, based on my experience, so accepted by modern American propagandists that alternative ways of doing propaganda are not within the conscious realm of possibility. Though I argue that most of these core features have served us well over time, I believe it is dangerous to the post-war order – particularly at the dawn of a new

Cold War – to leave these early operating assumptions unexamined. We have a responsibility to, at least generationally, question these hidden assumptions to ensure that they continue to serve us well, and to be willing to entertain the possibility that some of these core features may need to change as the geopolitical context in which we live continues to evolve. This paper is an attempt to do just that, to ensure that the U.S. propaganda service is as well placed as possible to be as effective in the 21st century's Cold War as it was in the 20th.

2.5   The Birth of American Institutional Propaganda

Before we get to the main story, we must first understand why, in contrast to some scholars, I do not include the American government's institutional propaganda efforts during World War I as meaningful precursors to our modern institutions.   Within days of the April 6, 1917 Congressional declaration of war against Germany, President Wilson named his friend, journalist George Creel, as head of the newly-established Committee on Public Information (CPI), responsible for both domestic and foreign propaganda operations, as well as domestic censorship. As the first in his field, Creel and his team had to learn on the job; of this period, Creel felt deeply unprepared for the task, later saying: "it was as if the Babylonians were asked to invent the threshing machine."[8]   But invent they did, and importantly, many of those on Creel's team, including Edward Bernays, Walter Lippmann, and Charles Merriam, would go on to be major early thinkers in propaganda theory.

Beyond advancing U.S. interests in the war, CPI staffers believed that their activities "provided an ideal opportunity to promote an ideology of American democracy [which could] provide a unifying cohesion for a country as diverse as America at a time of war and social

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[8] Sorensen, Thomas C, *The Word War: The Story of American Propaganda*, (New York: Harper & Row), 5-6.

change."[9] They worked to pull America from its isolationist traditions into an internationalist sensibility, to "justify intervention as an American mission to bring democracy to the Old World."[10] This was an important preview of what I term the "evangelical democratizing" mission which has, unlike many other aspects of CPI, remained with us to the present day.

At the same time, however, CPI also practiced what was later considered to be heavy-handed press censorship, and insisted on a significant level of influence over Hollywood releases.[11] More damagingly to their reputation, they occasionally provided information later shown to be false to the media, such as a report that U.S. forces had sunk several German submarines, and used their powers to locate and threaten government employees suspected of leaking information to the press.[12] Ultimately, they also failed to win the trust of the foreign policy establishment: notably, the State Department refused to cooperate with the CPI in any way.[13]

For many of these reasons, the CPI, more commonly known as the Creel Committee, was not to last. Just four months after the November 11, 1918 Armistice ending the war, President Wilson issued Executive Order 3154, abolishing the CPI. Clearly, Wilson saw institutional propaganda as a *temporary* measure justified by wartime, which had no purpose in a peacetime world. Other nations, however, were not so sanguine. The Soviet Union launched international radio propaganda in 1926, with the Germans, British, and Japanese following their lead in the early

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[9] Taylor, Phillip, *Munitions of the Mind*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 184.

[10] Taylor, Phillip, *Munitions of the Mind*, 184.

[11] Myers, James, *The Bureau of Motion Pictures and Its Influence on Film Content during World War II: The Reasons for Its Failure*, (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998): 6-8.

[12] Fleming, Thomas*, The Illusion of Victory: America in World War I*, (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 119-20 and 148-9.

[13] Shulman, Holly Cowan*, The Voice of America Propaganda and Democracy, 1941-1945*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 38-39.

1930s, giving them a significant head start on infrastructure, audience development, and research before the United States finally restarted its own propaganda efforts during World War II.[14]

The CPI's reputational problems, ironically, extended even beyond its own death. Following the end of wartime censorship, Americans began critically reevaluating the actions of the CPI in light of their democratic values, and came to unfavorable conclusions.[15] Scholars such as Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell have argued that though CPI succeeded at creating a "war psychosis" in the United States, that "when contrasted with the loss of so many American lives [and] disillusionment with the settlement of the war," Americans became deeply suspicious of propaganda itself.[16] Collectively, with the long-standing American tradition of isolationism again ascendant after the war, Americans and their government decided that institutional propaganda was both unsavory, unnecessary, and likely dangerous to democracy. As Congressman Frederick H. Gillett (R-MA) put it in 1918, "a propaganda bureau […] is a very dangerous thing in a Republic, because if used in […] partisan advantage of the administration, it has tremendous power, and in ordinary peace-time I do not think any party or any administration would justify or approve it."[17]

At first reading, the CPI seems a sensible place to begin to tell the story of American propaganda, and scholars such as Robert Jackall, Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, James

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[14] Henderson, John, *The United States Information Agency*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1969), 28; Yarrow, Andrew L., "Selling a New Vision of America to the World: Changing Messages in Early U.S. Cold War Print Propaganda," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 11, no. 4, (Fall 2009): 15.

[15] Huckin, Thomas, "Propaganda Defined*,*" in *Propaganda and Rhetoric in Democracy*, ed. Gae Lyn Henderson and M.J. Braun, (Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 2016) 120; Funk, Clayton, "The Committee on Public Information and the Mobilization of Public Opinion in the United States During World War I: the Effects on Educations and Artists," *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education* 14 (1994): 120-147.

[16] Jowett, Garth, and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, (Newbury Park: Sage Publishers, 1986), 128-9.

[17] Lasswell, Harold*, Propaganda Technique in the World War*, (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1972), 14.

Myers, Ted Smith, Philip Taylor, and Allan Winkler have done just that, without, in my view, sufficiently reckoning with the fundamental differences between CPI propaganda and what I term modern American propaganda.[18] Though the CPI was the first instance of *institutional* American government propaganda, I agree with scholar John Henderson that it was so fundamentally different than later state organs of American propaganda that it is not the right place to look for the origins of modern American propaganda.[19] First, the CPI sought out advertising specialists and made use of advertising techniques, rather than the much more journalistic approach employed by later American propagandists. Second, it saw truth as instrumental, rather than a core value. Third, it was meant to be an impermanent response to a temporary war, and fourth, its primary focus (at least early on) was on domestic audiences, rather than foreign audiences.[20] For these reasons, I argue we must look further down the road to locate the actual birth of today's propaganda traditions.

2.6   Propaganda Agencies in the Late 1930s and Early 1940s

From the end of the Great War until the late 30s, the United States government simply didn't engage in institutional propaganda. After almost two decades without institutional organs of propaganda, however, President Roosevelt began to see the writing on the wall in terms of likely U.S. engagement in the growing European war. As a result, he began to establish a number of small offices and agencies with various propagandistic functions as early as 1938. Roosevelt's

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[18] Jackall, Robert, "Propaganda," in *America's First Propaganda Ministry: The Committee on Public Information During the Great War*, ed. Robert Jackall and Janice Hirota (New York: New York University Press, 1995): 157; Jowett and O'Donnell, 128-129; Myers, James, *The Bureau of Motion Pictures,* 6-7; Smith, Ted, *Propaganda: A Pluralistic Perspective*, (New York: Praeger, 1989): 6; Taylor, Philip, *Munitions of the Mind,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003): 184.

[19] Holly Cowan Shulman's excellent *The Voice of America: Propaganda and Democracy, 1941-1945* does brilliant work outlining the ideological disputes on this paper's themes during the war period, but her masterly analysis – unfortunately for readers – did not continue to the present day.

[20] Henderson, John, *The United States Information Agency*, 28.

essential management style was to create a new agency to deal with every problem, while expecting them to sort out their own powers between them.[21] This, in a few words, was an unsuccessful management style.

In many ways, these agencies played a game of existential whack-a-mole with Congress, who often quickly moved to kill them, angry that Roosevelt was moving funds around without Congressional approval.[22] In fall of 1938, Roosevelt launched the U.S. Film Service under the New Deal-era National Emergency Council (NEC)'s U.S. Information Service, to create government films, among other functions. This was headed by journalist Lowell Mellett, who later became a key player in World War II propaganda efforts.

The Film Service moved into the Office of Education's Federal Security Agency in mid-1939 when the NEC was abolished, and did not, in the end, produce very much before being itself abolished in 1940.[23] Much like its CPI forebears, Congress saw it as a potential domestic threat to democracy, with Senator Robert Taft (R-OH) saying "I do not care who is controlling the Government, if it is to produce films and put them out, they are bound to become propaganda."[24] Mellett soon moved on to become the first head of the newly-established Office of Government Reports (OGR) in September, 1939, monitoring domestic press, and working to explain U.S. government activities to the general public.[25] None of these smaller agencies, however, were

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[21] Barrett, Edward, *Truth is Our Weapon*, (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co, 1953): 24

[22] MacCann, Richard Dyer and William A. Bluem, *The People's Films: A Political History of U.S. Government Motion Pictures*, (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1973), 93.

[23] MacCann and Bluem, *The People's Films*, 93.

[24] MacCann and Bluem, *The People's Films*, 112.

[25] Mellett, Lowell, "The Office of Government Reports," *Public Administration Review* 1, no. 2 (Winter, 1941): 126-31

meaningfully comparable to the modern, global, overt, foreign-directed propaganda currently practiced by the United States.

Another potential contender for the origin story of modern American propaganda institutions is businessman Nelson Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA), which Roosevelt established on August 16, 1940 to "assist in the preparation and coordination of [Latin American economic stabilization], to secure and deepen U.S. influence in the region, and to combat Axis inroads into the hemisphere, particularly in the commercial and cultural spheres."[26] Originally saddled with the unwieldy title of Office for Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations between the American Republics (OCCCRBAR), the organization had a wide remit which *included* but did not center upon propaganda, and a narrow geographic scope, extending only into Latin America.

The OIAA's major activities were fairly broad, including "economic warfare, economic cooperation, transportation, health and sanitation, food supply, information and propaganda, and cultural and educational activities." Its employees were largely drawn from American businessmen who had lived in Latin America for many years, given its economic rather than propaganda focus, and did not necessarily look at the Department of State or its Embassies as the final arbiter of correct foreign policy. Unlike a half-dozen other U.S. propaganda and information agencies created in 1940-41, in large part due to Rockefeller's influence with President Roosevelt, OIAA was not subsumed into the later umbrella organization the Office of War Information, though on April 10, 1946, OIAA was abolished with its remaining functions integrated into the Department of State. For the reasons listed above, I argue that the OIAA was not the precursor

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[26] Cramer, Gisela and Ursula Prutsch, "Nelson A. Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs (1940-1946) and Record Group 229," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 86, no. 4 ,(2006): 785-806.

agency to modern American propaganda. Essentially, its geographic focus was regional rather than global, and its purposes too broad compared to later propaganda agencies, despite the fact that its propaganda functions were later absorbed into those very same institutions.

2.7   1941: Roosevelt Throws Things at Wall, Sees What Sticks

Suspecting that U.S. involvement in Europe's war was likely to come sooner than later, despite widespread isolationism, Roosevelt began constructing a widespread, but haphazard, information and propaganda apparatus.[27] He established the Division of Information under the Office for Emergency Management (OEM) in March 1941, to explain defense activities to the general public. Two months later, he set up the Office of Civilian Defense (OCD) to handle "civilian protection, national morale, and public opinion."[28]

In June of that year, friend, businessman and former General William "Wild Bill" Donovan pitched Roosevelt with the idea for a new centralized intelligence agency, which would include foreign radio propaganda broadcasts. That same month, on June 25, Donovan was appointed the Coordinator of the Office of Strategic Information, renamed one month later as the Office of the Coordinator of Information (OCOI). Interestingly, he immediately brought on Robert Sherwood – a playwright and screenwriter – as chief of OCOI's new Foreign Information Service (FIS), to handle foreign propaganda operations. That same month, the Army established a "Special Study

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[27] Readers who are confused by the next few paragraphs are in good company: at the time, even the employees of the listed agencies were equally as confused as to their responsibilities and authorities. Please see the appendix for a graphical timeline of these organizations.
[28] Winkler, Allan, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 21-25.

Group" within military intelligence to plan for psychological operations, later morphing into the Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB).[29]

Just three months later in October 1941, realizing more public support was needed for a U.S. entry into the war, Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8922, carving out part of OCD to create the Office of Facts and Figures (OFF) to focus on that specific task.[30] His choice for chief of the new OFF was not a military officer, a political scientist, a journalist, or an advertising executive, but rather Archibald MacLeish, a modernist poet and writer, whose liberal values and ethical commitment to truth would, along with Sherwood's, forever put their stamp on modern American propaganda.

2.8   Pearl Harbor and the Separation of Propaganda from Censorship

By November of 1941, there were five major competing propaganda organs operating uncomfortably in the same or overlapping spaces: Lowell Mellett's Office of Government Reports, Nelson Rockefeller's OIAA, Sherwood's Foreign Information Service within Donovan's OCOI, MacLeish's Office of Facts and Figures, and the military's PWB, along with several other smaller offices in other government bureaus, agencies, and departments.[31] This, as it turned out, would be untenable, a fact brought into stark relief by the bombings of Pearl Harbor on December 7 of that year.[32]

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[29] Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 113.

[30] Girona, Ramon and Jordi Xifra, "The Office of Facts and Figures: Archibald MacLeish and the 'strategy of truth,'" *Public Relations Review* 35, (2009): 287-290.

[31] The cast of important characters for this story is lengthy. Please see the appendices for a list of these propaganda leaders and abbreviated biographies.

[32] Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 28-29.

The surprise attack "accelerated pressures to mount a major offensive against domestic apathy and the increasingly effective propaganda machinery of the Nazis," and it was clear that with no one in charge, this goal could not be met.[33] Indeed, "after Pearl Harbor […] there was an obvious and increasing battle among various government agencies for the attention and support of the public, [which] confused the public […] in a way that was both inefficient and embarrassing."[34] Hollywood insiders, among others, asked Roosevelt to find a solution – something he had successfully avoided since spring of 1941 – by which point the Budget Bureau had already been clamoring for re-organization of the wartime information agencies.[35] Crucially, following Pearl Harbor, longstanding Congressional opposition to institutional propaganda also melted away overnight. This would re-establish a long-standing pattern that continues to operate to the present-day: Congress understands the need for propaganda operations only when faced with a clear national security threat.[36]

When the House and Senate both passed the First War Powers Act on December 16, Roosevelt was freed to conduct both censorship and propaganda, with Congress' blessing. Rather than consolidating existing agencies, however, or expanding their powers, he simply created even more of them. Roosevelt signed the Act on December 18, and the following day he signed Executive Order 8985 establishing the Office of Censorship, which explicitly had no propaganda function.[37] In so doing, he set a new precedent that – unlike under CPI – censorship and

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[33] Avery, Robert K. and Timothy Larson, "U.S. Military Documentary Films: A Chronological Analysis," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (65th, San Antonio, TX, Nov 10-13, 1979).
[34] MacCann and Bluem, *The People's Films*, 123-4.
[35] MacCann and Bluem, *The People's Films,* 123-4.
[36] To wit, public diplomacy funding was dramatically cut in the 1990s with the end of the Cold War, only to be re-established following the attacks of 9/11. See Appendix I.
[37] Fiset, Louis, "Return to Sender, U.S. Censorship of Enemy Alien Mail in World War II," *Prologue Magazine* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2001), accessed May 7, 2022, https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2001/spring/mail-censorship-in-world-war-two-1.html.

propaganda would forever remain separate activities in the United States, unlike in both Axis and Allied countries, including the UK's Ministry of Information and the Nazi Ministry of Enlightenment and Propaganda. In this, Roosevelt charted a course for a distinctly modern *American*, as opposed to simply *democratic* practice of propaganda.[38]

Two months later, sometime in February of 1942, Donovan's deputy Robert Sherwood and Romanian actor John Houseman launched the first Voice of America (VOA) broadcast, while in April, Mellett's OGR opened a film branch in Hollywood to directly coordinate on propaganda with the industry.[39] As propaganda activities and agencies continued to burgeon in the early months of 1942, however, ideological differences between civilian propagandists came to the fore. In particular, OCOI chief Bill Donovan argued that propaganda should serve short-term, tactical goals, acting "as the initial arrow of penetration for covert actions. He did not care about standards of truth," as his focus was on battlefield subversion.[40] As Donovan himself wrote to Roosevelt, propaganda needed to have "a judicious mixture of rumor and deception" to be effective.[41]

His deputy, FIS chief Robert Sherwood, however, argued that although propaganda was a legitimate weapon of war – as important as military battles, in some cases – that a "strategy of truth" would be the only effective, credible, and ethical strategy.[42] As a playwright, he was deeply motivated by the power of words, writing that "there is a new and more decisive force in the human

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[38] Henry, Irving, "Chaos and Censorship in the Second World War," in *Blog: History of government*, accessed on May 6, 2022 at https://history.blog.gov.uk/2014/09/12/chaos-and-censorship/

[39] The date for the first VOA broadcast is disputed by historians. Some claim the date is as early as February 1, while others place the start date as late as February 24.

[40] Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 30.

[41] Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 28.

[42] Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 27-30, 76; Koppes, Clayton and Gregory Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits & Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies*, (New York. The Free Press, 1987): 59; Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 67; Fine, Richard, "Allied War Correspondents' Resistance to Political Censorship in the Second World War," in *Allied Communication to the Public During the Second World War: National and Transnational Networks,* ed. Simon Eliot and Marc Wiggam, (London: Bloomsbury Academic Publishing, 2020): 95.

race, more powerful than all tyrants [which] is the force of massed thought – thought which has been provoked by words, strongly spoken."[43]   Sherwood further wrote that "truth is the only effective basis for American foreign information."[44]

The military, meanwhile, was setting up an entirely parallel propaganda apparatus.   The Joint Chiefs of Staff established created their own Joint Psychological Warfare Committee in March 1941, and in April, the Army published its first edition of the military newspaper *Stars and Stripes*, whose propaganda target was not foreign audiences but rather U.S. soldiers.   Yet despite the proliferating branches of institutional propaganda, turf wars, and an increasing sense that clear lines of authority needed to be established, Roosevelt waited six months after Congress' war authorization to consolidate many (but not all) of these government organs.   Several historians agree that Roosevelt "had absorbed the temper of the 1930s on the subject of wartime propaganda. He didn't like it," and only acted to establish a centralized propaganda agency when it was clear that the existing situation was both overly chaotic and ineffective.[45]

2.9   OWI and the 1942 Propaganda Consolidation: the Triumph of the Strategy of Truth

Finally, on June 13, 1942, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9182, a first – but insufficient – effort to give meaningful guidance to the future shape of the U.S. propaganda program.   In a stroke, Roosevelt separated those who believed that truth was merely instrumental from those who believed it was essential.   The truth-relativists clustered under Donovan in his new Office of Special Services (OSS), which would later go on to become the Central Intelligence Agency.[46]

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[43] Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 17.
[44] Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 27.
[45] MacCann and Bluem, *The People's Films*, 126; Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 29.
[46] Note: this is an over-simplification of the actual historical narrative.

The truth-absolutists, on the other hand, gathered together under the new Office of War Information (OWI), to be led by respected CBS journalist Elmer Davis. OSS would take on the intelligence functions begun under OCOI, and, housed under the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would work hand-in-glove with the Psychological Warfare Committee (chaired by Donovan, and absorbed by OSS six months later) and military intelligence more broadly. OWI, on the other hand, would absorb MacLeish's Office of Facts and Figures from OEM, along with OEM's Division of Information, Mellett's Office of Government Reports, and OCOI's Foreign Information Service and its chief Robert Sherwood. The one major exception which landed in neither camp would be the OIAA, whose politically connected leader Nelson Rockefeller managed to retain independent control over Latin American propaganda throughout the war.[47]

In the new OWI organization, poet MacLeish would head policy and planning, journalist Mellett would lead the Bureau of Motion Pictures, and playwright Sherwood would manage the Overseas Branch, primarily responsible for overseas propaganda. It is in the OWI that I argue modern American propaganda was finally born, in a form roughly analogous to that which is practiced today. Notably, OWI also appears to be the origin for several descriptive terms of art for American propaganda and propagandists used for several decades thereafter, including the first use of "United States Information Service" to describe the American propaganda institution's activities abroad, and "public affairs officer" for chief country propagandist.[48]

Unfortunately, Roosevelt's order did not make clear who – and which underlying ideology – actually had what authorities vis-à-vis foreign propaganda operations, much less which ethical

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[47] Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 30.
[48] Sorensen, *The Word War*, 10.

standards would be applied. Social scientist Charles A.H. Thomson, who served as a U.S. military

propagandist during World War II, explained:

> The struggle for control of overseas propaganda continued between
> OWI and OSS. […] It rested on differences between those who
> believed that propaganda should form part of the program of
> subversive operations, and should consist of any action, true or
> untrue, responsible or irresponsible, which would effectively
> hamper the enemy at that point; and those who believed that
> propaganda should be a public, responsible, government operation
> to tell the truth about the war, about the United States and its allies,
> as a means of describing democracy and freedom, our war aims, and
> our determination to win both war and peace.[49]

 As Thomson explains, "it took nine months after OWI's creation to define and divide foreign

propaganda responsibilities between OWI and OSS, and during this period they spent almost as

much time fighting each other as fighting the enemy."[50]

Davis, frustrated by the perception that OWI was being undermined, ignored, and left out

of the loop on critical information by both OSS and military intelligence, took his case to the

President, who on March 12, 1943 issued Executive Order 9182, confirming "OWI's authority

over the federal program of information and propaganda, as against the encroachments of OSS."[51]

The ability of the *military* to independently run its own battlefield propaganda campaigns,

however, was not significantly curtailed by this order, though military leaders were advised to

keep OWI in the loop. In this sense, the success of this order was mixed, as military leaders – as

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[49] Thomson, Charles A.H., *Overseas Information Service of the United States Government*, (Menasha: George Banta Publishing Company, 1948), 10.
[50] Thomson, *Overseas Information Service*, 11.
[51] Thomson, *Overseas Information Service*, 10.

well as the State Department – distrusted OWI's ability to maintain operational security during

the war, particularly in the early years, and still regularly kept critical information from them.[52]

2.10   The End of Domestic Propaganda

One of the key questions to be answered about the nature of modern American propaganda

was whether and to what extent it would address domestic audiences versus foreign audiences. To

the surprise of early OWI leaders, this was answered in the negative early and forcefully by

Congress, despite a clear and apparent need. As historian Allan Winkler explains:

> Americans appeared unclear about the broader purposes of the struggle in which
> they were engaged. In the first months after Pearl Harbor, it seemed obvious that
> the United States was fighting in self-defense. By the middle of 1942 public
> opinion analyst Jerome Bruner found that significant numbers of people were not
> as sure why they were involved. In July, 30 percent of those responding to the
> question, "Do you feel that you have a clear idea of what this war is all about —
> that is, what are we fighting for?" answered negatively, while in December the
> number had risen to 35 percent. Other polls in the fall of 1942 showed that
> approximately a third of people interviewed were willing to accept a separate peace
> with Germany, and even after the announcement of the policy of unconditional
> surrender at Casablanca, the percentage remained almost as high. Other surveys
> too indicated significant public mistrust of America's allies. OWI clearly had its
> work cut out for it if it was to educate the public about the war.[53]

The poet MacLeish, whose pre-OWI Office of Facts and Figures had already come under

widespread attack as domestic propaganda, remained undeterred and primarily interested in

engaging the American public rather than foreign audiences.[54] He and his team in OWI's policy

and planning office "wanted to convey the evils of fascism, the insidious way it had infected enemy

populations, and the desperate need to destroy all traces of the disease," while "contrast[ing]

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[52] Koppes, Clayton and Gregory Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 115; Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 77, 82, and 164; Thomson, *Overseas Information Service*, 20.

[53] Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 54.

[54] Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 55.

American values to those of the fascists, and thereby to show the stake that every American had in the outcome of the struggle, as a way of justifying the sacrifice and personal expense involved in winning the war."[55]

OWI's domestic propagandists also had to wrestle with important questions about "the nature of propaganda in a democratic society at war."[56] To what extent would they seek national unity, even if should compromise values such as diversity and independence which were fundamental to American identity? Should they take a leadership role in interpreting the war for the American public, or follow the lead – if one existed – from the White House? To what extent should their goals be to prod a disinterested public into support for the war? Senior leaders of the OWI found that there were no easy answers.

MacLeish, for example, often clashed with OWI Domestic Branch chief Gardner Cowles – a former newspaper publisher – over these issues from OWI's birth in mid-1942 until the essential demise of the Domestic Branch on June 18, 1943. Neither Cowles nor MacLeish saw eye to eye on style or methods. Though MacLeish (along with Overseas Branch Director Robert Sherwood) argued that Americans were largely persuaded by rational, weighty, evidence-based appeals, Cowles believed that simplified, pictorial arguments were more effective.[57] Further, though MacLeish favored a journalistic approach, Cowles brought in a number of advertising executives to "sell" the war in February 1943, leading to mass resignations that April among MacLeish's acolytes, who believed it was unethical and "phony" to justify the war to Americans "the same way they were sold toothpaste."[58] OWI Director Elmer Davis backed Cowles, but the

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[55] Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 18-19, 55.
[56] Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda,* 38-39.
[57] Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 40.
[58] Burlingame, Roger, *Don't Let Them Scare You: the Life and Times of Elmer Davis*, (Cornwall: Cornwall Press, Inc., 1961): 215-217; and Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 62-65.

mass resignations of well-connected former journalists brought unwelcome Congressional and media attention to the Domestic Branch.

But Congressional ire was particularly directed at the OWI's Bureau of Motion Pictures, which focused on domestic audiences. Its chief Lowell Mellett had infuriated Hollywood with a carelessly worded statement on December 8, 1942, suggesting that the film studios run all scripts through OWI for approval, raising concerns of censorship.[59] Though Mellett attempted to calm the waters with an explanatory missive that May, his "extraordinary capacity for amassing opposition" did him no favors, and cries of censorship continued.[60] Following a Senate investigation, on June 18 the House of Representatives actually *abolished* the Domestic Branch by a vote of 218 to 114, fearing it was more pro-Roosevelt than anti-Axis.[61] The Senate overturned that decision, but returned only a small percentage of its original funding, resulting in the closure of most domestic publications, all motion picture production, field operations, and regional offices.[62] This was, for all intents and purposes, the end of *institutional* domestic government propaganda in the United States.

2.11   Policy-Driven, or Policy Drivers?

Another early point of contention was the essential question of *who was in charge.* Not only, to be clear, of the propaganda organization, despite the fact that the directorship was vested at least in title in journalist Elmer Davis. A second debate also took place regarding who set the policies that the propagandists advanced. To modern American propagandists, that this was ever

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[59] Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 108.
[60] MacCann and Bluem, *The People's Films*, 133.
[61] Doherty, Thomas, *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993): 43.
[62] Burglingame, *Don't Let Them Scare You*, 215.

in question is likely shocking. But several early key propaganda leaders believed it was they, not Washington, who were best equipped to *determine* and convey abroad what American foreign policy would be.[63] Compelled by a deep conviction that the war was an existential battle between freedom and slavery, they believed the Department of State was overly slow and conservative in its approach, and so they simply took matters into their own hands.[64] Needless to say, this infuriated the Department of State, the traditional home of foreign policy making.

At first, OWI leaders such as James Warburg, the Deputy Director for Psychological Warfare Policy, attempted to bring the existing foreign policy establishment on board. Feeling shut out of not only the policy making process but even of knowing what the policy actually *was*, "by the fall of 1942 he began writing [draft] propaganda policy," making a weekly trip from OWI's New York-based Overseas Branch office to meet with key Washington decision makers.[65] If Washington didn't immediately edit Warburg's proposals, then from his perspective, they became approved policy. As historian Holly Cowan Shulman explains, perhaps understating the case, "Warburg incurred resentment because of his independent procedures. He was admired, but often not trusted." His New York-based deputies, however, including journalists Joseph Barnes and Ed Johnson, and dramatist John Houseman – the first Voice of America (VOA) Director – were thrilled by Warburg's forward-leaning, ideologically pure clarity.

This tension eventually came to a head when the VOA, on Italian radio, called Italian King Victor Emmanuel a "moronic little king" in late July 1943, deeply complicating Allied efforts to get the king to renounce his support for the fascist government, then led by Marshal Pietro

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[63] Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 106.
[64] Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 20-22, 42.
[65] Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 41.

Badoglio.[66] The radio statement sprung from the conviction of the Warburg wing that moral clarity about good and evil was required when addressing the public. Facing a public rebuke from President Roosevelt after widespread media coverage of the scandal, OWI Director Davis sought to bring the New York-based Overseas Branch back under his control.

Problems, however, continued. London branch chief Wallace Carroll – a former foreign correspondent – was becoming increasingly infuriated with Robert Sherwood's leadership of the New York-based Overseas Branch, to which he reported. That December, Carroll resigned over his frustrations with Sherwood and Warburg's lack of guidance and communication, as well as over his disagreement over who made policy.[67] For Carroll, it was clear that the State Department and the White House were the only democratic and legitimate source of propaganda policy, and that they as propagandists had no right to overrule that policy, even if they disagreed with it.[68]

Picking up on Carroll's departure, American media began digging into, and reporting on, ongoing disputes between OWI Director Elmer Davis and Overseas Branch Director Robert Sherwood, who ideologically sided with Warburg. (Modern American government propagandists know one cardinal rule by heart: never become the story.) Davis hired CBS "hatchet man" Edward Klauber to get Sherwood's office in New York back in line with government policy, and in early 1944 Klauber proposed a reorganization of the Overseas Branch. Sherwood would become director of propaganda and information policy, replacing Warburg, while a new leader would be installed as Overseas Branch Director. Warburg, Johnson, and Barnes – whom Davis held particularly responsible for many of the ongoing issues – would be terminated.

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[66] Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 94.
[67] Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 106.
[68] Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 106-7, 112, 165.

Sherwood balked. Following the press leaks, the two took their respective cases to Roosevelt on February 2, 1944. The President eventually sided with Davis, resulting in Sherwood being effectively "exiled" to the London office, and the Overseas Branch returning from New York to Washington, where it could be more closely supervised.[69] Most of the team who questioned the centrality of the State Department's role in determining policy was fired, settling that question once and for all.[70] Sherwood resigned from the London office in September of that year – though returned to government service later in a variety of roles.

2.12   1944-1948: An Institutional History and the Question of Permanence

In order to understand the context in which the answers to *other* questions were decided – or left undecided – we must first explore what happened to American institutional propaganda in the period 1944-1948. Following the departures of Sherwood, Barnes, Johnson and Warburg, and the return of the Overseas Branch to Washington, "the new, more politically accommodating leaders of the Overseas Branch withdrew propaganda from controversial liberal positions and moved the Voice toward 'straight' news and information."[71] This allowed the OWI to begin to build a meaningful trust and cooperation with the State Department and the Department of Defense, including better coordination with the London-based, interagency Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB), comprised of OWI, OSS, U.S. military, and British Political Warfare Executive officials.[72]

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[69] Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 94-106.
[70] Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 106-108.
[71] Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 82.
[72] Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 112-113.   It is worth noting that James Warburg had been a part of the London-based PWB as well, which, unlike the OWI in general, did not subscribe to the strategy of truth, but instead employed the deceptive tactics favored by OSS and the Department of Defense. It seems that this time rubbed off on him, as he later argued in his 1946 book *Unwritten Treaty* that in his view it was a mistake to separate "black" and "white" propaganda.

Having resolved *some* of the key questions plaguing the propagandists, the remainder of World War II played out in *relative* peace between the various propaganda institutions. As with earlier eras, within weeks of the end of World War II, neither the president nor Congress saw further need for propaganda institutions in an era of peace, re-opening the question of institutional permanence. On August 31, 1945, Truman issued Executive Order 9608 transferring the functions of both the OWI and the OIAA into an Interim International Information Service (IIS) located within the State Department, as recommended by senior OWI leaders, but to the great skepticism of those at State, which remained deeply distrustful of propaganda or the utility of influencing public opinion.[73]

Truman appointed William Benton, an advertising executive and university vice-president, as the first ever Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs to lead the IIS, a transitional agency meant to last six months with the handover from OWI and OIAA. He also led the newly created Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs (OIC) by Departmental Order 1336, to distinguish it from the extant Office of Public Affairs, a small office handling Department of State press releases. Though the OWI and OIAA had already begun the process of dramatic budget cuts, Benton, "sensing the Congressional mood," cut propaganda programs even further, eliminating almost all wartime magazines, most of the news service, radio programming, and personnel.[74]

Unfortunately for Benton, Congress did not see this as sufficient, perhaps sensing blood in the water. The Budget Bureau and Congress gave him no credit for what he had already accomplished, but instead worked to further slash and burn U.S. propaganda operations to the

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[73] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 51-52; National War Agencies Appropriation Bill for 1946, "Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations: Testimony of Edward Klauber." United States Senate, Seventy-Ninth Congress, First Session on H.R. 3368, Friday, June 15, 1945.
[74] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 51-52.

bone.[75] "But by painstakingly explaining the program to one Congressman after another, Benton stemmed the tide. In a long and drearily complex series of Congressional proceedings, Benton barely managed to save his skeleton operation."[76] In particular, Benton argued cogently, and successfully, against a widely-held belief that the private sector would be both able, and more capable, of representing the United States abroad than the U.S. government, with limited coordination functions at the Department of State.[77] Modern American propagandists can effectively thank Bill Benton for the continued existence of their profession today as a government endeavor.

In the fall of 1947, for no ostensible reason – a recurring theme for post-war propaganda institutions – the OIC was renamed again, as the Office of International Information and Educational Exchange (OIE). The OIC-turned-OIE "operated for over two years without any legal authorization other than that of appropriations acts,"[78] which caused no problem in its first year of operations. In its second year, however, reasserting their prerogative to control the purse, Congress deeply slashed OIE's funding, leading to significant reductions in staffing and programs. This came despite vigorous intervention by President Truman and Secretary of State George Marshall, one of the first examples of genuine buy-in from State Department leadership on the value of propaganda programs.[79]

In the end, however, long-term funding for overt, foreign directed U.S. propaganda was likely secured by the launch of the Marshall Plan and its impacts abroad. The plan was first publicly announced by Secretary Marshall on June 5, 1947 in remarks at Harvard University,

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[75] Sorensen, *The Word War*, 21-22.
[76] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 51-52.
[77] Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 180.
[78] Thomson, *Overseas Information Service*, 7.
[79] Henderson, *The United States Information Agency*, 38. Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 188.

leading to a significant backlash by Soviet propagandists, who characterized it as "dollar imperialism."[80] A Congressional delegation headed to Europe in the summer of 1947 on a fact-finding trip to learn about the on-the-ground situation, and whether fears of growing Communist influence were warranted.[81] They returned chastened, with a new and experience-based understanding of the importance of winning hearts and minds, and immediately set to work drafting the Smith-Mundt Act.

This law would establish permanent funding for educational and professional exchange programs, which would bring foreigners to the United States – and send Americans abroad – to better develop "mutual understanding." It also promised a *permanent* peacetime overseas information program. Notably, despite what the Congressmen understood to be a clear and continuing threat from Communist propaganda, the law did not call for an aggressive propaganda campaign to persuasively, explicitly bolster democracy abroad, largely because of their ongoing fears of the risks of propaganda institutions *to* democracy.

The controversial law was enacted on January 28, 1948, as the first-ever Congressional imprimatur for peace-time propaganda. This was not, however, without significant concern and opposition. The draft law attracted more than one hundred amendments, and consumed "more days of debate and more pages of the Congressional Record than the previously contentious Taft-Hartley labor legislation," which had weakened the power of unions.[82]

As a result of Smith-Mundt, OIE was renamed and reorganized yet again on April 28, 1948, by being split into two offices with separate functions: the Office of International Information

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[80] Henderson, *The United States Information Agency,* 40-41; J.J. Joseph, "Trends in the Marshall Plan," *Science and Society* 13, no. 1 (Winter 48/49): 1-21.
[81] Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 189.
[82] Henderson, *The United States Information Agency,* 40-41.

(OII), and the Office of Educational Exchange (OEX.)[83] "The former office retained the mass media functions: radio, press, and publications, and motion pictures. The latter office got the slow media jobs: exchange of persons and support for libraries and institutes."[84] Modern American propagandists will be no doubt pleased to note that the constant, continuing renaming and reorganization of their institutions has been a feature from the very beginning, and is therefore unlikely to ever end. More importantly, however, peacetime propaganda as an institution was now secure as a permanent feature of the American government. As Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs George Allen said in a 1949 speech at Duke University, "Propaganda on an immense scale is here to stay."[85]

2.13   1948-1953: The Korean War, McCarthyism, and the Birth of USIA

Despite having once again having fought off the existential threat to its existence, modern American propaganda continued to suffer from relative skepticism from Congress, and was accorded only a minimal budget. World Wars I and II had clearly shown that once an immediate threat – of war, Communism, etc – had receded, there was little appetite for funding foreign-directed propaganda.   In this sense, only another war would be able to once again loosen Congressional purse strings. The wheels of history would soon provide just such a chance.

With Stalin backing the North Korean invasion of South Korea on June 25, 1950, it became clear to all concerned that the State Department's propaganda department was deeply underfunded given the scope of the task at hand. In FY1949, Congress ultimately allotted only $27 million for foreign persuasion activities – approximately $330 million in 2022 dollars, or roughly 15% of

[83] Sorensen, *The Word War*, 20-22.
[84] Thomson, *Overseas Information Service*, 7.
[85] Henderson, *The United States Information Agency,* 14.

modern funding levels.[86] Through additional appropriations in FY1950, propaganda spending increased by 76% to $47.3 million ($544m in 2022 dollars), and then more than doubled to $103.5 million in FY1951 ($1.1b in 2022 dollars), or approximately half of modern day spending.

With increased spending, of course, came increased oversight. In Truman's second term, a great number of people came together to try to chart a clear and compelling vision for the future of American propaganda, and to answer those questions which had not yet been fully answered. This felt particularly urgent given the rise of McCarthyist hysteria, with the State Department propagandists' very loyalty to the nation under question.

First, as part of the deal-making in 1948 prior to the Smith-Mundt Act, Congress had legislated a permanent Advisory Commission, which would examine overt U.S. government propaganda each year and provide its report to Congress on its effectiveness. Though the Advisory Commission's report in April 1951 had recommended that these propaganda functions remain within the State Department, following McCarthy's deeply demoralizing attacks, mass resignations, and the inability of propaganda leaders to focus on anything other than responding to Congress, by February of 1953 the Commission recommended that propaganda be moved into an independent agency.[87] This was, in fact, already partially underway at the State Department. On January 16, 1952, Assistant Secretary Barrett had ordered yet another reorganization – just before he resigned – creating a new "United States International Information Administration (IIA or

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[86] Budget figures from FY1949-FY1951 were sourced from actual expenditures, not initial appropriations, found within the Budgets of the United States Government, available at fraser.stlouisfed.org. Typically, actual expenditures are only reported 2-3 years later after the initial appropriation. Therefore, for FY51 figures, researchers should check FY53 or FY54. Unfortunately, the location of these budget figures, and the terms used to describe these line items, changes frequently year to year. Please see appendices for annual budget figures from 1941-present.

[87] "United States Advisory Commission on Information," Fourth Semiannual Report to the Congress (April 1951): 8, accessed May 6, 2022, https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/174300.pdf; "United States Advisory Commission on Information," Seventh Semiannual Report to the Congress (February 1953): 1, https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/175981.pdf.

USIIA) as a semi-autonomous agency within the Department of State, reporting directly to the Secretary."[88]

Second, a staunchly anti-Communist former Army Undersecretary, Tracy Voorhees, had created his own private sector commission dubbed the Voorhees Committee to lobby the government on how to best fight the global spread of communism. Their report of June, 1953, came to similar conclusions about propaganda as the Advisory Commission, though it argued that exchange programs should remain within the State Department. This was ostensibly to keep such programs free of the "taint" of propaganda, but in fact also calculated to help win the support of influential Senator J. William Fulbright (D-AR), who, as a deep skeptic of the value of propaganda, opposed such a move.[89]

Still four other commissions led inquiries that year. Eisenhower appointed newly-elected Senator Henry Jackson (D-WA), a twelve-year veteran of the House of Representatives, to lead a committee to advise him on the best way forward for propaganda. Simultaneously, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee appointed newly-elected Senator Bourke Hickenlooper (R-IA), an ardent conservative and isolationist, to conduct its own inquiry. Senator McCarthy was meanwhile running his own witch hunt investigations through the Senate Government Operations Committee. And the House of Representatives, not to be left behind, ran its own investigation.[90] Of these, the Jackson and Hickenlooper reports carried the most traction, with the Jackson Committee report concurring with both the Advisory Commission and Voorhees Committee reports on the need for a new, separate agency. Hickenlooper's report, meanwhile, concluded that *either* the current IIA

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[88] Henderson, *The United States Information Agency*, 47.
[89] Henderson, *The United States Information Agency*, 50.
[90] Dizard, Wilson P., *The Strategy of Truth: The Story of the U.S. Information Service*, (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1961), 41.

needed significantly more autonomy within the State Department to be successful, *or* it needed to become its own agency. Mirroring Voorhees, though, it also recommended separating "information" programs from cultural and educational exchange programs, with the latter remaining at the State Department.[91]

The reports largely agreed that the Department of State was a hostile environment in which propaganda could not succeed. Deemed overly inflexible, too conservative about trying new ideas, and either lacking enthusiasm or overtly opposing the work of the IIA, it was clearly time for a change. Faced with largely unanimous voices – and no real opposition from the State Department – President Eisenhower submitted a report to Congress on June 1, 1953, recommending the creation of a new agency: the United States Information Agency (USIA). Just three months later, the Agency began operations in September of 1953, headed by Theodore Streibert, a film and radio executive.[92]

In institutional terms, the story of overt American government propaganda more or less stops here. Despite a brief name change in the late 1970s, USIA remained the single organization responsible for overt, foreign-directed American propaganda for the next 46 years, when – no longer faced with the existential threat of the Cold War – Congress, following a predictable pattern, determined that propaganda was no longer likely necessary, and in 1999 returned propaganda functions to the Department of State. Needless to say, just two years later, Congress would again come to understand the ongoing need for such work.

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[91] Henderson, *The United States Information Agency*, 50-52.
[92] Henderson, *The United States Information Agency*, 52-53.

2.14 Emotion or Reason? Dialogue or Narrative? Persuade or Inform?

With the institutional history clear, we may now return to the original narrative, in the year 1942, to answer the origin story of *other* fundamental aspects of modern American propaganda, whose questions took much longer to answer, to the extent they were answered at all. Having decided where propaganda would live, and that it would be government-run, foreign-directed, fundamentally honest in nature, divorced from censorship, and driven by State Department defined-policy objectives, how to go about framing and selling the message was another important question yet left to answer. The Voice of America's first director, dramatist John Houseman, experimented in the early 1940s with an artistic movement called German Expressionism, using nameless but recognizably distinct voices to articulate various ideologies in conversation with each other.[93] This was intended as what Lenin refers to as "agitprop," or propaganda intended to provoke an audience toward a certain end: in this case, uprisings against the Nazis.

Houseman, however, left VOA at about the same time as the "moronic little king" scandal, and three months later, on September 26, 1943, VOA programming director Werner Michel issued formal guidance ending the agitprop era of U.S. propaganda. Propagandists and policy-makers had become increasingly skeptical as to the effectiveness of Houseman's techniques, particularly given that his audiences were believed to be starving for news, rather than entertainment. Michel instead directed the VOA to employ the sober, fact-based, rational narrative format common in news broadcasting instead.[94] As historian Holly Cowan Shulman explains, this was part of a larger trend in which "Allied propaganda took a more sober and less emotional, moralistic, or didactic approach to the problem of persuasion, muting overt statements of ideology and dropping most

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[93] Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 55.
[94] Shulman, *The Voice of America,* 128.

allusions to enemy bestiality."[95] This was another aspect of the short-term "victory" over Sherwood, Barnes, Warburg, Johnson, and Houseman, who also represented the viewpoint that "news alone could not produce effective propaganda."[96]

This inform-don't-persuade viewpoint would remain the standard through the post-war institutional transitions until early in the Truman presidency. Truman himself, in moving OWI functions to the State Department, argued in Executive Order 9608 that the U.S. would "not attempt to outstrip the extensive and growing information programs of other nations [but] rather … endeavor to see to it that other peoples receive a full and fair picture of American life and of the aims and policies of the United States government."[97] In early 1950, however, Truman received intelligence that the Kremlin was planning on launching proxy wars around the world, and worked with the senior-most U.S. propagandist at that point, State Department Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Edward Barrett, to launch a "Campaign of Truth," with four primary goals. First, to create a strong, U.S.-based international community able to respond to the threat of Communism. Second, to fairly present the United States and counter misinformation about it. Third, to discourage "aggression by showing that America wants peace but is prepared for war." And fourth, to reduce Soviet power by demoralizing its civil servants.[98]

Deeply motivated by the existential belief that they were promoting "the cause of freedom against the propaganda of slavery,"[99] the campaign led to a shift away from the staid, immediate post-war journalistic 'just the facts' style at VOA, toward a more clearly persuasive style. The VOA, wrote contemporary propagandist John Henderson, shifted "from an emphasis of attempting

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[95] Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 5-6.
[96] Shulman, *The Voice of America*, 170.
[97] MacCann and Bluem, *The People's Films*, 175.
[98] Sorensen, *The Word War*, 25-26.
[99] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 73.

to give the peoples of the world an adequate and fair pictures of the United States to greater emphasis on a program of hard-hitting propaganda."[100] But this shift was at odds with Congress's express intent for U.S. propaganda, which they had outlined in the 1948 Smith-Mundt Act. This law allowed only for U.S. propagandists "to promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries, and to increase mutual understandings between the people of the United States and the people of other countries."[101]

Enduring Congressional skepticism toward propaganda had not entirely melted away after the end of World War II, and neither Barrett nor Truman were convinced they would be able to get sufficient Congressional appropriations to fund their proposed campaign. Helpfully toward that end, in June of 1950 when Stalin helped start the Korean War, the administration capitalized on the threat to justify to Congress a massive increase in propaganda spending.[102] As the U.S. prosecuted the war, however, questions increasingly arose as to the effectiveness of the strident style of propaganda being employed.[103]

In the end, however, it was the excesses of McCarthyism that sealed the fate of overly emotional and strident overt American government propaganda into the dustbin of history, with a few notable exceptions. McCarthy's vitriolic attacks on State Department propagandists had led at first to "a frenetic effort on the part of the program managers to demonstrate their loyalty to the anti-Communist cause by devoting an increasing share of program outputs to attacks on the Communist bloc, with less content focused on positive aspects of U.S. policies."[104] At about the

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[100] Henderson, *The United States Information Agency*, 46.
[101] "Public Laws – Chs. 35, 36 – Jan. 27, 1948," accessed May 5, 2022, https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/177574.pdf.
[102] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 72-73.
[103] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 4-5.
[104] Henderson, *The United States Information Agency*, 49.

same time, Congress had launched several inquiries into the Truman administration's efforts to conduct propaganda and psychological warfare, including the aforementioned 1953 Jackson Committee. Among other recommendations, the committee's final report recommended scaling back on language perceived to be overly "propagandistic," and walking a finer line between persuading and informing.[105]

When the United States Information Agency was established in August 1953, its first director, Thomas Streibert – previously a film and radio executive – tried to straddle this line. On the one hand, Streibert promised to "concentrate on objective, factual news reporting" such that "in presenting facts […] their selection does not misrepresent a given situation."[106] For the agency, this theoretically meant "the elimination of polemics from its broadcasts and written output [and] the careful and scrupulous regard for a truthful and balanced account of events." Yet sensitive to criticism that USIA was not doing enough to *persuade*, Streibert sometimes swung in the opposite direction. In 1954, for example, he described his work as such: "To the enslaved people of the satellites, our news and commentaries from the outside world can also continue to bring evidence of our interest in their freedom and hope for their ultimate liberation."[107]

Streibert's successor George Allen – who had headed the propaganda program at the State Department in the late 40s – essentially put the nail in the coffin for overly emotional argumentation, however. Whereas Streibert pushed for a hard-sell, Allen preferred a passive information sharing approach. Ultimately, Allen believed that foreign opinion of the United States depended almost entirely on U.S. policy, not the spin that propagandists later applied to it, and

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[105] Rubin, *The Objectives of the U.S. Information Agency*, 107-138.
[106] Meyerhoff, Arthur, *The Strategy of Persuasion: The Use of Advertising Skills in Fighting the Cold War*, (New York: Coward-McCann Inc., 1965): 89; Henderson, *The United States Information Agency*, 56.
[107] Rubin, *The Objectives of the U.S. Information Agency,* 43.

therefore there was little reason to invest deeply in emotional persuasion techniques.[108] Though several examples can be found of later U.S. government overt propagandists using emotional persuasion rather than rational persuasion techniques, for the most part this was a minority approach from 1953 to the present day, with some notable exceptions – particularly in the Reagan era. Alternatively, however, every Director following Allen – most notably journalist Edward R. Murrow in the 1960s – emphasized the importance of working clearly to *persuade* rather than simply *inform* foreign publics, albeit in a reserved, journalistic tone of voice.

2.15   Questions Never Fully Resolved

While many of the fundamental issues facing any propaganda agency were satisfactorily asked and answered in the period 1941-1953, many other questions have defied consensus, and may in fact never be fully resolved. First, to what *extent* will U.S. propaganda focus on *informing* versus *persuading*? This, though various USIA directors had divergent views and emphases, was largely dependent on context. Which propagandist was in what country, during what time, in what cultural context, with which *achievable* goals, in the midst of which major events? To the extent that this question was ever answered, the answer was in the hands of each Embassy's public affairs officer, or chief country propagandist. Similarly, questions as to whether propaganda should focus on long-term or short-term goals, on elite or mass audiences, or on quantitative or qualitative goals have all defied a universally applicable answer. Though in my experience, State Department propagandists marginally value long-term over short-term goals, reaching elite over mass audiences, and setting quantitative over qualitative goals, in the end, we do both, to varying degrees depending on context.

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[108] Sorensen, *The Word War*, 105-106.

2.16   Conclusion

In this chapter, we explored how and why modern American propaganda institutions first became (1) public rather than private sector; (2) permanent rather than temporary; (3) truthful rather than dishonest; (4) overt rather than covert, (5) generally sober and rationalist rather than strident and emotional; (6) generally more persuasive rather than purely informational; (7) rooted in narrative rather than dialogue format; (8) internationalist *and* interventionist rather than isolationist; and (9) firewalled from censorship activities, rather than combined. Essentially, propagandists have largely been able to justify their professional existence only in the face of clear national security concerns. The choice to be rational versus emotional, persuasive versus informational, narrative- rather than dialogue-based, internationalist rather than isolationist, and truthful rather than mendacious was largely driven by the ideological beliefs of early propagandists, in concert with some anecdotal evidence about how well their propaganda was succeeding in the field. These choices, along with propaganda's separation from censorship activities, were also driven by deep Congressional and presidential hostility toward and fear of the power of propaganda.

In the next chapters, I will attempt to answer how and why modern American propaganda became (1) presumptive that increased exposure leads to increased liking; (2) based on on-the-job learning, gut feelings and past practices, rather than skills-based training or a foundation in the social sciences of persuasion; (3) unwilling to ask audiences to put themselves in harm's way to advance policy goals; and (4) evangelical about democracy, rather than focused exclusively on

more limited or transactional goals. I will also explore unresolved questions surrounding American propagandists' changing focus on elite versus mass audiences, preferences for long versus short-term goals, and briefly, the extent to which policy makers have included propagandists to the policy table.

3 The Institutional Culture of Modern American Propaganda

3.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the history of the United States Information Agency (USIA) and its institutional culture, from its birth in 1953 until its merger into the Department of State. Here, I argue that the institutional culture established by 1953 did not significantly change thereafter.

In this chapter, I will attempt to answer three primary questions: (1) what changed – or more importantly, didn't change – in the institutional culture and behavior of overt American government propaganda institutions from 1953 to the present; (2) why did these institutions come to rely on on-the job training rather than social science expertise when designing persuasion programs; and (3) how did these institutions come to become evangelical promoters of democracy? In the next chapter, I will explore the results of a survey of current U.S. propagandists, which confirms that the institutional culture born in the 1940s and early 1950s is still very much operative today.

Having explained the institutional history of modern American propaganda through the birth of the USIA, we must now turn to what came after. Though several top propagandists in the 1960s continued the tradition of writing memoirs of their time in government service, this abruptly came to a halt in the late 1960s. This greater reticence may have been due to increased negative attention on U.S. government statements and propaganda in light of the Vietnam war, and on the misleading statements made by senior government and military officials. As a result, in this chapter, while I rely on similar sources to those in the previous chapter – the writings and remarks of senior U.S. propaganda officials – for the period 1953 to 1968, thereafter my source material

shifts significantly. At that point in the story, I rely much more heavily on the annual reports of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, as well as upon oral interviews I conducted with six USIA officials, both mid-level and senior, who served from the 1970s to the 1990s.

3.2   The 1950s: The More Things Change…

With the establishment of USIA in 1953, there still remained fluctuations over time between directors, and depending on historical circumstances, in many aspects of how propaganda was conceived and executed. These included the relative importance that key USIA leaders accorded to short-term versus long-term programs, the emphasis they placed on persuasion versus information, and the extent to which they were invited to the policy-making table alongside senior State Department and Defense Department leaders. However, I argue that the overall institutional culture described in the previous chapter remained relatively constant. Those intimately familiar with how overt American government propagandists operate today will be struck by how familiar the operative beliefs of 1953 feel and sound.

For one, the institution was still committed to its wartime internationalist ethos, which was not a given following repeated Congressional attempts to defund the entire program. Illustrating this point, in 1953 former OWI deputy director and later State Department chief propagandist Edward Barrett published *Truth is Our Weapon,* explaining the ongoing need for a sustained strategy of global, truth-based propaganda to counter the Soviet Union's ideological and military expansion efforts. If anyone had any doubts that America, or its overt propagandists, might retreat into post-war isolationism, Barrett argued, Eisenhower quickly put that idea to rest: "President Eisenhower's inaugural address of 1953 [was] probably the most internationalist speech ever delivered by an American president," winning "plaudits from virtually every political and

journalistic voice this side of the *Chicago Tribune*."[1] In fact, Barrett wrote, by 1953 "old-style isolationism no longer exist[ed] as a political force."[2]

Those in charge of that global propaganda campaign were also committed to the sober and journalistic approach pursued by the OWI after 1943. In rejection of both McCarthyism and his own recent Campaign of Truth (see Chapter 2), Barrett argued that a winning strategy had to be rationalistic to be effective: "We have no wise choice but to master the techniques of international persuasion. This does not mean going hog-wild, misconstruing propaganda as a substitute for action. It does not mean adopting, under pressure from immature headline-hunters, such shrill and strident techniques as to alienate at the outset those we seek to win over. It doesn't mean confusing volume with effectiveness."[3]

Early USIA officer Wilson Dizard later made the same points in his 1961 book *The Strategy of Truth*, noting that the stentorian tone of the Campaign of Truth finally met its end with the birth of the new agency: "In the sober-sided reappraisal that took place in the 1953 when the USIA was set up, [the previous] pugilistic tone was changed," terminating the "strident, high-pitched program[s] that delighted in making sophisticated political points without concern for the reaction of the average listener."[4]

George Allen, the USIA Director from 1957-1960, reiterated this point: "We want the program to be factual, straightforward and dignified, to avoid flamboyance in tone, or voice, or in phraseology. […] We have sometimes raised our tone, in excitement or in anger, but I hope we

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[1] Barrett, Edward, *Truth is Our Weapon*, (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co, 1953): 227.
[2] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 227.
[3] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 6.
[4] Dizard, Wilson, *The Strategy of Truth: The Story of the U.S. Information Service,* (Washington, DC. Public Affairs Press, 1961): 74.

shall do it as little as possible."[5] Allen even went so far as to issue a "USIA Basic Guidance Paper" on October 22, 1957, forbidding "drawing obvious morals," "all kinds of polemics and denunciation," and "anything "sarcastic or boastful or self-righteous."[6]

Barrett argued the sober truth was crucial for two key reasons. First, it was important that the United States develop its own unique *style* of overt propaganda, which could not easily be confused with that of the Soviets: "Subtlety is essential. By being too shrill, propaganda can defeat itself – as the Soviets' output, happily, has sometimes done."[7] Second, Barrett reiterated the wartime view that "truth and truth alone should be America's weapon in official propaganda," as this was the only ethical and practical course.[8] Barrett argued that this uniquely American propaganda had to shy away from trying to create an emotional mass movement because it was dangerous to democracy. American propaganda, as a result, was constitutionally unable to create simplistic creeds as the Communists did, like arguing that Communism would lead to a worker's utopia, as such statements violated the strategy of truth.[9] Interestingly, other challenges that Barrett described in those early years are precisely the same as those that have bedeviled American propagandists up to the present day. He describes, for example, how a hostile Congress latched onto reports of one poorly thought-through art exhibit in their attempts to defund the entire program.[10]

Much like many later propaganda directors and operatives (see Appendix J), Barrett also believed that in a competitive marketplace of ideas, the American truth would rise to the top,

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[5] Henderson, John, *The United States Information Agency*, (New York. Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1969): 56.
[6] Sorensen, Thomas, *The Word War: The Story of American Propaganda*, (New York. Harper & Row, 1968): 99.
[7] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 19.
[8] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 131.
[9] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 268-270.
[10] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 57. This remains, sadly, a repeating feature of Congressional inquiry.

arguing that "we are convinced that America stands up well under examination and that knowledge of this nation fosters respect for it and confidence in it."[11] (This was also one of the early formulations of the enduring, but scientifically unsupported, belief that *the more they know us, the more they like us*.) Just three years later in 1956, former OWI Director Elmer Davis made the same scientifically dubious point about how rational facts would ultimately prevail of their own power: "This nation was conceived in liberty and dedicated to the principle … that honest men may honestly disagree; that if they all say what they think, a majority of people will be able to distinguish truth from error; that in the competition in the marketplace of ideas, the sounder ideas will in the long run win out."[12] USIA Director George Allen (1957-1960) also agreed, generally arguing that *informing* was equivalent to persuading.[13]

Barrett, like his OWI forebears, shared the evangelical belief that the idea of democracy was so compelling and obviously *superior* that it would be enough to simply share The Good Word with others, rather than investing over several generations in inculcating the social beliefs required for a democracy to succeed: "The U.S believes that democracy is the best form of government yet devised. […] We should illustrate how democracy works here and let our audiences reach their own conclusions."[14] Moreover, he argued, that evangelism had to be active: "The United States Government can no longer be indifferent to the ways in which our nation is portrayed by other countries, but is obliged to give a full and fair picture of the United States."[15] This, Barrett wrote, was implemented by propagandists with "a sort of missionary zeal that contrasted sharply with the average man's idea of a government bureaucrat. Voluntary work after hours and on weekends was

[11] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 68.
[12] Burlingame, Roger, *Don't Let Them Scare you: The Life and Times of Elmer Davis*, (Cornwall: Cornwall Press, Inc., 1961): 17.
[13] Sorensen, *The Word War*, 115-6.
[14] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 68.
[15] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 69-70.

more the rule than the exception."[16] Barrett's dedication page read, in its entirety: "To Mason, my wife – and to hundreds of other wives who have tolerated and encouraged propagandist husbands in the frustrating toil of trying to convert men to the cause of freedom."[17]

Finally, on an organizational level, even when examining USIA in 1953, modern American propagandists would easily recognize the clear reflection of their own institutions. Just five years after the birth of Congressionally-approved exchange programs, Barrett already confidently describes sending journalists on exchange programs such as the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) to attempt to generate more favorable coverage for the United States. He also describes multi-media, multi-audience campaigns on specific policy issues, such as a campaign to highlight what has happened in countries where Communists had already taken over – tactics which have not changed to the present day.[18] On a structural level, Barrett also outlines many of the key organizational structures so familiar to modern day American propagandists, including Country Team, and by different names, the Integrated Country Strategy (ICS), and the Public Diplomacy Implementation Plan (PDIP).[19] 1953 was also the year that, organizationally, USIA's first director Thomas Streibert vested a great deal of power in "geographic bureaus." In this arrangement, which continues to the present day, propaganda funding was first funneled to offices

[16] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 76.
[17] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, dedication page.
[18] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon*, 11.
[19] Barrett, *Truth is Our Weapon,* 237, 315; Rubin, Ronald, *The Objectives of the U.S. Information Agency*, (New York. Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968): 162-167; Sorensen, *The Word War,* 56-63. "Country Team" is a term of art that refers to a meeting between senior Embassy officials, including the Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission, and Section Heads. This innovation spread beginning in the 1950s, prior to which Ambassadors were free to organize the Embassy as they saw fit. The ICS is a three-year strategic planning documents developed by each Embassy that lays out medium-term goals and objectives for each section. The PDIP is a similar, but one-year, document specific to the Public Diplomacy Section which ties together finances, staffing, and strategic goals.

which oversaw, for example, operations in Sub-Saharan Africa or East Asia, rather than having such funding allocated from one global office.[20]

3.3 The 1960s: The Age of Murrow

Famed journalist Edward R. Murrow took over as USIA chief on March 21, 1961, just two months after President John F. Kennedy took office. Three years earlier, Congress had cut USIA's budget by 10% due to their displeasure with short-lived director Arthur Larson, and Murrow sought about rebuilding USIA's relationship with Congress. To do so, he had to explain why propaganda was still *relevant*, and therefore, with Kennedy's backing, worked to ensure that the entire agency clearly understood its mission was not only to *inform*, but also to *persuade.[21]* In this, he was backed by the U.S. Advisory Commission on Information, whose February 1963 report stated clearly that "merely purveying information is not enough. The United States must engage in ardent persuasion which by its nature is aggressive and creative."[22]

Murrow's efforts, however, were only so successful. One of his successors as USIA director, Leonard Marks, was later chastised by the Advisory Commission, whose 1968 report noted that "there is still uncertainty as to whether greater thrust and emphasis should be placed on *information* and persuasion or behind *education* and persuasion."[23] By this point as well, American propagandists were also attuned to the risk of inciting their audiences to risk life and limb in pursuit of American policy goals such as democratization, particularly in the wake of the

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[20] Henderson, *The United States Information Agency*, 53. The State Department, meanwhile, was glad to be rid of the responsibility of propaganda. In 1957, Secretary of State Dulles said of plans to bring USIA back into the State Department: "If I so much took into account what people in other countries are thinking or feeling, I would be derelict in my duty." Source: Sorensen, *The Word War*, 81-82.

[21] Henderson, *The United States Information Agency,* 66-68; Sorensen, *The Word War*, 122.

[22] United States Advisory Commission on Information, "Eighteenth Report of the United States Advisory Commission on Information," (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963): 20. Accessed on May 27, 2022, https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/175641.pdf

[23] Henderson, *The United States Information Agency,* 270.

1956 Hungarian uprising.[24] Both USIA and VOA were careful thereafter not to potentially lead audiences to believe that if they risked their lives for democracy, the United States would assuredly come to their aid.

In 1960s, the USIA also found itself in the Congressional hotseat for, in one case, not being assiduously truthful, and in another, for not disclosing that it was funding a particular program. In 1963 and on Murrow's watch, Congress was livid to discover that USIA had funded 2,000 copies of arch-conservative Jeanne Kirkpatrick's anti-Communist book *The Strategy of Deception* for distribution abroad, as some copies of it had made their way back to domestic markets in violation of Smith-Mundt.[25] Then, on January 13, 1965 under Director Carl Rowan, the Associated Press revealed that a USIA-funded propaganda "documentary" film about Vietnam had staged fake fighting scenes. Rowan immediately ordered an end to any such tactics.[26]

Meanwhile, USIA began to attract criticism from the private sector, in particular the advertising industry, that its persuasion efforts were largely ineffective. In 1963, journalist Walter Joyce called American propaganda "a disappointment," laying out five key criticisms. First, the program was so underfunded compared to its adversaries that it could not plausibly compete. Second, it had no clear goals in mind. Third, Joyce objected to the strategy of truth as fighting with one hand behind one's back. Fourth, Joyce pointed out the long-standing inability of key

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[24] Sorensen, *The Word War*, 92-3. Sorensen discusses how Hungarians interpreted VOA broadcasts to mean that U.S. military support would come in the event of a revolt against the Communist government. Obviously, this did not occur, leading to the deaths of approximately 2,500 Hungarians, and 200,000 refugees.
[25] Rubin, *The Objectives of the U.S. Information Agency*, 206; Sorensen, *The Word War*, 69-70.
[26] MacCann, Richard Dyer and William A. Bluem, *The People's Films*, (New York. Hastings House Publishers, 1973): 188.

propagandists to get a seat at the policy-making table. And fifth, he argued that there was far too much information, and not nearly enough persuasion.[27]

Advertising executive Arthur Meyerhoff made similar points in his 1965 book *The Strategy of Persuasion*, arguing that USIA efforts suffered from a clear lack of understanding of proven techniques of persuasion. "As a result," he wrote, "the message which they bear does not reach the people for whom it is intended in a form that has meaning for them."[28] Meyerhoff excoriated what he perceived as an overly factual style, noting a few counterexamples, such as USIA's dubbing of the Berlin Wall as the "Wall of Shame," as best practices. He rejected Murrow's formulation that "to be persuasive, we must be believable; to be believable, we must be credible; to be credible we must be truthful. It is as simple as that." Instead, Meyerhoff argued that "ultimately it is not that simple. While it is true that believability is vital to persuasiveness, it is a mistake to equate news with the truth."[29] The solution, he wrote, was a dramatic uptick in funding for market research, and hiring subject matter experts from the field of advertising.[30]

None of these criticisms, however, were lost on the actual propagandists themselves. Murrow's Deputy Director Thomas Sorensen wrote in his 1968 memoirs, for example, that "merely informing people was not enough. We had to make a case for our views, as others were doing for theirs. We had to be advocates, persuaders – propagandists. We did not lie, or distort the news, or subvert the media, but neither were we disinterested."[31] However, even Sorensen admitted to an ongoing confusion about how clearly to tie educational and exchange programs to

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[27] Joyce, Walter, *The Propaganda Gap*, (New York. Harper & Row, 1963): 16.
[28] Meyerhoff, Arthur, *The Strategy of Persuasion: The Use of Advertising Skills in Fighting the Cold War*, (New York. Coward-McCann, Inc., 1965): 15-18.
[29] Meyerhoff, *The Strategy of Persuasion*, 101.
[30] Meyerhoff, *The Strategy of Persuasion*, 16, 18, 60, 62, 86, 95, 100-102, 111, 117, 128, 160, 166.
[31] Sorensen, *The Word War, ix-x*.

policy-driven persuasion goals.[32] But USIA was clearly responding to some of these criticisms:

in the 1960s, the Agency created its own polling service called the Office of Research, "to analyze

foreign issues, attitudes, audiences, and media."[33] Under Murrow, the USIA also created, in

October 1961, the first Foreign Correspondents' Center in New York, which continues to operate

to the present day.[34]

The ethical issues that continue to confront overt, modern American government

propagandists were already clear to USIA officials in the 1960s. USIA had, since its inception,

banned "buying space in news columns or on the radio, or paying journalists to do its bidding."[35]

The already global network of 223 American government libraries had to walk an ethical tightrope

between providing the full scope of information and ideas, without angering host governments so

much that they were shut down.[36] And though the strict firewall between intelligence work and

overt propaganda at the working level remained in place, senior USIA and CIA leaders began

deconflicting their major operations to avoid overlap.[37] Deputy Director Sorensen reiterated that

the strategy of truth was still very much in place, though he also made it clear – as had his

predecessors – that truth needed to be contextualized for it to be meaningful.[38] Citing Murrow,

period academic Ronald Rubin also restated the argument for a specifically *American* style of

truthful propaganda, noting that "the USIA must mirror the diversity in American political life

[and] cannot practice the deception in which a propaganda machine freely engages. […] Instead,

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[32] Sorensen, *The Word War*, 70-72.
[33] Sorensen, *The Word War*, 83.
[34] Sorensen, *The Word War*, 186-7. A Washington, DC center later opened in 1970.
[35] Sorensen, *The Word War*, 65.
[36] Sorensen, *The Word War*, 66-67.
[37] Sorensen, *The Word War*, 231.
[38] Sorensen, *The Word War*, 244.

the USIA must make a virtue of national pluralism in publicizing the American message overseas."[39]

Despite its occasional missteps, and even when confronted with the difficult task of defending the Vietnam War, the organizational culture remained true to its World War II ethos throughout the 1960s. The employees of USIA in its second decade remained eager, truthful, internationalist evangelists for democracy, who ensured that their efforts at persuasion remained largely sober, dispassionate, and *American*, even when under attack by Congress and the private sector. On the other hand, they remained aloof from best practices from other fields such as advertising, as well as from contemporary social science research on persuasion.

3.4   The 1970s: Directors Shakespeare, Keogh, and Reinhardt

In the 1970s, the senior leaders of USIA essentially stopped communicating directly with the public through memoirs following their public service. Outside of a few specialist press articles, Director Frank Shakespeare (1969-1973) published a single article in *U.S. News & World Report*, while his successor James Keogh (1973-1976) similarly published but one article, and that in the same magazine.[40] The next director, John Reinhardt (1977-1980) published nothing at all aimed at the public – though he surely made waves with his article "United States government and international communication" in *International Educational & Cultural Exchange*'s Winter 1978 edition.[41] None of them published memoirs following their government service, nor does it appear

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[39] Rubin, *The Objectives of the United States Information Agency*, 36.
[40] Shakespeare, Frank, "Who's winning the propaganda war?," *U.S. News & World Report*, May 1, 1972; Keogh, James, "How a troubled America puts best foot forward," *U.S. News & World Report*, September 30, 1974.
[41] Reinhardt, John, "United States government and international exchange," *International Educational & Cultural Exchange* 13, (Winter 1978): 40-43.

did any of their deputies. Limited scholarly work from universities continued to assess USIA strategies, successes, and failures, but the voices of the senior propagandists themselves fell silent.

As a result, to bolster the case that the cultural fundamentals of modern, overt, institutional American propaganda did not change in the 1970s, I necessarily turn to reports from the Congressionally-mandated Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (ACPD), as well as oral interviews from several USIA officials who served in this period.[42] ACPD reports are akin to reports from corporate management consultants who identify issues, problems, and inefficiencies for the organization to solve. In this light, they are not primary sources that can give us the views of the propagandists themselves, but rather a secondary source from those who have closely studied the operations, beliefs, and motivations of the propagandists. These reports shine a spotlight on ongoing policy questions such as the extent to which propagandists need a seat at the policy table to be successful, and inefficiencies such as deficient research capabilities. However, they do not specifically address embedded cultural questions like the extent to which practitioners continued to embrace the strategy of truth; for those questions, we must turn to oral interviews.

ACPD reports in the 1970s, at least on the propaganda program, were sporadic, typically being released every three years rather than annually as is mandated by law. They highlighted many of the perennial, never-answered questions, and often took conflicting views depending on which year's report one reads: should USIA remain independent or return to the State Department? Should public affairs officers in the field have more or less decision-making authority? Should propaganda programs hew closely to the political winds, or should they chart a more stable course

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[42] The ACPD was previously comprised of two parallel monitoring organizations, one focused on cultural and exchange programs, the other on propaganda programs. For the sake of clarity, I refer to all three organizations as ACPD in the main text, though footnotes indicate which Commission is specifically cited.

founded upon the foreign policy principles that both Democrats and Republicans were likely to agree upon? How would success be measured? How important was it for propagandists to have a seat at the policy making table? To what extent should propagandists maintain the long-standing 'warts and all' approach to describing America, even in the face of some Congressional opposition? How should propagandists prioritize outreach to elite versus mass audiences?

More importantly, however, they treated as unquestioned some of the salient points of America's institutional propaganda culture. None of these reports even approached questioning the strategy of truth. They treated internationalism as a given in the Cold War context of competition with both the USSR and China, and treated the permanence of the institution as obvious. There was not a single suggestion that persuasion techniques become more emotional, strident, or vivid, and ACPD reports fully supported the evangelical mission of the United States to advance democracy in the face of totalitarianism.

The reports in the 1970s *also* called out several of the ongoing weaknesses of American propaganda culture, including the presumption that increased exposure leads to increased liking, and the lack of grounding in social science research on persuasion. The 1970 report explicitly questioned the prevailing idea that *the more they know us, the more they like us*, calling this assumption "hazardous."[43] Echoing previous decades' criticism, the reports further characterized USIA's research efforts as "primitive, timid, and stumbling in the past," noting that its research was both underfunded and not grounded in existing social science, and that its results were not

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[43] United States Advisory Commission on Information, "Twenty Fifth Report of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Information," (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971): 6. Accessed on May 24, 2022 at https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/175917.pdf

effectively communicated to the field.[44] Finally, all reports from this period agreed that the USIA had not established credible means to measure program success, with its 1974 report providing an entire how-to manual on how to do so in its appendices.[45]

Oral interviews with period USIA employees confirm that in the 1970s, modern American propagandists shared the same institutional culture as both their forebears and successors. Pat Kushlis served from 1970-1998 in a variety of roles, including both domestic positions as well as in Helsinki, Moscow, and Bangkok. Highlighting the ongoing tension between the extent to which American propagandists should inform versus aggressively persuade, Kushlis noted that "I wouldn't say [we were] selling policy. That would be too much. I would say explaining policy." Moreover, the tone of U.S. propaganda was sober and reasoned: "I don't remember strident language." In this period, Kushlis also notes that USIA programs were still driven by foreign policy, and animated by the strategy of truth: "In my own experience, I was never given anything that was disinformation. Yes, we were doing propaganda, but I was never given anything that was a lie." The truth required contextualization, but also included facts that were less favorable to the United States: "[The] warts and all [approach] was never frowned upon. Really it was more important to focus on knowing who you're talking to [and] to try to explain this is what the official is saying and the context in which it was said."[46]

Paul Smith, who served with the USIA from 1973 until 1999, and then with the State Department until 2002, had similar memories. In his 30-year career, which included serving as

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[44] United States Advisory Commission on Information, "Twenty Fourth Report of U.S. Advisory Commission on Information," (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969): 6. Accessed on May 24, 2022 at https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/175663.pdf

[45] United States Advisory Commission on Information, "27th Annual Report of the United States Advisory Commission on Information," (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974): 65-100. Accessed on May 24, 2022 at https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/27th-report-ACI.pdf

[46] Pat Kushlis (retired USIA officer) in discussion with the author, April 2, 2022.

Consul General in St. Petersburg and Deputy Chief of Mission in Moscow, he remembered using

neutral rather than strident language in his persuasion efforts: "We were to avoid anything that

would create conflict, [and] get the message across but downplay the emotional dimension." Smith

also noted that long-term goals were prioritized over short-term goals:

> Long-term goals were the focus of the country plans. Meeting people was meant to build long-term relationships. Exchange programs were meant to send people to influence policy over the long term on their return. Establishing long-term working relationships with the media to get the message out. *Not* focusing on why were not supporting this or that trade issue, but bigger things like we're a democracy. Issues were always there and we always had to be prepared to articulate the U.S. position, but it wasn't that we spent a lot of time doing that. The key was to develop relationships, positive relations.[47]

3.5 The 1980s: The Charles Wick Era

Though the standard tenure for 'successful' USIA directors from the 1950s to the 1970s

was 3 years, Hollywood film producer Charles Wick broke the mold by remaining in office for the

entirety of Reagan's presidency, setting a to-date unbroken record for longest serving chief

American propagandist. Backed by a president whose own Hollywood history had shaped him

into a man known as the Great Communicator, Wick was anxious to make it clear that the USIA

was not here simply to inform, but to *persuade*, and often in dramatic fashion.[48] Though the public

affairs officers at various Embassies had become accustomed in the 1960s and 1970s to more or

less running their shops, so long as they conformed to larger foreign policy goals, Wick saw

himself as an orchestra director, and insisted that – at times – all USIA posts play the same tune,

even if local audiences found the sound a bit dissonant.

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[47] Paul Smith (retired USIA and State Department officer) in discussion with the author, April 2, 2022.
[48] Snyder, Alvin, *Warriors of Disinformation,* (New York. Arcade Publishing, 1995): *xv*

Wick insisted, for example, that every USIA post around the world screen a U.S. government-funded musical film called "Let Poland Be Poland," and that every Embassy pressgang local media into televised press briefings, whether or not local media was interested.[49] This was, as one of Wick's deputies explained, because Reagan wanted to "inject new vigor" into American propaganda, or, as National Security Advisor Carnes Lord put it, to "shake up this whole backwater of U.S. government policy," which disturbed the Reaganites with its "lack of fresh thinking in approaching the mission, and its World War II mentality."[50] Wick insisted that USIA reframe from the propaganda *détente* of the 1970s to a more aggressive anti-Soviet stance, aggressively countering Soviet disinformation efforts.[51] Mirroring Truman's ill-fated Campaign of Truth, Wick called this new effort Project Truth, but later folded it into an expanded Project Democracy as the first title was deemed too propagandistic.[52] This "multi-agency programming initiative [was] designed to advocate the principles of democracy abroad," part of the long-standing democratic evangelism of U.S. propaganda efforts.[53]

ACPD reports largely took up this charge as well, focusing more narrowly on specific tactics and program ideas rather than long-standing issues related to USIA's institutional culture. However, almost every ACPD report in the 1980s made specific mention of the need for increased

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[49] Snyder, Allen, *Warriors of Disinformation*, 6, 83.
[50] Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation*, 33.
[51] Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation*, 77, 105.
[52] United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, "Second Report on the U.S. International Communication Agency (1982)," 32. Accessed May 27, 2022 at https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/1982-Report.pdf. Also "1983 Report of the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy," 22. Accessed May 27, 2022 at https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/1983-Advisory-Commission-Annual-Report.pdf.
[53] United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, "1983 Report of the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy," 22.

funding for, and integration of, research into program decisions. The 1989 report in particular castigated the "largely ritualistic … commitment to public opinion research."[54]

Despite the changes referenced above, the core propaganda culture, including the strategy of truth, again remained remarkably stable. Though USIA's director for television and film grandiosely claimed in his book *Warriors of Disinformation* that he and his peers became "unknowing warriors of disinformation, and then we became knowing ones," his book is bereft of even a single example of USIA knowingly promoting disinformation. Instead, at times, the CIA or the National Security Agency "duped [USIA] into transmitting lies – disinformation – without [us] realizing it at the time."[55]

Oral interviews with period employees confirm that the "World War II mentality" so disliked by the Reagan appointees was still alive and well, for better *and* for worse. Judith Siegel, who served for 25 years in USIA and the State Department (1981-2006), including in a position equivalent to Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Information Bureau, confirmed that the strategy of truth was just as active as it had been previously: "Everything in our publications was balanced and accurate, and to the extent possible, non-propagandistic." Further, "because some Congressional staff believed that the Reagan administration attempted to politicize USIA funding decisions for civil society grants," Congress added reporting guidelines to ensure that [Information Bureau] grants did not serve domestic political concerns. [56]

Dan Sreebny, meanwhile, served for almost 30 years in USIA and the State Department, from 1980 to 2009, and has continued working with certain State Department propaganda

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[54] United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, "1989 Report," 28. Accessed on May 27, 2022, at https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/1989-Report-ACPD.pdf
[55] Snyder, *Warriors of Disinformation*, *xiv*
[56] Judith Siegel, (retired USIA and State Department officer) in discussion with the author, April 5, 2022.

institutions even into retirement. Sreebny confirmed that despite the change in tone at the very top under Wick, USIA language remained, for the most part, sober and journalistic. "The idea," said Sreebny, "was not to adopt a journalist approach because we're journalists – we're not – but because we need credibility with the target audience in order to influence them. […] I wouldn't say journalism versus emotion, but there's a consistent approach of needing to be credible. In a speech you want to include stories, feelings, a sense of what matters, but you want to ensure it's grounded in credibility. But there's that tension sometimes, like Iraq and Afghanistan, if we just yell it loud enough, we are right, they are wrong. We are good, they are bad, and we did sometimes get suggestions to do some of that."[57]

Ben Ziff joined USIA in 1988, and following its integration into the State Department in 1999, worked his way up to senior level positions including Deputy Chief of Mission in Bogota, and Deputy Assistant Secretary in the European bureau. Like Siegel, he confirmed that in the 1980s "USIA focused on more long-term relationship building, less on immediate communication responses [because] you just didn't have the situational awareness," despite the fact that policy makers in Washington did not "think about a year from now, five years from now, fifteen years from now. It's our job to think about that." Ziff also confirmed the ongoing commitment to the strategy of truth, as well as to relatively sober communication styles: "Emotional language was generally avoided because we didn't think it would *work*. It was more thoughtful and sober, and we talked about it in terms that [the audience] would think was respectful." Further, "we were not lying, cheating, and stealing," as "the thing we always had going for us was our credibility." Much like the OWI of the early 1940s, Ziff explained that USIA even into the 1980s and 1990s attracted

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[57] Dan Sreebny, (retired USIA and State Department officer) in discussion with the author, April 8, 2022.

"mavericks, the authors, the poets, the dreamers, the artists, the academics, who were interested in the subject matter and engaging with foreign audiences."[58]

3.6   The 1990s: The Collapse of Communism, and USIA Integration

The collapse of the Soviet Union and its regional empire posed existential questions for American propagandists. To what extent would they still be needed in this post-Cold War world? So much of 1980s-era U.S. propaganda had been directed at combating Communism that Ziff, who joined in 1988, understood USIA as "not this general [public diplomacy] organization," but one instead "set up to counter the bulwarks of the Soviet Union and to a lesser extent China." Ziff saw USIA "struggle in the time after the Wall fell [as] it just couldn't find a purpose, because it was designed to counter the Soviet Union."[59] Judith Siegel concurred: "For so long [public diplomacy] was called the war of ideas, but then supposedly we won – so what were we fighting?"[60]

Perhaps sensing pending budget cuts, the ACPD report in 1990 sought to head off this eventuality by arguing that USIA was needed now more than ever, particularly to fulfill the evangelical role of democratization in those countries recently freed from authoritarianism. That report argued the "USIA is not a creature of the Cold War, its work now finished. The Agency's worldwide mission will become more, not less, important," with its efforts "vital to the success of democratization in Eastern Europe."[61] Regardless, USIA's budgets decreased throughout the decade (see Appendix I), as unfortunately did funding for the ACPD, which largely stopped

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[58] Ben Ziff (Former USIA and current State Department officer), in discussion with the author, April 3, 2022.
[59] Ziff interview.
[60] Siegel interview.
[61] United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, "*Public Diplomacy in a New Europe* (1990)," 3. Accessed on May 27, 2022 at https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/1990-Public-Diplomacy-in-a-New-Europe.pdf

producing annual reports for the next twenty years, albeit with a few enlightening special reports appearing at intervals.

Jonathan Cebra joined USIA at this tumultuous time, officially in 1997, though after having worked in Warsaw for the State Department from 1992-1993, and then for a major USIA grantee which administered several of its exchange programs. Debra, Smith, Siegel, and Cebra all described an institution with clear long-term goals in which programs were driven by foreign policy.[62] Siegel elaborated: "When I supervised these programs in the Clinton and second Bush administrations, the focus was on information that would make foreign publics understand us better," including understanding the context of specific policy goals.[63] Cebra and Paul Smith concurred that the strategy of truth, including the 'warts and all,' and other significant aspects of the institutional culture were very much intact.[64]

3.7   1999 and Beyond: Integration with State

Despite massive budget cuts to the propaganda apparatus as part of USIA's integration into the State Department – a 33% drop from 1999 to 2000 – as well as a perceived loss of status, my interviewees confirmed that the institutional culture remained largely intact in the next decade, up until my own hiring in 2008. That said, there *were* significant changes noted by the propagandists who chose to remain with State. Cebra reported a lessened sense of independence at the working level, particularly in the ability to tell the Ambassador 'no.' Shockingly, he noted that it "took

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[62] Jonathan Cebra (former USIA and current State Department officer), in conversation with the author, May 4, 2022.
[63] Cebra interview.
[64] Cebra and Smith interviews.

about five years after consolidation before we started getting Department Notices," the State Department's preferred method of communicating policy changes to its staff.[65]

Siegel concurred with Cebra's assessment, saying that "within the Department, [public diplomacy] is a diminished presence compared to what USIA was. USIA was able to be much more of a force because the Department couldn't kill things." According to Siegel, the educational and cultural programs did not significantly change post-merger thanks to their separate legislative charter, and in any case, the Department of State was more interested in administering the information programs.[66]

Ziff noted that in part due to technological limitations such as the absence of social media and the internet, USIA was much more focused on influencing elites than mass audiences, as compared to modern public diplomacy at the State Department. Further, he argued that Embassies in general have lost autonomy due to the technological ability through email for policy makers in Washington to engage with posts on a minute to minute basis. As a result, "some of the long-term stuff got deprioritized because of this new ability to focus on the short-term stuff." Ziff also describes how the meaning of "policy-driven" has taken on a much more narrow definition in the State Department era:

> Younger officers might say that you're not using State Department channels to move tactically day by day, hour by hour, to move the needle. The Department now believes it deploys public diplomacy in a much more narrow, mechanistic way. The older Public Diplomacy officers were much more broad-brush, and much more focused on shifting sentiment by suasion, and who you engage with, not how you engage with them. It wasn't about getting these three words into a speech by the Prime Minister, which is what Washington [now] thinks is a success.[67]

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[65] Cebra interview.
[66] Siegel interview.
[67] Ziff interview.

Though there is much to recommend about the enduring institutional culture of modern American propaganda, there are also significant weaknesses in that culture. Next, I will explore three specific issues that have their roots in that same institutional culture, dating back to 1953:

3.8 Institutional Weakness A: Lack of Training

The lack of meaningful training for public diplomacy officers has been an issue identified by many critics since the establishment of the USIA, and that deficit continues to hamper the ability of such officers to meaningfully advance U.S. foreign policy to the present day. Distressingly, the time allotted to training for U.S. propagandists has dramatically *decreased* over the decades. Recently, for example, the State Department's training school – the Foreign Service Institute – combined two separate three-week courses, on information and cultural programs respectively, into *one* three-week course, despite the necessarily reduced course outcomes.[68]

As early as the Eisenhower administration, there was significant discussion about creating a "National Foreign Affairs Academy" or "Freedom Academy" to provide long-term, pre-service training to U.S. government propagandists.[69] Spurred by concurring recommendations from ACPD reports in 1952 and 1954, that discussion continued throughout the 1950s, until in May of 1962 Assistant Secretary of State Frederick Dutton told Congress that the Department of State

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[68] Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, "2021 Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy & International Broadcasting,"24. Accessed on May 27, 2022 at https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2021-ACPD-Annual-Report-508-WEB.pdf
[69] Rubin, *The Objectives of the U.S. Information Agency,* 180.

actively opposed the idea.[70] This was despite a presidential committee on propaganda having

determined that such an institute was "essential."[71]

In 1967 and 1968, the ACPD raised the issue again, calling training for U.S. propagandists

insufficient, and by 1968 proposals were once again floated for a propaganda training academy.[72]

USIA itself was well aware of the deficiencies of relying entirely on an apprenticeship model:

> Agency planners liken[ed] the status of [USIA] training [in 1969] to that of the medical and legal professions in the early nineteenth century. At that time, the apprentice system was the principle method of training, but the professions had begun to draw together their accumulated knowledge and to create schools where this collected information was stored, analyzed, and imparted to students. Similarly, the Agency has relied on developing apprentices into skilled propagandists, but it is now moving toward a more formalized arrangement.[73]

Sadly, that prediction did not bear fruit. Perhaps sensing that they were unlikely to make

meaningful headway pushing increased training given budget realities, ACPD did not significantly

address the issue again for several decades, until 2014, when the issue again became a steady,

annual drumbeat.

In particular, a 2015 ACPD special report called "Getting the People Part Right II: the

Human Resources Dimension of U.S. Public Diplomacy" and a 2020 special ACPD report called

"Teaching Public Diplomacy and the Information Instruments of Power in a Complex Information

Environment" spotlighted the gap in practitioner knowledge compared to their private sector and

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[70] United States Advisory Commission on Information, "Sixth Semiannual Report of United States Advisory Commission on Information," (Washington, DC. Government Printing Office, 1952): 3-4, 16, 27-30. Accessed on May 27, 2022 at https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/175481.pdf; also "Ninth Semiannual Report of United States Advisory Commission on Information," (Washington, DC. Government Printing Office, 1954): 2-3, 10-11. Accessed on May 27, 2022 at https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/175314.pdf

[71] Joyce, *The Propaganda Gap*, 112.

[72] United States Advisory Commission on Information, "The Twenty-Second Report of the United States Advisory Commission on Information (1967)," 19. Accessed on May 27, 2022 at https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/174289.pdf; Rubin, *The Objectives of the U.S. Information Agency*, 47.

[73] Henderson, *The United States Information Agency*, 93.

academic peers, and the dangers this created for U.S. foreign policy.[74] Helpfully, both provided

road-maps as to how to effectively move towards a more training-based model.

3.9   Institutional Weakness B: Insufficient Research

A second major deficit in the institutional culture of American propagandists has been a

lack of understanding of, appreciation for, and commitment to employing research outcomes to

improve their practices. In 1953, USIA commissioned a private sector study to help it identify its

major challenges moving forward. The bulk of the book-length report pointed out that USIA was

not using any valid scientific theories of communication or persuasion, while setting goals which

were so vague as to be useless. This was in part due to the fact that within its first year of operation,

USIA had cut a research staff of over 150 down to five, and abolished the separate research staffs

of the Voice of America and other media units.[75] As far as one of the report's authors could tell,

USIA leadership never actually read the report they had commissioned.[76] Certainly, they took no

efforts to implement its recommendations.

This failure to give research its due place within the institution was not for lack of trying

on the part of ACPD.   Year after year, using almost the same language, it excoriated the USIA for

not adequately funding research, reading private sector or academic research, or using even their

own research to steer the way in which they organized their propaganda activities. ACPD annual

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[74] Meridian International Center and U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, "Getting the People Part Right: Second Edition, The Human Resources Dimension of U.S. Public Diplomacy in 2015." Accessed on May 27, 2022 at https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/244112.pdf; U.S. Advisory   Commission on Public Diplomacy, "Teaching Public Diplomacy and the Information Instruments of Power in a Complex Media Environment." Accessed on May 27, 2022 at https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Teaching-Public-Diplomacy-and-the-Information-Instruments-of-Power-in-a-Complex-Media-Environment-2020.pdf
[75] Bogart, Leo and Agnes, *Premises for Propaganda: The United States Information Agency's Operating Assumptions in the Cold War*, (New York: The Free Press, 1976): *xx.*
[76] Sproule, Michael, *Propaganda and Democracy*: *The American Experience of Media and Mass Persuasion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 213.

or special reports in 1961, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1973, 1977, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1989, 1991, 1993, 2005, 2010, and annually from 2014-2022 each brought attention to the issue, but until very recently, appear to have been entirely ignored.[77] Indeed, even for the years missing from the list above, in almost every case the explanation is not that the report did not cite research as a problem, but rather that no report was issued that year.

ACPD believed that this lack of attention to research was not solely about lack of funding, but rather due to a deeply ingrained hostility among government propaganda executives. Its March, 1966 report argued that "unlike most private practitioners in foreign communications, USIA managers are not disposed to organize and develop their programs and their budgets around facts as established by research. ... There appears to be little desire to utilize the facts that research has made available. The use of research has been seriously neglected to the detriment of the program."[78] The February 1973 report brought up the same charges: "There appears to be little disposition on the part of most of the Agency's senior personnel … to either call for research as an aid in decision making or to use the results of research studies that have been initiated by others. … Too many decisions continue to be made on impression and hunch."[79] In that report, ACPD members went so far as to recommend that USIA executives be *required* to have a background in research, to try to remedy the problem.

Sensing that USIA leadership hadn't perhaps understood their point, ACPD spent 12, single-spaced pages of the May 1977 report trying to explain the importance of centering the

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[77] ACPD reports can be found at https://www.state.gov/reports-u-s-advisory-commission-on-public-diplomacy/

[78] U.S. Advisory Commission on Information, "Twenty-First Report of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Information," (Washington, DC. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966): 24. Accessed on May 27, 2022 at https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/175653.pdf

[79] U.S. Advisory Commission on Information, "26th Report of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Information," (Washington, DC. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973): 33. Accessed on May 27, 2022 at https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/175929.pdf.

results of scientific research on persuasion within the profession of propaganda.[80] ACPD's 1989

report complained that "Commitment to public opinion research in foreign policy decision-making

remains largely ritualistic." Decades later, ACPD was still making the same points. As late as

2018, ACPD was essentially reprising their Sisyphean task with yet another well-argued special

report, "Optimizing Engagement: Research, Evaluation and Learning in Public Diplomacy."[81]

3.10   Institutional Weakness C: Insufficient Evaluation

Related to, but separate from, the issue of centering scientific research outcomes in

program design is the question of how to measure success. Much like the previous two identified

issues, this problem has bedeviled American propagandists since the early 1950s – despite many

attempts by the ACPD and other critics to provide meaningful, accessible solutions over time.

Defining part of the problem, ACPD's July, 1969 report complained about the murkiness of

"mutual understanding" as a metric, noting that "the plain fact is that in too many cases the Agency

does not know why it is doing what it is doing."[82] Five years later in 1974, little had changed.

According to the ACPD:

> USIA efforts to assess the impact of its programs have been handicapped by confused
> notions as to what constitutes effectiveness in a communication agency and by doubts that
> effectiveness in any really meaningful sense can be measured. 'No cash register rings
> when a man changes his mind,' one Agency Director has said. The present paper argues
> that the effectiveness of USIA programs can in fact be clearly defined in terms of a set of

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[80] United States Advisory Commission on Information, "The 28th Report (1977)," 37-48. Accessed on May 27, 2022 at https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/28th-report-ACI.pdf.
[81] Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. "Optimizing Engagement: Research, Evaluation and Learning in Public Diplomacy (2019)," Accessed on May 27, 2022 at https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/ACPD-Optimizing-Engagement.pdf
[82] U.S. Advisory Commission on Information, "24th Report of U.S Advisory Commission on Information," (Washington, DC. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969): 6. Accessed on May 27, 2022 at https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/175663.pdf

reasonable criteria and can be objectively and quantitatively measured through the techniques of behavioral science.[83]

The report went on to give thirty-seven pages of detailed notes on how, from a public diplomacy perspective, to meaningfully evaluate dozens of different types of programs. It does not appear that this advice was implemented, however, despite similar ACPD recommendations in 1980, 1989, 1993, 2010, and then annually since 2015. The ACPD even drafted two special reports on the topic, the first in 2010, called "Assessing U.S. Public Diplomacy: A Notional Model," and the second in 2018.[84]

In the first report, ACPD partnered with the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas, Austin, because – in typically understated fashion – "the Department does not regularly employ replicable quantitative methods capable of measuring the extent to which we are achieving the desired foreign policy outcomes on the basis of our public diplomacy efforts."[85] It noted that *outputs* such as numbers reached were measured, but not actual *outcomes*, and went on for *151 pages* providing yet another how-to manual for the Department of State. The second report provided more of a primer on public diplomacy research methods, but also some important work on implementation best practices.[86]

Though the Department of State's propaganda research and policy unit, dubbed R/PPR, has taken strides in the past two years towards these goals, they have not yet filtered down in a meaningful way to the propagandists operating abroad. Communicating Washington's knowledge

[83] United States Advisory Commission on Information, "27th Annual Report of the United States Advisory Commission on Information," (Washington, DC. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974): 65.
[84] The United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, "Assessing U.S. Public Diplomacy: A Notional Model (2010)." Accessed on May 27, 2022 at https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/149966.pdf. *Also see Citation 81*
[85] The United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, "Assessing U.S. Public Diplomacy: A Notional Model (2010)," 2.
[86] *See Citation 81.*

to "the field" has long been an issue: as far back as 1974, the ACPD report criticized USIA's research office for not effectively ensuring that practitioners knew what it was doing, or knew what it knew. This state of affairs has not yet meaningfully changed at the Department of State, though there is hope that this is changing.

4 Modern American Propagandists' Ethics, Beliefs, and Behavior

4.1 Introduction

This study explores whether modern American propagandists continue to embrace the same ethical and aesthetic values and norms established by their predecessors in the period 1941-1953. These norms include an adherence to the "strategy of truth," a preference for rational reasoning over emotional reasoning, insistence on disclosure of the U.S. government as the source of information, a preference for clear links between programs and policy, and a preference for long-term over short-term goals. A total of 240 individuals currently employed as public diplomacy-coned State Department officers were anonymously surveyed in April and May, 2022 through a snowball sample, out of an approximate total of 1,000 such officers overall. The study tested twelve separate hypothesis, of which eight were supported, two partially supported, with one receiving weak support and one unsupported. Overall, this study lends credence to the thesis that modern American propagandists' norms and values have not significantly changed over time, but rather that a particularly *American* culture of propaganda has perpetuated itself for over 70 years. It also demonstrates that this particular culture is one that is, at its core, ethical in nature.

4.2 Background

In the previous two chapters, I laid out a historical argument for how modern American propaganda (public diplomacy) came to be. Beginning in 1941, President Roosevelt established the precursor institutions to modern day public diplomacy. These organizations were led largely by political progressives including writers, poets, playwrights, and, in largest number, journalists.

Those leaders' ethical values, preferences and practices went on to create a uniquely *American* style of propaganda, and an institutional culture that largely survived moves between several parent organizations.

In Chapter 2, I explored the origins of these institutions, and how they came of age in the early Cold War period with the 1953 establishment of the United States Information Agency (USIA). To do so, I employed books and articles written by these leaders, scholarly histories of these institutions, Congressional testimony, various U.S. government reports, and reports from the Congressionally-mandated U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (ACPD).

In Chapter 3, I explored the history of these institutions up to the present day, arguing that the key ideological decisions made in the early growth period went largely unchallenged. Here, I again worked with books and articles written by period propaganda leaders and other scholarly histories, ACPD reports, and oral histories conducted with USIA employees who served in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. To further bolster the case that this particularly American propaganda *culture* has not dramatically changed since 1953, in this chapter I present the results of my research into currently-serving public diplomacy officers.

4.3   Study Design

An online, anonymous survey asked a series of validity, demographic, and survey-specific questions aimed at currently serving, public diplomacy-coned Foreign Service Officers with the U.S. Department of State. I reached out to such officers both through private Facebook groups, individual State Department emails for known colleagues, and through Department listservs which reached the overwhelming majority of potential participants. Though 360 users began the process, 37 did not successfully pass the validity questions, which used public diplomacy terms of art

unlikely to be known to those outside the field to ensure that only public diplomacy officers completed the survey. Surprisingly, another 83 respondents exited the survey after successfully passing the validity questions, without completing any further demographic or survey questions, resulting in an N of 240 survey participants.

Demographic questions included only gender identity, time in service, whether the participant had previously served in a public diplomacy role in a warzone, and whether the participant had previously been employed by the U.S. Information Agency, the precursor propaganda agency to the U.S. Department of State. Demographic questions were kept limited in order to help maintain full anonymity, and because I do not posit other demographic factors as significant response predictors. For a full list of survey questions, please see Appendix K.

Research Question 1: Have the ethical, aesthetic and behavioral norms of foreign-directed, overt U.S. government propaganda (public diplomacy) which were established in the period 1941-1953 persisted to the present day, largely unchanged?

Research Question 2: Given that these norms were born in periods of "hot" war, do they remain resilient for public diplomacy officers during U.S. military conflicts today?

4.4   Hypothesis

H1: U.S. Public diplomacy practitioners (PDPs) will self-report that they do not deceive foreign publics, with no significant differences between demographics.

H2: PDPs will self-report that they rarely conceal themselves as the source of information, with no significant differences between demographics.

H3: Service in a war zone will not impact results in H1 or H2.

H4: PDPs will self-report that they do not engage in methods of propaganda often used by totalitarian regimes, such as name-calling, sarcasm, emotional reasoning, or selecting one ethnic as a featured enemy.

H5: PDPs will self-report ambivalence about telling partial truths.

H6: PDPs value and believe in an objective reality that can be agreed upon by disinterested observers.

H7: PDPs believe that propaganda should be driven by foreign policy goals.

H8: PDPs believe that moral and rational arguments are preferred forms of persuasion, while emotional arguments are less preferred.

H9: PDPs believe that some propaganda techniques are effective, but unethical, and do not use those techniques considered unethical.

H10: Overall, PDPs value long-term goals over short-term goals.

H11: PDPs believe U.S. involvement in the world, particularly regarding democratization, is a net positive.

H12: PDPs rely on outdated social and behavioral science vis-à-vis persuasion.

4.5   Results

To test **H1**, I asked whether survey participants either misled or lied to foreign audiences, and whether they perceived such behavior as either effective or ethical. Respondents uniformly rejected this behavior, with 235 (97.9%) and 236 (98.3%) respectively saying that they rarely or never mislead or lie to foreign audiences. Similar margins rejected the premise that these behaviors were either effective (96.4%) or ethical (98.0%). *The first hypothesis, that PDPs embrace a strategy of truth, is supported.*

To test **H2**, I asked whether PDPs concealed the U.S. government as the source of information, and whether this behavior was effective or ethical. Survey respondents reported that concealing the source was relatively rare, with 171 (71.2%) of respondents saying that they rarely or never engage in this behavior. Another 51 (21.3%) respondents reported that they sometimes engage in this behavior, with 18 (7.5%) reporting that they usually or always conceal the source. Efficacy was rated low, with 136 (56.6%) reporting that concealment is rarely or never effective, with 87 (36.3%) calling it sometimes effective.

Results for perceptions of the ethicality of concealment were almost identical, with 133 (55.4%) calling it rarely or never ethical, with 85 (35.4%) calling it sometimes ethical. No statistical differences were observed for gender. However, PDPs with fewer than 5 years of service were more likely to report ambivalent ("sometimes/neither agree nor disagree") feelings toward concealment than other cohorts, who more uniformly rejected the practice. I propose that this is due to having spent less time becoming acculturated to State Department norms, rather than a sudden shift in ethics likely to lead to long lasting change. *The second hypothesis, that PDPs rarely conceal themselves as the source of information, and that this should not vary based on time in service, is supported.*

To test **H3**, I compared whether service in a warzone impacted results to the previous sets of questions, as well as whether such respondents differed in their response to the statement "When in a warzone, what is ethical to do in public diplomacy changes." A majority of all participants (56.7%) somewhat or strongly disagreed with the idea that wartime changes ethical considerations. The next largest group (29.8%) believed this to be sometimes true. Only 13.5% of respondents agreed that this was usually or always true. No statistical difference was observed between PDPs who had or had not served in warzones for any of these questions.

Notably, however, male respondents were more likely to be ambivalent about the question than women, and women were more likely to disagree with the statement than men. Among male PDPs, 38.3% responded that they neither agreed nor disagreed, compared to only 20.2% of women. Meanwhile, 31.9% of women somewhat disagreed with the idea, compared to only 14.8% of men. Responses for strongly agree, somewhat agree, and strongly disagree were, however, comparable. A similar pattern was observed for PDPs with fewer than 5 years of service, who were much more ambivalent (50%) than their older cohorts, for whom between 23.0% and 33.3% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. As with the gender differential, this was due to few new officers responding that they "somewhat disagreed" with the proposal, while other categories showed comparable responses among cohorts. *The third hypothesis, that wartime service does not impact ethical perceptions or behaviors, is supported.*

To test **H4**, I asked whether survey participants participated in behaviors often associated with totalitarian state propaganda, such as self-righteousness, name-calling, sarcasm, and use of stereotypes. As with other questions, I also asked their views on the effectiveness and ethicality of these behaviors. Respondents almost uniformly denounced behaviors such as self-righteous argumentation and the use of stereotypes. PDPs gave moderately less strong, but still negative

responses on name-calling and sarcasm. Among all respondents, 90.6% reported rarely or never making use of stereotypes in their work. Similar scores were found for self-righteous argumentation (86.6%), sarcasm (80.1%) and name-calling (79.8%). Similar views on the effectiveness and ethics of these practices were also reported.

A gendered difference was again observed. In general, for most questions, women were more likely to *strongly* disagree, while men were more likely to *somewhat* disagree or to report ambivalence. This indicates that at least for these questions, female PDPs surveyed showed a stronger sense of moral clarity on what they perceived as right and wrong. There was, however, no clear or consistent relationship between time and service and moral clarity. *The fourth hypothesis, that PDPs do not engage in negative emotion-based techniques often associated with totalitarian regimes, is supported.*

The "strategy of truth" as outlined by early modern American propagandists did not presume that it was possible to tell the "whole" truth, and there were significant debates among the institutions about which facts were relevant and ethically required to be presented by these propagandists. As a result, I hypothesized in **H5** that PDPs would report ambivalent responses on the question of telling partial truths, particularly when other relevant facts are in conflict with clear policy goals. To test H5, I asked whether telling PDPs told whole or partial truths to advance policy goals, whether these practices were either ethical or effective, and also whether they told the 'whole truth' when it conflicted with policy goals.

PDPs, in fact, reported less ambivalence than expected, with clear majorities stating that they simply tell the whole truth, thus avoiding moral ambiguity. Among those surveyed, 59.2% said that they always or usually tell the whole truth to public audiences, with another 35.2% saying

they sometimes do so. PDPs agreed that telling the whole truth is effective (57.5% strongly or somewhat agreed) and ethical (77.25%). No respondent reported that they always tell partial truths, and only 9.9% reported that they usually did so. PDPs reported that partial truths are neither ethical nor effective, with only 11.6% and 8.15% strongly or somewhat agreeing, respectively.

However, in cases of clear policy conflicts, a clear split emerged. In this case, surveyed PDPs were unlikely to report telling the whole truth, with only 23.1% reporting that they would always or usually do so, 38.4% reporting that they would sometimes tell the whole truth, and 38.4% reporting that they would rarely or never tell the whole truth should it conflict with policy objectives. These results did not vary significantly by time in service, with one exception: PDPs with fewer than 5 years of service were less than half as likely as other cohorts to state that they would tell the "whole truth" should it conflict with policy goals, possibly due to their lack of tenure and associated labor protections. The single area of significant gender difference was to the question, "I tell the whole truth to foreign audiences to advance U.S. foreign policy goals," wherein women (43.8%) were almost twice as likely as men (24.3%) to respond that this was sometimes true, with men being more likely to report that they always or usually did so. *The fifth hypothesis, that PDPs will demonstrate moral ambiguity about the strategy of truth as regards partial versus whole truths is partially supported, particularly in cases in which the whole truth is unhelpful to policy objectives.*

In order to determine to what extent the 'truth,' in the eyes of PDPs, was based on a solid, objective, commonly understood foundation, rather than a perspective that truth is relative, respondents were asked for **H6** whether they agreed that "from a foreign policy perspective, there is an objective reality that can be agreed upon by third party, disinterested observers." I hypothesized that PDPs would overwhelmingly support this statement, particularly given the daily

frustrations faced by those in this field with state-sponsored disinformation campaigns, and our fact-based responses to those campaigns.

There was significantly greater ambivalence on this question than predicted. A slight majority, 50.6% somewhat or strongly agreed with this statement. However, 24.3% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 25.1% either somewhat or strongly disagreed. Neither time in service nor gender strongly predicted responses. *The sixth hypothesis, that PDPs accept the idea of an objective reality which can be agreed upon by neutral observers for the purpose of foreign policy promotion was only weakly supported.*

By 1943, PDPs who believed that they should drive, rather than implement, foreign policy, had been largely driven from government. To test whether this remained the case for **H7**, I asked survey participants whether propaganda should be clearly linked to foreign policy, and whether "the best" such programs had no clear policy component. This would test two ideas: one, that they understood the principle, at work, and two, that they agreed that the principle of linking foreign policy to propaganda can be effectively *implemented*.

There was overwhelming consensus on these two points. Among respondents, 86.4% agreed that "public diplomacy should be clearly linked to, and driven by, foreign policy," with an almost identical number (85.54%) somewhat or strongly disagreeing with the proposition that "the best public diplomacy programs have no policy component." Within this broad consensus, however, there were some significant differences. PDPs with fewer than five or fewer years of service almost monolithically *strongly* agreed on these points, while more seasoned PDPs were roughly split between strongly and somewhat agreeing. This *may* be explained by two separate processes: 1) entry level training for PDPs may be doing a more focused and therefore successful

job of inculcating this belief in new officers; and 2) experience in the field may temper the strength of this belief over time – though significant differences were not observed between cohorts with, for example 6-10 years compared to greater than 15 years of service. A moderate gender difference was also observed. Women were marginally more likely to strongly or somewhat agree (90.8%) with the importance of linking policy to programs than men (81.6%), though no significant difference was observed regarding whether policy-linked programs were *better.*

Finally, previous employment at USIA was a moderate predictor of support for linking policy to programs. Only 64.7% of those who reported prior USIA employment strongly or somewhat agreed with the idea that public diplomacy should be linked to, and driven by, foreign policy, while 88.1% of those who had worked only at the State Department agreed. This did not imply, however, that previous USIA employees *disagreed* with the premise – most of the remainder (23.5%) was simply ambivalent. As to the question of whether propaganda programs were *better* without any clear policy link, 70.6% of those who reported prior USIA employment disagreed, while 86.7% of those only employed by State disagreed, and strongly (54.6%). *The seventh hypothesis, that PDPs agree that policy should drive programs, and that such programs are successful, is supported. Newly-minted employees, women, and those who had never served at USIA were the most likely to agree.*

The next question at hand in **H8** is whether, as predicted, PDPs prefer rational and logical arguments over emotional or moralistic forms of reasoning. I asked participants whether they used each of these three argumentative styles with foreign audiences, and whether the use of these styles was effective and ethical. I also included a separate question on whether "U.S. public diplomacy outreach is too drab to be effective" to discern whether there was any discontent with the presumed rationalist style of argument employed.

As expected, a significantly greater number of respondents reported usually or always using rational arguments (79.4%) compared to moral arguments (39.3%) or emotional arguments (50.43%), though the use of moral and emotional argumentation was significantly higher than predicted. Though 61.8% of respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that moral arguments are *ethical*, only 38.5% considered them *effective.* A similar number (63.4%) found emotional arguments to be ethical (63.4%), though respondents were more likely to find emotional arguments effective (60.8%) when compared to moral arguments. Though the numbers of those using moral argumentation is statistically identical to the number of PDPs who believe it is effective, there is a 10% gap between those who believe emotional argumentation is both ethical and effective, but choose not to use it. I argue that this gap is further evidence of a longstanding, embedded cultural antipathy towards emotional argumentation styles, above and beyond the 29% difference between those using rational versus emotional arguments.

Some surprising gender-based differences were revealed. Men were significantly more likely (50.5%) to agree that moral argumentation is effective, while only 28.7% of women agreed. Men also perceived moral argumentation as more ethical (72.5% agree) compared to women (52.7%), and as a result more likely to make use of moral arguments (54.3% versus 26.3%). Similar but smaller results were found for all questions regarding rational argumentation *as well* as emotional argumentation, almost entirely because women were more likely to answer "neither agree nor disagree" to each of these questions than men. Those serving five or fewer years were moderately more likely to prefer moral argumentation, but there were no significant differences for rational or emotional reasoning preferences.

On whether current programs are too drab to be effective, there was no consensus, though respondents were slightly more likely to disagree with this statement than to agree. Slightly over

a third (39.7%) somewhat or strongly disagreed, 34.5% neither agreed nor disagreed, and the remainder (25.9%) somewhat or strongly agreed. *The eighth hypothesis, that PDPs prefer rational and moral argumentative styles over emotional ones, regardless of perceptions of ethics and effectiveness, is partially supported. Rational arguments are strongly preferred, though emotional arguments were preferred to moral ones. A strong majority (74.2%) were not convinced that this preference leads to ineffective outcomes.*

H9 posited that PDPs find some forms of argumentation to be effective, but unethical, and therefore choose not to employ them. For all three argument styles above, PDPs found them to be more ethical than effective. For styles of argument associated with totalitarian regimes, there was agreement that these were *neither* effective nor ethical. *This hypothesis was not supported*.

In **H10**, I asked whether long-term goals were more important than short term goals. To follow up on H8, I also asked whether "colorful, emotional" arguments were perceived as effective in the short- or long-term, presuming that PDPs would respond to earlier questions (as they did) that they prefer rational over emotional arguments. This would help further clarify the extent to which emotional arguments may be seen as effective, even if less frequently used. A plurality of 45.4% strongly or somewhat agreed that long-term goals are more important than short-term goals, with 37.0% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Only 4.7% of respondents disagreed with this statement. Respondents were much more likely to see colorful, emotional arguments as yielding *short-term* benefits, perhaps yet another reason that rational argumentation styles are preferred, given the preference for longer-term goals. While 53.5% of respondents agreed that emotional arguments yield short-term effects, only 25.5% agreed that they also bring about long-term effects. *The tenth hypothesis, that PDPs prefer long-term to short-term goals, is supported.*

To test **H11,** that PDPs have an "evangelical" belief in promoting democracy, I asked four questions. A strong majority of 80.8% somewhat or strongly agreed that "one main function of my job is making the world safe for democracy." Meanwhile, an even greater number (90.2%) agreed that "lessons from the United States are valuable for the rest of the world." There was almost universal agreement (96.2%) that "United States engagement in the world is a good thing," with 71.0% strongly agreeing. To tease out the extent to which this agreement was tempered by military action, I also asked about "U.S. intervention." Still, clear majority (57.9%) strongly or somewhat agreed that U.S. intervention was a net positive, with most of the remainder (32.8%) ambivalent. Only 9.4% of respondents disagreed with U.S. intervention being beneficial.

To clarify any potential researcher bias on this point, allow me to state that I agree with the majority on all of these points, even as I reckon with the dramatic failures of some U.S. military interventions in the 21st century from a democratization and foreign policy perspective. I point out these figures not to chastise this "evangelical" belief – which I share, to a large degree – but rather to document it as a perhaps unquestioned or invisible assumption among PDPs. *The eleventh hypothesis, that PDPs hold a 'messianic' belief in promoting democracy, is supported*.

The final hypothesis, **H12**, posited that PDPs rely on outdated social science theories, or the absence of any theory or research at all, when conducting their work. First, I tested support for an idea which is part of the received wisdom at the State Department, which has not been borne out by social science research: namely, that "the more that foreign audiences know about us, the more they like us." This idea is a significant part of the justification for many of our cultural and exchange programs, though even these are now *also* clearly tied to other, more concrete policy goals. A majority of respondents (60.7%) agreed with this sentiment, with another third (30.3%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Only 9.0% disagreed.

I framed this idea in two additional ways. First, to test the belief that *providing information* would result in more positive sentiment among foreign audiences, I asked whether respondents agreed that "the more accurate information that foreign audiences have about us, the more they like us." In response, a full two-thirds (66.1%) somewhat or strongly agreed, with 27.5% ambivalent, and 6.4% disagreeing.

Next, to test the beliefs that *personal experiences in the United States* such as exchange programs or study abroad would result in more positive sentiment among foreign audiences, I asked to what extent respondents agreed that "the more personal experience that foreigners have with the United States, the more they like us." Here, an overwhelming majority of 92.7% agreed, with 51.1% strongly agreeing. Again, this widespread belief is not based on empirical evidence, demonstrating that some core PDP beliefs are founded either in outdated science, or in no evidence at all. To further test this hypothesis, I asked about previous experience with, and level of comfort with, social science and academic theories of persuasion. Only 26.9% of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed with the premise that they are well-versed in the latest social science on persuasion, with slightly fewer (20.6%) expressing knowledge of theories of persuasion.

Slightly more than a quarter of respondents (28.44%) said that they had received training in persuasion theory and science outside of the State Department, with 17.6% reporting some State Department training in these areas. PDPs reported the belief that such training, however, was both of interest and would make them more successful in their positions. Over 85% of respondents indicated they would be interested in additional training on persuasion theory and science, with 56.5% strongly interested, while 72.0% believed such training would make them more effective. *The final hypothesis, that PDPs rely on outdated social science, or do not have adequate social science knowledge, is supported.*

Unrelated to the listed hypotheses, I also asked a few open-ended questions to gauge what practices PDPs believed were unethical. When asked "what are some things you would never do as a PD officer because you see them as unethical," by far the most popular answer was to lie or mislead, with 74.8% of respondents mentioning this. A distant second, 15.3% of respondents cited financial malfeasance including bribery, theft, paying for news coverage, or inappropriately sole-sourcing grants. A comparable number, 12.3%, cited anything that could lead to harm or endanger lives, such as exposing information sources, expressing racism or prejudice, or making threats. A small minority (3%) said they would *never* conceal the U.S. government as the source of information, and 1.8% said they would never employ bot farms to spread a message. When asked whether they had personally done anything as a PDP they later considered unethical, only 12.0% said yes.

Finally, I was curious as to whether PDPs considered themselves propagandists. In my 14 years at the Department of State, I have only rarely heard this term used to describe our work. However, early leaders of public diplomacy were quite forthright, even in Congressional testimony, in describing their work as propaganda. A slight majority of 50.6% somewhat or strongly agreed that "Public Diplomacy is a kind of propaganda," with 19.2% ambivalent, and almost one-third (30.2%) disagreeing. Those with sixteen or more years of service were the least likely to agree (38.5%), while less seasoned cohorts reported between 50.9%-59.7% agreement. There were no significant gender differences, though those previously employed by USIA were much *less* likely to agree with the characterization of public diplomacy as propaganda. Among such employees, a majority of 52.9% disagreed that public diplomacy was a form of propaganda, while only 28.4% of State Department employees who had never worked at USIA shared those

views. This is a fascinating result, as USIA leadership well into the late 1960s publicly described their work as propaganda in books and Congressional testimony.

4.6   Conclusion

This study helps bolster the thesis that present day modern American propagandists continue to embrace the same ethical and aesthetic values, norms, and behaviors that were first established in the period 1941-1953. In particular, such propagandists have profoundly embraced the "strategy of truth" as a core value, and one that transcends even the existential implications of wartime. This is moderated, however, in cases in which the "whole truth" is antithetical to U.S. policy objectives.

Second, these practitioners agree that propaganda programs should be linked to, and driven by, foreign policy, and embrace the idea that they are evangelists for democracy. They also continue to embrace the journalistic and rational style of argumentation which developed in sharp counterpoint to early fascist and Communist propagandists of World War II and the early Cold War era. Next, they continue to prefer long-term goals over short-term objectives.

Third, public diplomacy officers maintain some core beliefs about how persuasion works that are not evidence-based. They are aware of their lack of knowledge and training in this field, and would strongly welcome additional instruction, which they believe would make them more effective.

Finally, this survey helps demonstrate that public diplomacy officers are, by the definition I earlier provided of "ethical propaganda," themselves enacting a fundamentally ethical project.

Namely, their behavior and activities share the core values of truth, beneficence, reason, open information, and relevance.

The full data-set, which is anonymized, can be downloaded at: tinyurl.com/PDKnowledge

5   Conclusion: A New Way Forward?

The last chapter is merely a place where the writer imagines
that the polite reader has begun to look furtively at his watch.

-Walter Lippmann

5.1   Introduction

In the previous four chapters, I attempted to demonstrate that modern, American overt propagandists trace their ethical, aesthetic, and behavior norms, practices and values back to the period 1941-1953. At that time, the senior-most U.S. government propagandists were drawn largely from the arts, including journalists, playwrights, and poets, rather than from commerce or the military. This choice led to the development of a particularly American institutional culture among propagandists, which has been successfully perpetuated to the present day. Further, I argued that this American propaganda culture is fundamentally ethical in nature, as it is centered on certain core values including truth, beneficence, reason, open information, and relevance.

Some aspects of the question, "How shall we do propaganda," however, continue to resist firm answers, and will likely never be fully resolved. Indeed, it may be better for these questions not to be answered at an institutional level, but rather to allow individual propagandists in the field to make their own decisions about how best to advance American foreign policy. That said, the institutional culture of American propaganda has long suffered from a few key weaknesses, identified very early on, and yet which remain stubbornly unresolved to this day. I argue that American foreign policy would be best served by the Department of State implementing the

following suggestions from four key areas: (1) training; (2) communication; (3) standards, practices, and technology; and (4) strategic development.

5.2 Recommendation One: Provide Significant Professional Training

A) Implement universal, pre-service public diplomacy-coned foreign service officer (PD FSO) training in the social science of persuasion, including best practices from the applied field of advertising.

In a world of infinite resources, ideally all PD FSOs would receive a full year of pre-service training, including all of the elements in this section. Realizing that that is budgetarily unlikely, there are still significant improvements that can be made to our currently insufficient training model, first through online, self-paced courses, and second, through the introduction of additional, mandatory short courses at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), particularly for first and second tour officers. That said, the current trend at FSI, to dramatically *cut* training time for PD FSOs, is deeply discouraging.

The Department of State should concentrate on developing a core of experts in both the academic field of communication as well as in advertising, ideally bringing in or hiring consultants from those fields, to then develop these courses on the social science of persuasion. Such courses would make *explicit* the assumptions of our institutional culture, and would disabuse current PD FSOs of several scientifically unsupported ideas currently widely held, such as the idea that "the more they know us, the more they like us." These courses should endeavor to teach the fact that, according to research, a number of different factors intermingle to influence levels of persuasion, and that there is no magic bullet. They should also, however, teach the few apparently universal findings on persuasion, such as that an individual who presents *both* sides of a story, but rebuts the

opposite position, will be more persuasive than an individual who either presents only one side of a story, or presents both sides with no rebuttal.

B) Implement universal PD FSO training in rhetoric.

Though rhetoricians largely abandoned propaganda to social scientists in the 20th century in favor of a narrow focus on English literature, there has been a resurgence of interests from the field in the 21st century. Providing a firm grounding in the art of rhetoric – such as an understanding, at the very least, of how to understand and apply *logos, ethos* and *pathos* – would provide a common reference language for PD FSOs to discuss persuasion strategy.

C) Implement PD FSO universal skills training on graphic design, photography, and video production and editing.

Though FSI offers several of these courses, they are often oversubscribed, aimed at entry-level skills, and PD FSOs' obligations to their departing and gaining posts often prevent them from taking these allegedly "non-essential courses." These skills are anything but non-essential, and it is deeply damaging to the ability of PD FSOs to effectively and persuasively present the American government point of view in the 21st century, while still relying primarily on the occasional, unpaid graphic design intern to create compelling images and videos. This is one of the few seriously damaging aspects of having maintained a largely unchanged institutional culture among American propagandists since 1953. Frankly speaking, PD FSOs should no longer be able to serve in the field without this training, or without additional funding to each Public Affairs Section to regularly contract out graphic design work.

D) Implement skills training on survey design and implementation, and basic statistics, for Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) and Locally Employed Strategic Content Coordination Specialists.

Though ideally provided to all PD FSOs, at a bare minimum, all outgoing PAOs and locally-employed Strategic Content Coordination Specialists should be required to have training in survey design, implementation and statistics, in order to do meaningful evaluation work on their otherwise extremely well thought-through programs. This would, *in part*, obviate the need to depend on high-priced local polling firms, though such contract work would still be required for national surveys. To the extent that PD FSOs are required (and they *should* be required) to effectively "measure success," it is unethical to implement such a requirement without meaningful training.

5.3 Recommendation Two: Increase Communication to the Field

A) Create a position within R/PPR whose purpose is, at least in part, to survey the latest in social science research on persuasion, and effectively communicate it to the field.

About 25 positions have been created in the State Department office which handles public diplomacy research, policy, and evaluation (known as R/PPR) that may already be responsive to this recommendation, in part in anticipation of the ultimate passage of House Resolution 1253 – the Public Diplomacy Modernization Act of 2021 (HR 1253). Though this bill appears not to have moved past Committee since February, 2021, it is still deeply encouraging that R/PPR is taking such proactive action to attempt to address the issues raised by the draft law. The law itself requires improvements in research and evaluation of PD programs, as well as "support [of] United States diplomatic posts' public affairs sections," and "shar[ing] appropriate public diplomacy research and evaluation information within the Department." I am not aware of any other legislation that has so meaningfully addressed these shortcomings in the institutional culture of modern American

government propaganda, at any time in U.S. history. As a practitioner in the field, I have unfortunately not yet seen communications from this office, but I am hopeful that, once fully staffed, such communication will be regularized.

B) Annually survey all public diplomacy officers to assess their needs and knowledge base, to help better shape future FSI trainings and R/PPR information content.

Though periodic Survey Monkey polls are sent to PD FSOs, it would be helpful to annually poll all PD FSOs on issues such as those covered in Chapter 5, to establish whether there continue to be any significant gaps in training, research, evaluation, or ethics. Ideally, this would take place in more sophisticated polling software, such as Qualtrics, which can easily tease out relationships (or the lack thereof) between any two measured factors.

C) Make it standard practice to send the annual ACPD report to all public diplomacy officers upon publication, and encourage supervisors to review and discuss it with their subordinates. Designate one special assistant to the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (R) to devise and propose ways to implement its suggestions.

In my 14 years as a Public Diplomacy Officer, I have never once received, or been encouraged to read, an ACPD report. This is a remarkable wasted opportunity. Part of the reason that the ACPD has, at times, spent 70 years recommending literally the same changes, year after year, is that they have no enforcement capability, and as a result, their reports can be ignored. The Undersecretary for Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy (known as R) should designate, in its position description, at least one special assistant to ensure that each ACPD report is widely read in the field, and to work towards implementing their suggestions. Ideally, the OIG would also apply ACPD recommendations in their inspection reports.

5.4　　Recommendation Three: Develop Standards, Practices, and Technology

A) *Clarify the purpose behind, and metrics for success for exchange programs.*

The 1969 ACPD report rightly complained about the murkiness of "mutual understanding" as a measurable goal, yet PD FSOs remain wedded to the term by law, particularly in the area of exchange programs. In my discussions with PD FSOs, few seem to take this seriously as a goal at this point, given its imprecision, but what do we replace it with? Several of the ACPD reports over the decades have wrestled with this question, and generally argued in favor of long-term shifts in public sentiment as the most meaningful measurable outcome. While the Department of State has legal cover to continue to operate exchange programs solely on the basis of the fundamentally immeasurable "mutual understanding," PD FSOs have gone above and beyond this, seeking to specifically tie programs to concrete foreign policy goals. Unfortunately, we still continue to largely measure outputs (individual participation) rather than outcome (changes in, or wrought by, a participant.) The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs has of late implemented one very positive change, performing interviews with certain exchange participants and providing interview summaries back to the sponsoring Embassies. Yet a meaningful measure for success for exchange programs remains elusive. If the Department chooses to measure output *as* outcome, this should be made clear; alternatively, other standards for success should be developed and widely disseminated.

B) Develop a standard package of metrics for success that the field can use for the most common types of programs.

The draft bill HR 1253 also requires R/PPR to "design and coordinate standardize research questions, methodologies, and procedures." As part of their expansion of the research and evaluation unit, this is well under way, and I look forward to seeing results in the near future.

C) Bring senior PD leaders to discuss whether across-the-board evangelical democracy promotion is serving us well, or whether we can create a type of Maslow's hierarchy to help officers best direct their efforts towards what is achievable. Communicate these findings to the field.

A successful democracy requires specific *cultural* elements to be present, including tolerance of those with differing political beliefs, demanding transparency, acceptance of free and fair elections as the legitimate arbiter of temporary power, an acceptance of the same underlying fundamental reality as one's other citizens, and a willingness to put the health of the system itself above one's party. Some foreign policy scholars have also included factors such as a certain level of stability and security, and also literacy. Department of State propagandists often continue operating under the presumption that we should be promoting and discussing democracy everywhere, yet this is likely unrealistic and impractical. I argue that this is a holdover from the Cold War era in which democracy was counterpoised against totalitarianism; it is no longer clear that this is an effective way to frame the issues that matter to us. It would perhaps be more effective to promote and discuss specific human rights as elucidated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to work more narrowly on cultivating the cultural pre-requisites to successful democracy.

E) Fund a switch to the free version of QualtricsXM instead of SurveyMonkey for PD practitioners, and after an initial training period, purchase a one-license-per-post institutional subscription to QualtricsXM.

I cannot speak highly enough about QualtricsXM as compared to SurveyMonkey. Simply put, SurveyMonkey does not have the statistical power to do the types of measurement that PD FSOs require to genuinely measure success.

F) Develop automated computational engagement tools for the field.

The 2017 AFCD report highlighted the need, in a world of state sponsored disinformation promoted by bot farms, for "computational engagement tools" that would allow PD FSOs to effectively respond. This recommendation appears to have been ignored, at least insofar as tools are provided to PD FSOs in the field. Asking PD FSOs to fight Russian bot farms with their individual Facebook pages is approximately as effective as when Japanese Emperor Hirohito asked his subjects to fight the planned U.S. ground invasion with bamboo spears. It is time to consider how to ethically use bot farms to advance our foreign policy, given the manifest inability of a few thousand PD FSOs to engage in even a fraction of the disinformation narratives appearing on social media. Given our ethical commitments and values, this could be structured as having bots which automatically post links to verified news stories whenever disinformation narratives are posted; the bots themselves could be clearly labeled as being operated by the U.S. government. Such ethical botfarms should be deployed at the post level by PAOs, rather than centrally from Washington.

G) Develop a clear and explicit ethical code for public diplomacy, and implement universal training on the ethics of persuasion. When doing so, take note of the existence of gendered differences in ethical beliefs among current public diplomacy practitioners.

I have argued that modern American propaganda is fundamentally ethical because it hews to clear ethical principles including *truth, beneficence, reason, open information,* and *relevance.* However, while PD FSOs overwhelmingly agree with these ethical standards when asked, for the most part, the only ethical rule they supply *unprompted* is that lying is unethical. Because propaganda *does* carry with it inherent dangers to democracy, it is essential to develop at least a basic ethical professional code for PD practitioners, along the lines of those found in journalism, health care, and law. Though PD FSOs, in my experience, behave ethically almost without exception, we open ourselves to unnecessary risk and confusion by not making it clear what our ethical professional standards actually are. For those formulating such a code, it is important to note the existence (see Chapter 5) of certain gendered differences on perceptions of ethics, particularly should the code's authors themselves have an unconscious, gendered bias towards one formulation or another. Those in charge of this process should consult the remarkably thorough appendix already developed for assessing ethical and other public diplomacy issues at the end of Leo Bogart's *Premises for Propaganda*.

5.5   Recommendation Four: Implement Strategic Development

A) Informally engage multinationals to help key policy makers understand the importance of public diplomacy and the need for consistent, non-"acting" leadership at the Under Secretary level.

Possibly through relationships with retired U.S Ambassadors, U.S.-based multinationals and think tanks should be encouraged to aggressively lobby Congress on the importance of consistent public diplomacy leadership. Public diplomacy should be actively framed to Congress as "making the world safe for U.S. business," an argument which generally resonates well

regardless of political party. Since integration, public diplomacy has not fared well from a leadership perspective. During USIA's existence, the institution had a Congressionally confirmed Director 93% of the time, and the average tenure of any leader – confirmed or unconfirmed – was 27 months (see Appendix J). Within the State Department, however, the numbers are deeply discomfiting, and speak to a lack of seriousness or commitment on the part of State towards public diplomacy. At State, public diplomacy has had a Congressionally confirmed director only 56% of the time, and directors – confirmed or unconfirmed – lasted an average of only 10 months. It is, simply put, untenable to expect serious results from an organization without stable leadership. The 1964 ACPD report recommended creating a senior civil servant position who, serving as something like chief of staff, would step in as Acting Director in the absence of a confirmed propaganda chief. Given the likely political impossibility of divesting public diplomacy back into an independent agency, I recommend the State Department immediately implement such a change.

B) *Implement a once-in-a-generation review.*

The State Department should work with the sponsors of HR 1253 to add language requiring a once in a generation (20 years) "super-review," a blend of ACPD and OIG inspections. Because of the far-reaching nature of this review, it is unlikely that the Department would regularly implement it without specific legislation that required it. Such a review team could number about 75 individuals, with State Department employees assigned to one-year tours on the team. The assignments would include a variety of PD FSOs and civil servants, from all grades, as well as locally engaged staff, and staffers from various State Department bureaus and offices including R, P, S, J, E, M, H, BP, CA, DS, GWI, IRM, FSI, GTM, IRM, GEC, ECA, GPA, and the geographic bureaus. From other parts of government, it would bring in (at least at times) representatives from other foreign affairs agencies such as Commerce, Agriculture, FBI, USAID, USAGM, DOD, DHS,

CBP, DOJ, DEA, FDA, CDC, ICE, INL, Peace Corps, and Treasury. Further, it would consult with social scientists, pollsters, rhetoricians, and advertisers, historians, ethicists, academics, and media and social media experts. The purpose of this 20-year review would be to question the unquestioned assumptions about how public diplomacy is done, to argue in favor of retaining those elements of institutional culture that are still serving us well, and to discard those elements that no longer make sense within the context of that time.

Ideally, the review team would have OIG-like powers, and would be required to not only identify problems, but to develop specific pathways by which changes could be effected, while pinpointing the responsible offices. There is some precedent for this: in 1987, USIA put on a major conference called "Public Diplomacy in the Information Age," whose outcomes served as that year's ACPD report. However, this effort would necessarily be significantly more involved than a single conference.

C) Recreate a PD-specific polling office.

During integration in 1999, USIA's research and polling office was folded into the Department of State's bureau of intelligence and research. Unfortunately, as a result, public diplomacy needs have always come second to political offices when polls are being developed. While some of the State Department's pollsters are exceptionally proactive about reaching out to public diplomacy sections to include their equities, this is not a requirement, nor is it the norm. Public Diplomacy is essentially crippled without meaningful polling data. I am hopeful that the new research and evaluation unit within R/PPR will be able to take up some of this slack, but significant additional funding will likely be necessary to reproduce the abilities of USIAs former research and polling office.

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Appendix A. Various Definitions of Propaganda – A Partial List

undated	Harold Lasswell	Controlling the presentation of an object so that a desired act will be elicited toward it on the part of selected persons.[1]
1927	Harold Lasswell	The control of opinion by significant symbols [including] stories, rumors, pictures, and other forms of social communication. Propaganda is concerned with the management of opinions and attitudes by the direct manipulation of social suggestion.[2]
1928	Edward Bernays	Conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses.[3]
1942	Harold Lasswell	The manipulation of symbols as a means of influencing attitudes on controversial matters.[4]
1943	Edgar Henderson	Any anti-rational process consisting of pressure techniques used to induce the propagandist to commit himself, before he can think the matter over, to such attitudes, opinions or acts as the propagandist desires of him.[5]

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[1] Lasswell, "Propaganda," 18.
[2] Lasswell, Harold, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, 9.
[3] Bernays, *Propaganda*, 9.
[4] Lasswell, "Communications Research and Politics," 106.
[5] Cunningham, *The Idea of Propaganda*, 81.

1946	James Warburg	Mobilizing certain of man's emotions in such a way that they will dominate his reason.[6]
1948	Leonard Doob	The attempt to affect the personalities and to control the behavior of individuals toward ends considered unscientific or of doubtful value in a society at a particular time.[7]
1959	Karin Dovring	Biased communication[8]
1961	Jacques Ellul	A set of methods employed by an organized group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in its actions of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulations and incorporated in an organization.
1968	Bernard Rubin	A universal phenomenon that everyone participates in, encompassing the conscious and deliberate attempt to foster a favorable reception for an idea, as well as what we imbibe from our surroundings when there is no particular intent.
1968	Thomas Sorensen	The selective but credible dissemination of truthful ideas and information for the purpose of persuading other people to think and act in ways that will further the propagandist's purposes.[9] *[Note: definition of ethical propaganda]*

[6] Warburg, *Unwritten Treaty*, 17.
[7] Doob, *Public Opinion and Propaganda*, 240.
[8] Cunningham, *The Idea of Propaganda,* 84.
[9] Sorensen, Thomas, *The Word War: The Story of American Propaganda*, (New York. Harper & Row, 1968): 5

1979	Michael Balfour	Inducing people to leap to conclusions without adequate examination of the evidence.[10]
1982	Fred Walker	Any form of communication in support of national objectives designed to influence opinions and emotions.[11]
1985	Terence Qualter	The deliberate attempt by the few to influence the attitudes of and behavior of the many by the manipulation of symbolic communication.[12]
1986	Garth Jowett & Victoria O'Donnell	A deliberate attempt to shape perceptions to achieve a response that furthers a desired action.[13]
1988	Noam Chomsky	Amusing, entertaining, and informing to inculcate values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that integrate audiences into society.[14]
1989	Nicholas Burnett	Discourse in the service of ideology, wherein meaning serves to sustain or alter relations of domination.[15]
2002	Stanley Cunningham	An inherently unethical endeavor best understood philosophically rather than sociologically, not characterized by intentional or deliberate falsehood so much as a mental posture or habit of careless disregard for truth-conditions, and of choosing to

[10] Balfour, Michael, *Propaganda in War, 1939-1945: Organizations, Policies, and Publics, in Britain and Germany*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979): 419.

[11] Cunningham, *The Idea of Propaganda*, 84.

[12] Qualter, *Opinion Control in the Democracies*, 124.

[13] Jowett, Garth, and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion,* (Newbury Park: Sage Publishers, 1986): 16.

[14] Chomsky*, Manufacturing Consent*, 1.

[15] Burnett, Nicholas, "Ideology and Propaganda: Towards and Integrative Approach," in *Propaganda: A Pluralistic Perspective*, ed. Ted Smith, 127.

		ignore them, but which does not require specific intent.[16]
2002	Daniel O'Keefe	A successful, intentional effort at influencing another's mental state through communication in a circumstance in which the persuadee has some measure of freedom.[17]
2003	Randal Marlin	The organized attempt through communication to affect belief of action or inculcate attitudes in a large audience in ways that circumvent or suppress an individual's adequately informed, rational, reflective judgment.[18]
2003	Philip Taylor	The deliberate attempt to persuade people to think and behave in a desired way, intended to benefit those organizing the process.[19]
2016	Thomas Huckin	False or misleading information or ideas addressed to a mass audience by parties who thereby gain advantage. Propaganda is created and disseminated systematically and does not invite critical analysis or response.[20]

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[16] Cunningham, *The Idea of Propaganda*, 52, 158.

[17] O'Keefe, Daniel, *Persuasion: Theory and Research*, (Thousand Oaks. Sage Publications, 2002): 5.

[18] Marlin, Randal, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion*, 22.

[19] Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*, 6.

[20] Huckin, Thomas, "Propaganda Defined," in *Propaganda and Rhetoric in Democracy*, ed. Gae Lyn Henderson and M.J Braun, ( ): 125-6.

Appendix B. Institutional History, 1939-1942

A39 S39 O39 N39 D39 J40 F40 M40 A40 M40 J40 J40 A40 S40 O40 N40 D40 J41 F41 M41 A41 M41 J41 J41 A41 S41 O41 N41 D41 J42 F42 M42 A42 M42 J42 J42

OWI

OSS

Office of Government Reports

OEM Office of Information

Office of Civilian Defense

Office of Facts & Figures

VOA

OCOI Foreign Information Service

Office of the Coordinator of Information

"Stars and Stripes" newspaper

DOD Psychological Warfare Board

Office of Inter-American Affairs

U.S. Film Service
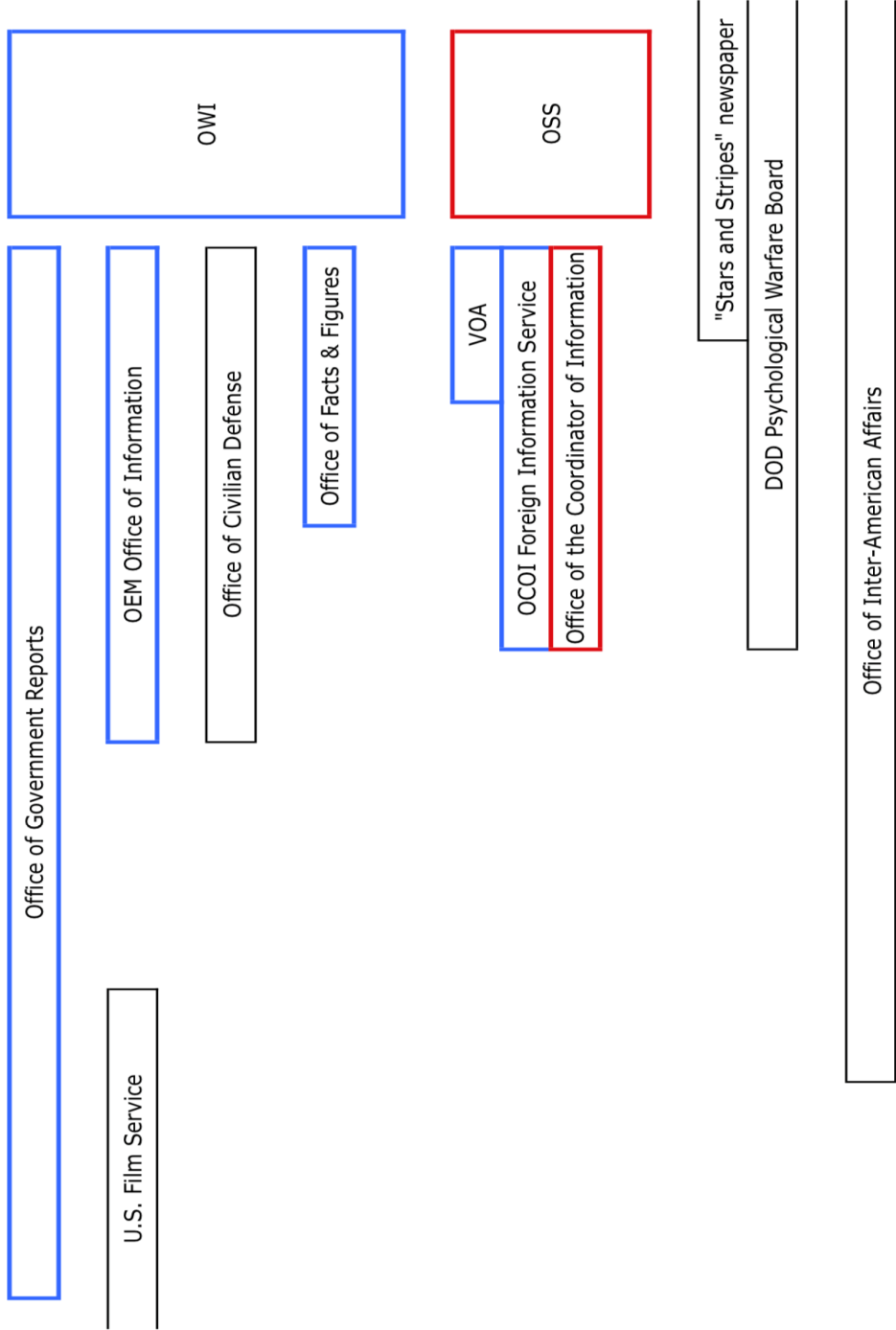
Appendix C. Institutional History, 1942-1945

Timeline chart showing institutional history from M42 to J46. Labels include: Department of State - Interim Information Service; OWI - Foreign Branch; OWI - Domestic and Foreign Branches; OIAA; OSS; Davis succeeds against coup - policy; Staid journalism, not emotional narrative; FDR - OWI in charge of foreign propaganda.
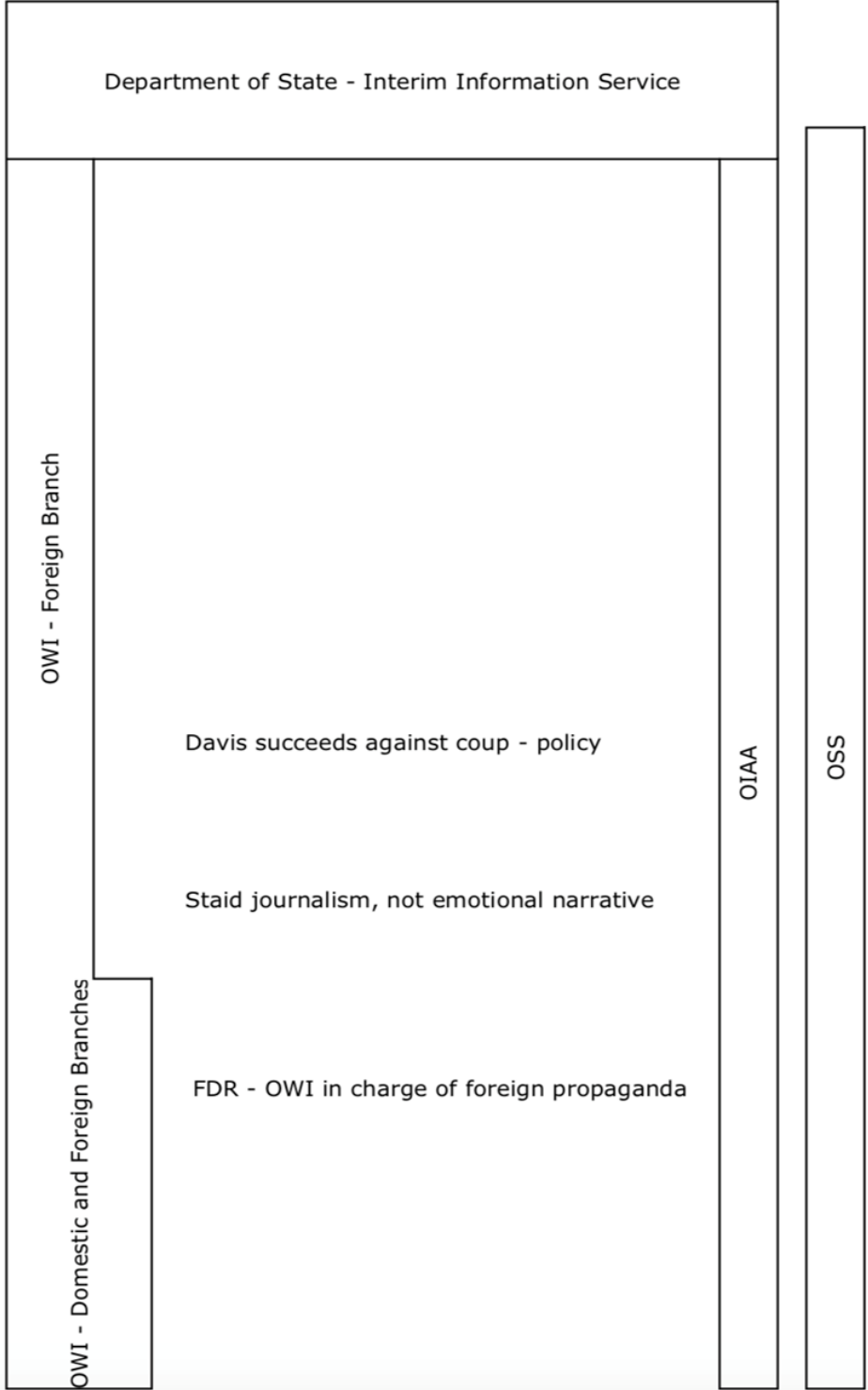
Appendix D. Institutional History, 1945-1949

A45 S45 O45 N45 D45 J46 F46 M46 A46 M46 J46 J46 A46 S46 O46 N46 D46 J47 F47 M47 A47 M47 J47 J47 A47 S47 O47 N47 D47 J48 F48 M48 A48 M48 J48 J48 A48 S48 O48 N48 D48 J49 F49 M49 A49 M49 J49 J49 A49 S49 O49

| Department of State - Office of International Information & Cultural Affairs (OIC) | Department of State - Office of International Information & Educational Exchange (OIE) | Department of State - Office of Internationall Information (OII) |
| | | Department of State - Office of Educational Exchange (OEX) |

Congress fact finding mission
Marshall Plan announced

Communist coup in CR
Smith-Mundt signed

150

Appendix E. Institutional History, 1950-1954

J50 F50 M5(A50 M5(J50 J50 A50 S50 O5(N50 D5(J51 F51 M51 A51 M51 J51 J51 A51 S51 O51 N51 D51 J52 F52 M5: A52 M5: J52 J52 A5: S52 O5: N5: D5: J53 F53 M5: A53 M5: J53 J53 A53 S5: S5: O5: N5: D5: J54 F54 M54

United States Information Agency (USIA)

Department of State - United States International Information Administration

Department of State - Office of International Information (OII)

Department of State - Office of Educational Exchange (OEX)

6 reports

Eisenhower sworn in

McCarthy attacks on State Department

Korean War

Campaign of Truth

Appendix F. List of Institutional Acronyms

ACPD   The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy was established by the 1948 Smith-Mundt Act to provide at least annual reports to Congress on the effectiveness of U.S. propaganda programs.

CBS   Columbia Broadcasting Services is one of the first three major U.S. television stations, and continues to operate today.

CPI   The Committee on Public Information was the first U.S. propaganda institution. It was headed by George Creel, and operated in World War I from April 1917 to November 1918. It was later deeply criticized as a danger to democracy.

DOS   The Department of State is the U.S. foreign affairs agency. For most of its history, it was deeply hostile to propaganda and public outreach, though absorbed USIA's propaganda functions in 1999.

FIS   The Foreign Information Service was part of OCOI, operating from July 1941 to July 1942, when it was absorbed into OWI. Playwright Robert Sherwood was its chief.

IIA   The U.S. International Information Administration was a semi-autonomous propaganda agency which operated within the State Department from January 1952 until September 1953. It was run by Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Howland Sargeant.

IIS   The Interim International Information Service was a temporary institution within the Department of State which operated from September 1945 to December 1945, whose sole purpose was to transfer the remaining functions of OWI and OIAA to the State Department. Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs William Benton ran the service.

NEC   The National Emergency Council was a New Deal-era agency established to handle various government programs, including the domestic propaganda-focused U.S. Information Service and its branch the U.S. Film Service. It was abolished in 1939.

OCCCRBAR   The Office of the Coordinator of Commercial and Cultural Relations was the first name for OIAA, from August 1940 until July 1941. Run by Nelson Rockefeller, it was primarily an economic and trade agency, but also coordinated U.S. propaganda within Latin America.

OCD	The Office of Civilian Defense was established in May 1941 to handle civilian protection, national morale and public opinion. It's propaganda functions were transferred to a new agency, the OFF, in October 1941.
OCOI	The Office of the Coordinator of Information was established in June 1941 and operated until June 1942 under William Donovan. An intelligence gathering agency, it also handled covert and overt propaganda until Roosevelt divided the office into the OWI and the OSS.
OEM	The Office of Emergency Management was a World War II-era federal agency, founded in May 1940. It included a Division of Information until those functions were transferred to OWI in June 1942.
OEX	The Office of Educational Exchange was the State Department office which handled educational, cultural and exchange programs from April 1948 until January 1952. It was divided from the pre-existing OIE, and later subsumed by the IIA.
OFF	The Office of Facts and Figures operated from October 1941 until June 1942 under poet Archibald MacLeish. It took over OCD's propaganda functions until it was subsumed within the OWI.
OGR	The Office of Government Reports, headed by Lowell Mellett, was an early domestic propaganda agency established in September 1939. It was later folded into the OWI.
OIAA	The Office of Inter-American Affairs was the later and better known name for OCCCRBAR. Unlike other propaganda agencies, it maintained its independence from OWI. It continued formally operating on paper until April 1946, though its remaining functions had already been transferred to IIS by the end of 1945.
OIC	The first official propaganda agency within the Department of State, the Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs operated from September 1945 until autumn 1947, when its named was changed to OIE. OIC absorbed the remaining functions of OWI and OIAA. William Benton ran the service.
OIE	OIC changed its name for no ostensible reason to the Office of International Information and Educational Exchange in autumn 1947. This was the beginning in a long and storied history of name changes with no ostensible purpose.

OII	In April 1948, OIE was split into the Office of International Information (OII) and the Office of Educational Exchange (OEX). The two offices remained split until they were recombined by Assistant Secretary Barrett in January 1952 under the name IIA.
OPA	The Office of Public Affairs was a small office in the Department of State that operated through WWII and the Cold War, which primarily handled direct press inquiries to DOS. It is not comparable to the present-day Bureau of Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy, but rather closer in function to the Department spokesperson's office.
OSS	The Office of Special Services was one of two agencies created in June 1942 when President Roosevelt split the OCOI into two. This office handled intelligence gathering and covert propaganda, and was a predecessor agency to the CIA.
OWI	The Office of War Information was the primary overt foreign (and, for a short time, domestic) propaganda agency during World War II. It operated from June 1942 until the end of August, 1945, when President Truman abolished the agency and ordered its remaining functions to be transferred to DOS.
PWB	The Psychological Warfare Branch was a tactical, covert, military propaganda organization within the War Department during World War II whose precursors date back to June 1942. Operating primarily out of London, it also included representatives from OWI.
PWC	The Psychological Warfare Committee was the domestically –located equivalent and parent of the PWB, founded by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in March 1941 to coordinate tactical military propaganda.
PWE	The British Political Warfare Executive was the UK equivalent of the PWC; its members were part of the London-based PWB.
USACPD	*See ACPD*
USIA	The U.S. Information Agency was the longest-running American overt, foreign directed propaganda agency. It was established by Eisenhower in September 1953 after several studied concluded that propaganda operations within DOS were ineffective. It operated until 1999, when it was merged again into DOS.
USIIA	*See IIA*
VOA	The Voice of America was the primary radio propaganda organization for the U.S. government during WWII and the Cold War, launched in

February 1942 within the FIS, then transitioning into OWI. In the 1970s, it achieved significant independence from the U.S. government, and continues to operate as a quasi-independent agency today.

Appendix G. Short Bios of Key Propagandists

Allen, George	A career Foreign Service Officer, Allen served as the second-ever Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs from March, 1948, to November, 1949. Later, he was appointed Director of USIA, where he served from November, 1957 to December, 1960.
Barnes, Joseph	A journalist who was first recruited by Sherwood into FIS, he later served as a senior figure in the New York-based Overseas Branch of OWI (deputy OWI director for Atlantic Operations) he supported MacLeish and Warburg's vision of propaganda *driving* policy. As a result, he was fired in February 1944 along with several others.
Barrett, Edward	Barrett was *Newsweek* journalist who first served as a government propagandist within OCOI, before transitioning into OWI News and Feature Bureau chief. He was then promoted to head the Overseas Branch after Barnes, Johnson, and Warburg were fired in 1944. After returning to *Newsweek* following the war, he later served as Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs from February 1950 until February 1952.
Benton, William	A little-known hero who essentially saved public diplomacy from being defunded following WWII, Benton was an advertising executive, investor, and university president who was appointed as the first ever Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, beginning in September 1945 and continuing until September 1947. He successfully persuaded a hostile Congress to continue funding propaganda operations, and not to outsource the work to the private sector. Later, as a Senator, he introduced an unsuccessful motion to expel Joseph McCarthy from the Senate. *See entry on Archibald MacLeish for more information on my designation of Benton as the "first" Assistant Secretary for Public Affair*
Bernays, Edward	Bernays was a theater publicist who joined CPI during WWI to build domestic and foreign support for U.S. entry into the war. Often regarded as the founder of public relations, he became an early propaganda theorist who worked political campaigns, and advised OWI and later USIA. He embraced covert-source propaganda and early social science research on persuasion, but

wrongly concluded that individuals had no ability to resist persuasion techniques.

Carroll, Wallace	A foreign correspondent based in Europe before WWII, in 1942 he joined OWI as its London Office Director, where he worked closely with PWE. Frustrated by conflicts with Sherwood and Warburg he resigned in late 1943, before returning at Davis's request to OWI in 1944 as its deputy director for Europe. He later wrote the book *Persuade or Perish* chronicling his time with OWI.
Cowles, Gardner	A former newspaper publisher, Cowles was appointed as chief of OWI's Domestic Branch, where he regularly clashed with MacLeish over style and tactics. Cowles believed in using persuasive advertising techniques rather than reasoned debate. In February 1943, he hired several advertising executives, leading to mass resignations among those who opposed using these methods.
Creel, George	A politically progressive (for his time) investigative journalist, Creel was appointed by President Wilson as head of the Committee for Public Information, the WWI propaganda agency. Using both censorship and PR techniques, he sought to increase public support for U.S. entry into the war. He was later deeply criticized for his mendacious techniques.
Davis, Elmer	A well known CBS radio journalist, President Roosevelt appointed Davis as the first and only director of OWI, in charge of over 3,000 employees. He argued for minimal censorship and maximum information provided to the public, leading to conflicts with the War Department and OSS. Following the war, he returned to his radio career.
Dizard, Wilson	Previously a journalist with *Architectural Forum*, he joined the State Department as a public affairs officer in 1951, transitioning to USIA when it launched in 1953, where he remained for almost 30 years. He published *The Strategy of Truth: The Story of the U.S. Information Service* in 1961.
Donovan, William	Donovan was a lawyer and businessman who served in WWI, ending as a Colonel. He returned to law following the war, but in the late 30s helped establish an informal group of businessmen and lawyers collecting intelligence on foreign affairs. Believing U.S. entry into the war was inevitable, he persuaded President Roosevelt to establish OCOI, naming him

director. In 1942, OCOI was split into OWI and OSS, where he remained as director and was promoted to the rank of major general. He later helped launch the CIA.

Henderson, John	Biographical information on John Henderson is sparse, but he served in the State Department's propaganda organs in the late 1940s, moving on the USIA in 1953. In 1969, he published the book *The United States Information Agency*.
Houseman, John	A Romanian artist, Hollywood actor and theater professional, Houseman was the first Director of the VOA, where he employed artistic rather than journalistic methods. He resigned in spring 1943 after being accused of being a Communist sympathizer, and encountering deep resistance to his artistic methods, which were perceived as avant-garde and ineffective by many.
Johnson, Ed	A journalist with *Collier's* magazine, and then CBS, he joined OCOI in 1941 as an expert on Europe before becoming chief of the OWI overseas editorial board. He was fired in 1944 along with Barnes and Warburg.
Klauber, Edward	A journalist with the New York Times and CBS, Klauber was brought in by OWI Director Davis as OWI Associate Director in 1944 to help fix the policy disputes between Sherwood and Davis, he orchestrated the removal of Barnes, Warburg, and Johnson.
Lippmann, Walter	Lippmann was a journalist and CPI advisor who first believed that propaganda was value neutral, that the best ideas would rise to the top, and that elites needed to direct democracy. In 1922, he wrote *Public Opinion*, a seminal work on propaganda. Later, partly based on the excesses he observed at CPI, he became much more skeptical, believing it was antithetical to free choice within a democracy. In 1947, he invented the term "Cold War."
MacLeish, Archibald	A politically progressive, modernist poet, writer, and lawyer who served in World War I, President Roosevelt controversially appointed him Librarian of Congress in 1939. After successfully revamping the Library, Roosevelt made him chief of the new Office of Facts and Figures in October 1941, where he served until moving into OWI in June 1942 as head of policy and planning. He resigned from OWI due to policy the same policy disputes that caught Warburg, Johnson, and Barnes, but was later appointed in December 1944 as the Assistant Secretary of State for Public and Cultural Relations (rather than the later designation of Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs) until he

handed off the baton to William Benton in August 1945. Though technically the first such comparable Assistant Secretary, OWI was handling propaganda operations during his entire tenure, making Benton the first such Assistant Secretary genuinely in charge of the propaganda program. As MacLeish never held either the exact title or the actual responsibilities, I argue that Benton was the first of his lineage.

Mellett, Lowell	Mellett was a politically progressive journalist and WWI foreign correspondent who also covered U.S. domestic politics and social issues. Headed U.S. Film Service under NEC's U.S. Information Service from fall 1938-fall 1939, and it was abolished soon after. Mellett transferred to be the head of the new Office of Government Reports in fall 1939. In February 1942 he opened a separate Hollywood Branch to coordinate film propaganda, and was then brought into OWI in June 1942 to head its Bureau of Motion Pictures within the Domestic Branch. After angering Hollywood in December 1942 with clumsy attempts at censorship, his office was essentially defunded by Congress in June 1943. He then supervised work with director Frank Capra to film pro-war propaganda films for U.S. soldiers. In June 1944, he resigned his government commission and returned to his work as a journalist and author.
Merriam, Charles	Merriam was a politically progressive political scientist and early backer of U.S. entry into WWI, who joined CPI as its branch chief in Italy. He is considered the founder of the "Chicago School" of political science, advocating quantitative methods.
Michel, Werner	Werner was an Alsatian theater and stage producer who Sherwood and Barnes hired to manage the OWI Radio Program Bureau's broadcasting division following Houseman's departure. He favored a much more emotionally neutral and journalistic style, rather than Houseman's artistic and emotional style.
Rockefeller, Nelson	Rockefeller was a businessman, and later politician, who shrewdly used his family's inherited wealth to curry favor with political elites. In 1940, he convinced President Roosevelt to appoint him to establish and run the CIAA, which he directed until the end of World War II. In 1944, he was dually appointed as Assistant Secretary of State for American Republic Affairs. After angering Roosevelt in 1945, Rockefeller was fired and the CIAA absorbed into DOS. He remained engaged in government under Truman, Eisenhower, and Nixon, and eventually became New York Governor and Ford's Vice-President.

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Sherwood, Robert	A playwright and writer, the rise of the Third Reich moved him from a pacifist stance to a pro-war position in defense of democracy. A speechwriter for Roosevelt's 1940 campaign, he was recruited by Donovan as head of the COI's new Foreign Information Service in July 1941. His insistence on a 'strategy of truth' and long-term goals rather than short term tactics led to a falling out with Donovan, he was relieved to become OWI's Policy Development Branch director in June 1942. He recruited a number of other key OWI propagandists, but was functionally "exiled" to London following a policy dispute with Davis over who was actually in charge. Unable to implement his vision, he resigned in September 1944. Credited with the phrase "arsenal of democracy," he continued to write and won a Pulitzer in 1949.
Streibert, Theodore	A film and radio executive, Eisenhower appointed Streibert as the first Director of USIA in fall of 1953. He served until 1956. He worked to move VOA away from the polemics of the Campaign of Truth toward objective reporting focused on long-term cultural goals and "mutual understanding." That said, he was still occasionally accused of promoting too much of a "hard sell." He also established a system of work division and organization at posts abroad that has largely endured to the present day.
Sorensen, Thomas	A career USIA officer, Sorensen was promoted to the position of USIA Deputy Director based largely on the fact that his brother was special counsel to President Kennedy. He wrote an excellent history of the USIA through the late 1960s called "The Word War."
Thomson, Charles	Thomson was a social scientist who worked closely with Lasswell. He served in World War II, ending as a Colonel, during which time he worked largely with military propaganda in coordination with OWI, State, PWE and the War Department. In 1948, he published an institutional history of U.S. propaganda called "Overseas Information Service of the United States Government."
Warburg, James	(deputy OWI director for psychological operations) Overseas Branch's deputy director for propaganda policy. First worked as COI special assistant, developing foreign language staff for Sherwood's FIS.

Appendix H. Recommended Further Reading

Those interested in further reading on the early institutional history of overt U.S. propaganda should start with Dr. Holly Cohen Shulman's *The Voice of America: Propaganda and Democracy, 1941-1945* (1990). This book does an excellent, and enjoyable, job of charting the both the institutional changes over time, as well as the individual ideological disputes that animated the period.

Second, Thomas Sorensen's *The Word War: The Story of American Propaganda* (1968) provides a similarly robust pictures of both these issues during World War II, but extends its analysis through the late 1960s.

Other strong recommendations on these topics, by publication date, include:

- Thomson, Charles A.H., *Overseas Information Service* (1948)
- Barrett, Edward, *Truth is Our Weapon* (1953)
- Dizard, Wilson, *The Strategy of Truth* (1961)
- Meyerhoff, Arthur, *The Strategy of Persuasion* (1965)
- Rubin, Ronald, *The Objectives of the U.S. Information Agency* (1968)
- Henderson, John*, The United States Information Agency* (1969)
- MacCann, Richard D. and William Bluem, *The People's Films* (1973)
- Bogart, Leo and Agnes, *Premises for Propaganda* (1976)
- Winkler, Allen, *The Politics of Propaganda* (1978)
- Koppes, Clayton and Gregory Black, *Hollywood Goes to War* (1987)
- Funk, Clayton, "The Committee on Public Information" (1994)
- Snyder, Alvin, *Warriors of Disinformation* (1995)
- Myers, James*, The Bureau of Motion Pictures* (1998)
- Sproule, Michael J., *Propaganda and Democracy* (1997)
- Cramer, Gisela and Ursula Prutsch. "Rockefeller's OIAA" (2006)
- Girona, Ramon and Jordi Xifra, "The Office of Facts and Figures" (2009)
- Yarrow, Andrew, "Selling a New Vision of America" (2009)

Appendix I. U.S. Overt Propaganda Budgets, 1941-2020

U.S. Public Diplomacy Funding 1941-Present
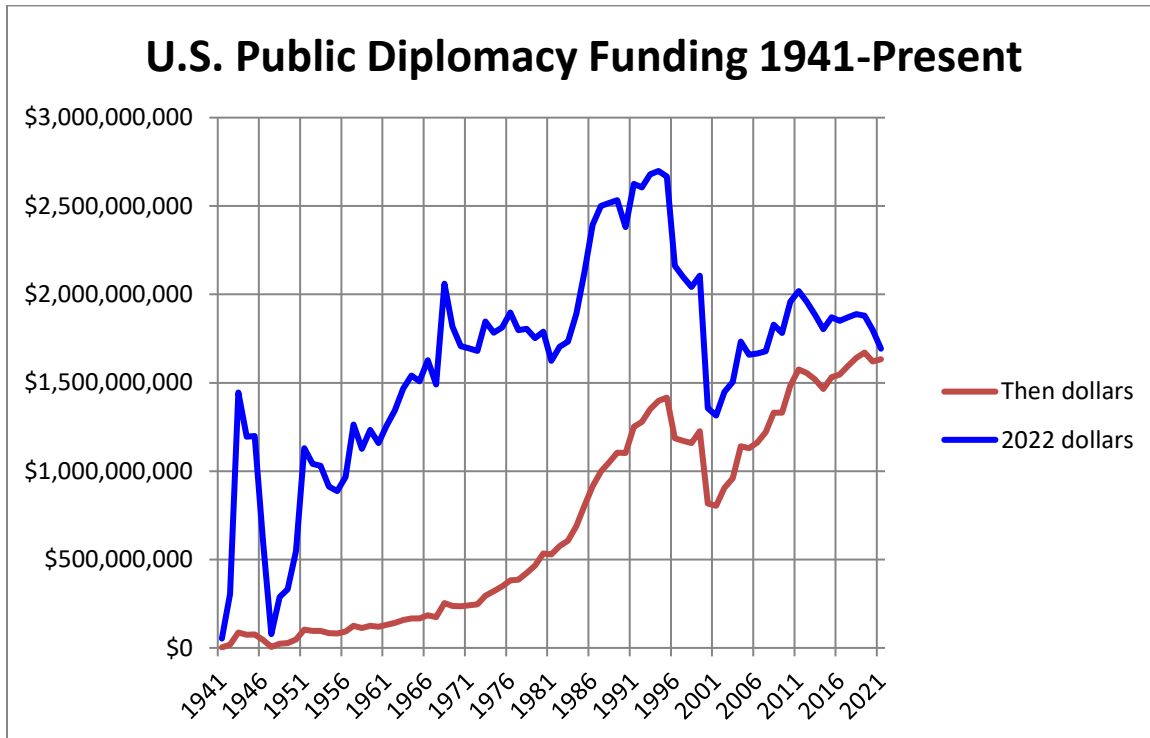
Note: This chart is best read as demonstrating trends over time rather than providing 'accurate' funding levels for overt, foreign-directed U.S. propaganda in any given year. This is due to the fact that the constitution of various propaganda agencies has changed over time, as has the way that the U.S. government counts and reports spending. Additionally, I have had to use four separate data sources to compile this graph; in particular, I believe the apparent spike in funding in 1967 to be an artifact of using different data sources, rather than an actual funding increase.

From 1941-1946, I relied on Robert Pirsein's "The Voice of America: A History of the International Broadcasting Activities of the United States Government, 1940-1962."

From 1947-1953, I used U.S. government budget reports available at fraser.stlouisfed.org.

From 1954-1967, I used information found in John Henderson's The United States Information Agency.

Finally, for 1968 to the present, I found OMB data in "Table 3.2 – Outlays by Function and Subfunction: 1962-2027," *at whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/historical-tables/*

Appendix J. U.S. Government Propaganda Chiefs

Agency	Director (or Acting*)	Years	Tenure (months)
OWI	Elmer Davis	1942-1945	39
OIC	William Benton	1945-1947	24
OIE	*Unknown**	1947-1948	7
OIE	George Allen	1948-1949	20
OIC	*Unknown**	1949-1950	3
OIC	Edward Barrett	1950-1952	24
USIIA	Wilson Compton	1952-1953	12
USIIA	*Unknown**	1953	5
USIA	Theodore Streibert	1953-1956	39
USIA	Arthur Larson	1956-1957	10
USIA	George Allen	1957-1960	36
USIA	*Unknown**	1960-1961	3
USIA	Edward R Murrow	1961-1964	34
USIA	Carl Rowan	1964-1965	15
USIA	Leonard Marks	1965-1968	39
USIA	*Unknown**	1968-1969	3
USIA	Frank Shakespeare	1969-1973	48
USIA	James Keogh	1973-1976	46
USIA	*Unknown**	1976-1977	5
USIA/ICA	John Reinhardt	1977-1980	41

ICA	*Unknown**	1980-1981	10
ICA/USIA	Charles Wick	1981-1989	91
USIA	*Unknown**	1989	3
USIA	Bruce Gelb	1989-1991	23
USIA	*Unknown**	1991	3
USIA	Henry Catto Jr.	1991-1993	20
USIA	*Unknown**	1993	4
USIA	Joe Duffey	1993-1999	73
State	Evelyn Lieberman	1999-2001	16
State	*Unknown**	2001	8
State	Charlotte Beers	2001-2003	18
State	*Unknown**	2003	10
State	Margaret Tutwiler	2003-2004	6
State	*Unknown**	2004	5
State	Patricia Harrison*	2004-2005	4
State	*Unknown**	2005	6
State	Karen Hughes	2005-2008	31
State	*Unknown**	2008	2
State	James Glassman	2008-2009	7
State	*Unknown**	2009	4
State	Judith McHale	2009-2011	25
State	*Unknown**	2011-2012	7
State	Kathleen Stephens*	2012	2
State	Tara Sonenshine	2012-2013	14

State	*Unknown**	2013-2014	7
State	Richard Stengel	2014-2016	34
State	Bruce Wharton*	2016-2017	6
State	*Unknown**	2017	4
State	Steve Goldstein	2017-2018	3
State	Heather Nauert*	2018	9
State	*Unknown**	2018-2019	4
State	Michelle Giuda*	2019-2020	13
State	Ulrich Breichbuhl*	2020	7
State	Nilda Pedrosa*	2020-2021	4
State	Jennifer Hall Godfrey*	2021-2022	14
State	Elizabeth Allen*	2022-*present*	*3*

Note: Table does not indicate gaps of fewer than 8 weeks.

Appendix K. Survey Questions

Filter Questions

Do you consent to participating in this study?

Are you currently a Public Diplomacy-coned Foreign Service Officer, employed by the U.S. Department of State?

R/PPR is…
- The office that primarily handles PD grants
- The office that primarily handles PD research and policy
- The office that primarily handles press outreach

0.7 refers to…
- The section of the law that forbids domestic PD activities
- The ideal ratio between PD FSOs and LE staff.
- The budget code that funds many PD activities.

A PDIP is a…
- Annual plan which aligns goals and objectives with budgets
- Tool for determining the proper grade level for PD LE staff
- Mechanism for protecting public diplomacy intellectual property

Demographic Questions

What is your gender identity?
- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

How many years have you served as a PD-coned FSO?
- 0-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16+ years

Have you served in a PD capacity in an active warzone?
- Yes
- No

Were you ever employed at USIA?
- Yes
- No

H1 (Likert Scale)

Misleading foreign audiences is effective at advancing U.S. foreign policy goals. Misleading foreign audiences is ethical when advancing U.S. foreign policy goals.
I mislead foreign audiences to advance U.S. foreign policy goals.
Lying to foreign audiences is effective at advancing U.S. foreign policy goals.
Lying to foreign audiences is ethical when advancing U.S foreign policy goals.
I lie to foreign audiences to advance U.S. foreign policy goals.

H2 (Likert Scale)

Concealing the source of information is effective at advancing U.S. foreign policy goals.
Concealing the source of information is ethical when advancing U.S. foreign policy goals.
I conceal the source of information to advance U.S. foreign policy goals.

H3 (Likert Scale)

When in a warzone, what's ethical to do in public diplomacy changes.

H4 (Likert Scale)

Making self-righteous arguments to foreign audiences is effective.
Making self-righteous arguments to foreign audiences is ethical.
I use self-righteous argumentation with foreign audiences.
Denouncing bad nation state behavior to foreign audiences is effective.
Denouncing bad nation state behavior to foreign audiences is ethical.
I denounce bad nation state behavior with foreign audiences.
Using name-calling against bad nation state behavior is effective with foreign audiences.
Using name-calling against bad nation state behavior is ethical with foreign audiences.
I use name-calling against bad nation state behavior with foreign audiences.
The use of sarcasm with foreign audiences is effective.
The use of sarcasm with foreign audiences is ethical.
I use sarcasm with foreign audiences.
Employing stereotypes with foreign audiences is effective. Employing stereotypes with foreign audiences is ethical.
I employ stereotypes with foreign audiences.

Highlighting U.S. successes to foreign audiences is effective.
Highlighting U.S. successes to foreign audiences is ethical.
I highlight U.S. successes with foreign audiences.
Highlighting U.S. failures to foreign audiences is effective at advancing policy goals.
Highlighting U.S. failures to foreign audiences is ethical.
I highlight U.S. failures with foreign audiences to advance policy goals.

H5 (Likert Scale)

Telling partial truths to foreign audiences is effective at advancing U.S. foreign policy goals.
Telling partial truths to foreign audiences is ethical when advancing U.S. foreign policy goals.
I tell partial truths to foreign audiences to advance U.S. foreign policy goals.
Telling the whole truth to foreign audiences is effective at advancing U.S. foreign policy goals.
Telling the whole truth to foreign audiences is ethical when advancing U.S. foreign policy goals.
I tell the whole truth to foreign audiences to advance U.S. foreign policy goals.
I tell the whole truth to foreign audiences in my job to advance U.S. foreign policy goals, even when it is detrimental to U.S. interests.

H6 (Likert Scale)

From a foreign policy perspective, there is an objective reality that can be agreed upon by third party, disinterested observers.

H7 (Likert Scale)

Public diplomacy should be clearly linked to and driven by policy.
The best public diplomacy programs have no policy component.

H8 (Likert Scale)

Making moral arguments to foreign audiences is effective.
Making moral arguments to foreign audiences is ethical.
I use moral argumentation with foreign audiences.
Making rational arguments to foreign audiences is effective.
Making rational arguments to foreign audiences is ethical.
I use rational argumentation with foreign audiences.
U.S. public diplomacy outreach is too drab to be effective.
Using emotional arguments with foreign audiences is effective.
Using emotional arguments with foreign audiences is ethical.
I use emotional arguments with foreign audiences.

H10 (Likert Scale)

One main purpose of my job is to make the world safe for democracy.
Lessons from the United States are valuable for the rest of the world.
The United States government is the legitimate, official representive of the American people to foreign audiences.

H11 (Likert Scale)

Long term goals are more important than short term goals.
Short term goals are more important than long term goals.
Colorful, emotional arguments are effective with public audiences over the short-term.
Colorful, emotional arguments are effective with public audiences over the long term.

H12 (Likert Scale)

United States engagement in the world is a good thing.
United States intervention in the world is a good thing.

H13 (Likert Scale)

The more foreign audiences know about us, the more they like us.
The more accurate information foreign audiences know about us, the more they like us.
The more experience foreign audiences have with the U.S., the more they like us.
I am well-versed in the latest science research on persuasion.
I am well-versed in academic theories of persuasion.
I have received State Department training in the latest science and theory of persuasion.
I have received non-State Department training in the latest science and theory of persuasion.
Understanding the latest science on persuasion makes PDOs more effective.
I would be interested in additional training on the latest science and theory of persuasion.

Other

What are some things you would never do as a PD officer because they are unethical? [text box]
Have you ever done anything you consider unethical as a PD Officer? [yes/no]
Public Diplomacy is a form of propaganda. [yes/no]