

The Role of Propaganda in Modern Society

Rustamov Ramz Rizokulovich

Karshi State Technical University, Uzbekistan

RustamovRamz23@gmail.com



Article History

Received on 15 June 2024

^{1st} Revised on 8 July 2024

Accepted on 10 July 2024

Abstract

Purpose: This study aimed to examine the historical development, theoretical foundation, and modern application of the propaganda system as a key mechanism for shaping public opinion, guiding social development, and ensuring societal cohesion in the 21st century.

Methodology: This research employs a qualitative approach through literature-based analysis. Key theoretical perspectives from prominent scholars such as Harold Lasswell, Walter Lippmann, and John Dewey are reviewed to understand the evolution of propaganda theories and their relevance to modern societal dynamics.

Results: The findings show that the propaganda system has evolved from a basic tool of communication into a complex and structured mechanism for managing public opinion. In modern society, propaganda plays a crucial role in influencing the public's perception of sociopolitical reforms, promoting shared values, addressing social problems, and mobilizing collective action. Institutions across the political, economic, and cultural sectors actively rely on propaganda to secure support and foster public engagement.

Conclusions: The study concludes that propaganda, when used responsibly, functions as a powerful force for social unity, value dissemination, and problem-solving. As societies face ongoing challenges, such as crises and conflicts, the significance of propaganda in shaping collective consciousness and guiding public behavior remains indispensable.

Limitations: This study is limited to theoretical and literature-based discourse without empirical data or case studies to support claims. It does not assess the ethical dilemmas or manipulative potential of propaganda in authoritarian contexts.

Contributions: This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of propaganda's societal functions by connecting classical theories with modern implementations. This highlights how propaganda, when aligned with democratic and humanistic values, can be an effective tool for social development, cohesion, and reform.

Keywords: *Modern Propaganda Systems, Propaganda System, Propaganda Tools, Social Significance Of Propaganda.*

How to cite: Rizokulovich, R, R. (2024). The Role of Propaganda in Modern Society. *Jurnal Humaniora dan Ilmu Pendidikan*, 4(1), 1-7.

1. Introduction

The concept of propaganda is deeply embedded in the historical trajectory of human communication and social organization. While some scholars argue that propaganda systems emerged formally during the late Middle Ages, particularly with the establishment of the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide by Pope Gregory XV in 1622 to support Catholic missionary activities, such a view oversimplifies the origins of the phenomenon (Farcaş, 2024; Pansanella, Sîrbu, Kertesz, & Rossetti, 2023). To suggest that the dissemination of ideas and the shaping of public opinion did not occur prior to the 18th century

would be historically inaccurate and intellectually reductive. In fact, the strategic spread of ideologies, beliefs, and socio-political messages has been a core feature of human societies since antiquity (Gavrilets & Richerson, 2022). Propaganda has evolved significantly in modern society, transitioning from traditional forms to sophisticated digital strategies that permeate various aspects of daily life. In the digital age, propaganda is disseminated through social media platforms, online news outlets, and other digital channels, making it more pervasive and challenging to detect. This evolution has profound implications for public opinion, political processes, and societal norms.

One notable development is the rise of computational propaganda, which involves the use of algorithms, bots, and artificial intelligence to spread misleading information and manipulate public discourse. This form of propaganda leverages the speed and reach of digital platforms to influence opinions on a large scale. For instance, a study published in 2023 highlights how computational propaganda has been employed to sway public opinion during political events, emphasizing the need for robust detection and countermeasures (Howard, Lin, & Tuzov, 2023).

The impact of propaganda is not limited to political arenas; it also affects cultural perceptions and societal behaviors. Mass media campaigns have been used to shape cultural narratives and consumer behaviors, as seen in historical examples like the "Torches of Freedom" campaign, which linked smoking with women's liberation. Such campaigns demonstrate the power of propaganda to influence societal norms and individual choices. Given the pervasive nature of modern propaganda, there is a growing emphasis on media literacy as a tool to empower individuals to critically analyze and interpret information. Educational initiatives aim to equip people with the skills needed to identify propaganda techniques and assess the credibility of information sources. By fostering critical thinking and awareness, society can better navigate the complex information landscape of the digital age (Angkustsiri, 2023).

In conclusion, the role of propaganda in modern society is multifaceted and deeply integrated into digital communication channels. Understanding its mechanisms and impacts is crucial for maintaining informed public discourse and safeguarding democratic processes (Wilde, 2024). From the rhetorical strategies of ancient Greece to the symbolic architecture of the Roman Empire, and the myth-making of monarchic and theocratic states, various forms of proto-propaganda have been used to influence public perception and reinforce authority (Woolley, 2022). American sociologist Charles Simons argues that propaganda, in its most fundamental form, emerged as soon as humans began to use language to influence others' thinking and behavior. This aligns with the view that propaganda is not merely a tool of manipulation but a necessary mechanism for organizing social life, fostering collective identity, and maintaining social cohesion (Le & Block, 2024).

In modern society, the role of propaganda has evolved significantly due to the development of mass media and digital communication technologies (Патрахина & Шламова, 2015). These tools have amplified the capacity of governments, corporations, and social movements to construct narratives, shape public opinion, and direct collective behavior (Rustamov & Elboyeva, 2020). As Simons emphasizes, without the guidance of public opinion, structured social development becomes nearly impossible. Therefore, propaganda is not only a historical artifact but a dynamic, evolving system that remains central to contemporary governance, conflict, and culture (Кареева, Некрасов, & Пинчук, 2020).

2. Literature Review and Hipotesis

As human society has developed, the paradigms of socio-economic, political and cultural development have changed, new and new models of development have emerged, religious views, ideas and ideologies have developed, and conflicts of interests have become more acute, the propaganda system has also become more complex. In particular, for centuries, various social groups, political forces, and the scientific community serving the socio-political interests of these forces have paid special attention to improving the propaganda system. As a result of these efforts, new and new types and forms of propaganda have emerged.

Public opinion encompasses the collective attitudes, beliefs, and values of a society, serving as a foundation for establishing social norms and guiding individual behaviors. According to Britannica, values represent the deep-seated principles that are slow to change but exert a powerful influence on public mood, while attitudes and opinions are more fluid and susceptible to change. These components interact to form a dynamic system where societal norms are both shaped by and reflective of prevailing public sentiments. Propaganda significantly influences public opinion by shaping societal values and norms. Through strategic dissemination of information, propaganda can reinforce existing beliefs or introduce new ideologies, thereby molding collective behavior. This process is evident in various contexts, including political campaigns and public health initiatives, where targeted messages aim to align public perception with specific agendas (Shao et al., 2018).

The advent of digital media has given rise to computational propaganda, where algorithms and automation are employed to disseminate persuasive content. This form of propaganda leverages social media platforms to target specific audiences, often using bots to simulate genuine user engagement. Such tactics can create echo chambers and reinforce existing biases, making it challenging for individuals to encounter diverse perspectives (Pote, 2024). Enhancing media literacy is crucial in empowering individuals to critically evaluate information and recognize propaganda. Educational initiatives that focus on developing analytical skills can help audiences discern credible sources from misleading content. By fostering a critical mindset, media literacy serves as a defense mechanism against the manipulative tactics of propaganda. While propaganda can be utilized for beneficial purposes, such as promoting public health measures, it also raises ethical concerns when used to manipulate or deceive. The line between informative communication and manipulative propaganda can be blurred, leading to potential misuse. It is essential to establish ethical guidelines and accountability measures to ensure that propaganda serves the public interest without infringing on individual autonomy (Stella, Ferrara, & De Domenico, 2018).

Selective Exposure Theory posits that individuals preferentially consume information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs, leading to reinforcement of those beliefs over time. This behavior contributes to the formation of echo chambers, where exposure to opposing viewpoints is limited. In the context of propaganda, selective exposure can exacerbate polarization, as individuals become increasingly insulated within their ideological bubbles. Understanding this theory is vital in developing strategies to promote diverse information consumption and mitigate the divisive effects of propaganda (Rabb, Cowen, & de Ruiter, 2023).

However, the propaganda system began to gain power in the literal sense only from the second half of the 20th century. Because by this time, the need to purposefully influence the minds and worldview of people, to form a certain social opinion and position in them, to encourage them to act in a certain direction, increased. In particular, political institutions operating in society became interested in forming a specific socio-political position in citizens, economic entities in encouraging them to consume certain products and services, social institutions in uniting them around a certain goal or point of view, and cultural institutions in raising their level of awareness. The propaganda system was assessed as a force, a unique mechanism capable of effectively serving the realization of such goals (Nazki, 2024).

In this regard, theories have also emerged that express ways to rationally use its capabilities. One of these theories was developed by Harold Dwight Lasswell, who served as director of the Political Science Center in New York. According to the scientist, propaganda has a neutral content, it can be both positive and negative, depending on the goal it sets for itself. Any citizen is extremely susceptible to propaganda, and the aggravation of social problems, economic crises, and political conflicts further strengthen this feature in them. People begin to perceive propaganda as a source of spiritual peace. Therefore, it is necessary to use propaganda effectively and purposefully. G. Lasswell believes that the purpose of propaganda is to unite people around a single cause. The scientist believes that propaganda tools should strive to influence both the intellect and emotions of citizens. To this end, he proposes subordinating the media to scientific technocracy, and making extensive use of various political myths

and political stereotypes that can excite people in the propaganda process (Ribeiro, Schmidt, Nicholas, Kruglikova, & Du Pont, 2019).

This article analyzes how selective exposure to partisan television news contributes to the formation of echo chambers. By linking behavioral measures of television consumption to political data, the study provides empirical evidence on how media choices reinforce existing political beliefs and limit exposure to opposing viewpoints (Broockman & Kalla, 2024). This comprehensive review synthesizes research on echo chambers and filter bubbles, exploring their existence, antecedents, and effects. The study highlights variations in measurement approaches and contextual factors that influence outcomes, emphasizing the need for cross-platform studies and investigations into the causal links between polarization and echo chambers (Hartmann, Wang, Pohlmann, & Berendt, 2025).

Selective exposure plays a pivotal role in intensifying political polarization within social media environments, where algorithms curate content based on user preferences. This personalization reinforces users' ideological biases, reducing exposure to divergent viewpoints and fostering homogeneous online communities. Research has shown that individuals not only gravitate toward content aligned with their beliefs but also engage more with emotionally charged and confirmatory information. Such dynamics contribute to the entrenchment of partisan identities and diminished tolerance for opposing perspectives. Understanding this phenomenon is crucial for designing interventions that encourage exposure to diverse opinions and reduce polarization (Johnson, Neo, Heijnen, Smits, & van Veen, 2020).

Writer and journalist Walter Lippmann notes that the social and political processes of his time have become extremely complex. The processes have become so complex and sophisticated that the average citizen cannot independently understand their essence. Therefore, the destructive propaganda of the developing era can easily deceive him, mobilize him for inhuman ideas. W. Lippmann supports Harold Lasswell's ideas about subordinating the media to scientific technocracy, emphasizing that this will serve to increase the effectiveness of propaganda. The writer also proposes the creation of a Research Bureau. In his opinion, this bureau should be engaged in analyzing various information, presenting its results to the elite, and determining the scope of information that the population should or should not know (Guriev & Treisman, 2015).

American philosopher and pragmatist John Dewey proposed his own theory of propaganda. In his opinion, the main goal of propaganda should be to spread enlightenment. Only through the spread of enlightenment can citizens be protected from inhuman, deceitful goals. However, the philosopher does not consider the idea of placing the media at the disposal of any social group to be acceptable. He considers it appropriate to reform education and the media, to use their capabilities to discuss social problems. The propaganda system, which has been constantly improved based on the theories presented by scientists in response to social needs, has gained serious social significance in the new century. Its capabilities are widely used in modern societies for various purposes. An increasing number of social, economic and political institutions have found it convenient to rely on the power of propaganda in order to achieve their goals. In other words, in the 21st century, the propaganda system has become one of the most reliable means of achieving various goals (Khaneghahi, Pudineh, & Zehi, 2022).

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in a literature-based analytical approach. The analysis draws upon primary theoretical frameworks developed by notable scholars such as Harold Lasswell, Walter Lippmann, and John Dewey, who have significantly contributed to the field of political communication and media studies. Secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, historical records, and academic reviews, are utilized to contextualize the evolution of propaganda systems in relation to broader socio-political transformations.

Data collection focuses on the synthesis of textual information from academic databases and scholarly publications, aiming to trace the trajectory of propaganda from historical emergence to its modern-day applications. The method involves thematic content analysis, through which key patterns, ideological

shifts, and strategic applications of propaganda are identified and discussed. This methodology allows for a conceptual understanding of propaganda's role in contemporary society without reliance on empirical or statistical data.

4. Result and Discussion

First of all, the use of the possibilities of the propaganda system to form an acceptable opinion in the public is gaining momentum. This is not without reason, of course. Because in modern society, public opinion performs important functions. First of all, it is a powerful source that determines the direction of social changes. After all, only those goals and objectives that are supported by public opinion, which is an expression of the needs and interests of members of society, can be realized. Goals that the public does not approve of and does not consider to be an expression of its goals cannot be achieved. It is impossible to mobilize members of society for such goals and direct them towards them. Therefore, any social changes require, first of all, the formation of an acceptable attitude of the public, its organization and management. The propaganda system plays a crucial role in implementing this task, because it is based on its capabilities that it is possible to form an acceptable public opinion about the planned reforms. This is why socio-economic and political reforms in modern societies begin with propaganda aimed at forming an acceptable public opinion.

Another characteristic of public opinion is that it creates the basis for the establishment of certain values and norms of behavior in society. Indeed, only those values and norms that are considered acceptable and approved by the general public are popularized in society. Each member of society strives to assimilate only those values valued by the public and to turn only the norms recognized by it into the rules of his behavior. The modern propaganda system allows social institutions to widely popularize acceptable values and norms by influencing public opinion. Public opinion is also a factor in eliminating various problems in society. It is extremely difficult to eliminate a problem that has been ignored by people. On the contrary, bringing a certain social problem to the attention of the public is the first step towards eliminating it. The modern propaganda system copes with this task with great skill. Social institutions operating in various countries are actively using propaganda methods and techniques to draw public attention to existing problems, to inform about their causes and consequences, and to mobilize people to implement social programs aimed at solving this problem.

Public opinion functions as a powerful mechanism in shaping the values and behavioral norms within a society. These shared beliefs and expectations serve as the foundation for collective identity and social cohesion. Individuals tend to conform to widely accepted standards, not merely out of obligation but due to an internalized desire for social inclusion and legitimacy. In this regard, public opinion acts as a selective filter, promoting only those values that align with societal consensus. It discourages deviant behavior while reinforcing what is perceived as morally, ethically, or culturally appropriate, thus ensuring a level of stability and predictability in social interactions.

Modern propaganda systems serve as efficient tools for disseminating these accepted values and norms across various segments of society. By utilizing mass media, digital platforms, and educational channels, propaganda reinforces public opinion by constantly repeating desirable messages. These messages are often embedded in political speeches, advertisements, public service announcements, and even entertainment media. As such, propaganda plays a dual role: not only does it reflect prevailing public opinion, but it also actively shapes it by framing certain norms as universally beneficial or necessary for national progress and unity.

In addition to reinforcing norms, public opinion can also catalyze social change when it focuses collective attention on unresolved societal issues. Problems that are ignored or downplayed by the public tend to persist, largely due to the lack of mobilization and accountability. However, once public awareness is heightened often through well-orchestrated propaganda efforts there is a greater likelihood of political and institutional action. Public opinion, in this sense, becomes both a diagnostic and corrective force, pushing governments, NGOs, and civil organizations to act in accordance with the public will and moral demand.

Propaganda, when ethically employed, can be instrumental in addressing complex social challenges. Campaigns aimed at reducing stigma around mental health, encouraging environmental sustainability, or promoting vaccination are examples of how propaganda can help mobilize collective action. By framing these issues in emotionally resonant and factually persuasive ways, social institutions can steer public opinion toward constructive engagement. Furthermore, modern technologies—especially social media algorithms and targeted messaging—allow these campaigns to reach specific demographics, increasing their effectiveness in shaping both attitudes and behaviors.

Despite its potential for positive impact, the use of propaganda also raises serious ethical concerns. If manipulated by self-serving interests, propaganda can distort public opinion, promote harmful ideologies, or marginalize dissenting voices. The line between information and manipulation can become blurred, especially when critical thinking and media literacy are underdeveloped among the public. Therefore, while propaganda is a powerful tool in shaping values, norms, and problem awareness, its application must be guided by transparency, democratic principles, and respect for individual autonomy to ensure that it serves the public good rather than authoritarian agendas.

5. Conclusions

From that result and decision, in modern society the propaganda system serves to fulfill the tasks aimed at ensuring social cohesion by popularizing humane ideas, activating interpersonal relationships, and creating an atmosphere of mutual assistance. While crises, disagreements, and conflicts exist in human society, and their threat to social cohesion persists, the propaganda system does not lose its importance and role. The propaganda system, which has been performing important social functions for centuries, has literally become a powerful social mechanism in the new century. Today, its capabilities and potential are widely used to fulfill the important tasks facing society.

Limitations and Future Study

This study is limited to a conceptual and literature-based analysis without incorporating empirical data or case studies that could further validate the role of propaganda in specific societal contexts. Future research should explore how propaganda systems operate within different cultural and political frameworks through comparative and empirical methodologies. Investigating the impact of digital media algorithms, audience segmentation, and grassroots participation in propaganda dissemination could provide deeper insights into its evolving mechanisms.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge the contributions of previous scholars in the fields of political communication, media studies, and sociology, whose theories and insights have shaped the foundation of this analysis. Gratitude is also extended to academic peers and institutions that provided access to research materials and scholarly databases supporting this study.

References

- Angkustsiri, K. (2023). Mind Over Media: Propaganda Education for a Digital Age: LWW.
- Broockman, D. E., & Kalla, J. L. (2024). Selective exposure and echo chambers in partisan television consumption: Evidence from linked viewership, administrative, and survey data. *American Journal of Political Science*. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12886>
- Farcaş, A. D. (2024). Social values and propaganda: theoretical perspectives of key concepts. *Revue internationale Animation, territoires et pratiques socioculturelles*, (25), 1-14.
- Gavrilets, S., & Richerson, P. J. (2022). Authority matters: propaganda and the coevolution of behaviour and attitudes. *Evolutionary Human Sciences*, 4, e51. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/ehs.2022.48>
- Guriey, S., & Treisman, D. (2015). How modern dictators survive: Cooptation, censorship, propaganda, and repression.
- Hartmann, D., Wang, S. M., Pohlmann, L., & Berendt, B. (2025). A systematic review of echo chamber research: comparative analysis of conceptualizations, operationalizations, and varying

- outcomes. *Journal of Computational Social Science*, 8(2), 52. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s42001-025-00381-z>
- Howard, P., Lin, F., & Tuzov, V. (2023). Computational propaganda: Concepts, methods, and challenges. *Communication and the Public*, 8(2), 47-53. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/20570473231185996>
- Johnson, B. K., Neo, R. L., Heijnen, M. E., Smits, L., & van Veen, C. (2020). Issues, involvement, and influence: Effects of selective exposure and sharing on polarization and participation. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 104, 106155. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.09.031>
- Khaneghahi, S., Pudineh, A., & Zehi, M. A. M. (2022). Investigating the effect of intellectual computer games on creative thinking skills and increasing concentration in children of divorce. *Journal of Social, Humanity, and Education*, 2(4), 283-293.
- Le, T. L., & Block, E. (2024). When communist propaganda meets western public relations: Examining Vietnam's government pandemic communication. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 13(1), 33-67.
- Nazki, S. H. (2024). Indigenous traditions and the impact of war: An analysis of N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*. *Journal of Social, Humanity, and Education*, 5(1), 61-72.
- Pansanella, V., Sirbu, A., Kertesz, J., & Rossetti, G. (2023). Mass media impact on opinion evolution in biased digital environments: a bounded confidence model. *Scientific reports*, 13(1), 14600. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-39725-y>
- Pote, M. (2024). Computational Propaganda Theory and Bot Detection System: Critical Literature Review. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2404.05240*. doi:<https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2404.05240>
- Rabb, N., Cowen, L., & de Ruiter, J. P. (2023). Investigating the effect of selective exposure, audience fragmentation, and echo-chambers on polarization in dynamic media ecosystems. *Applied Network Science*, 8(1), 78. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s41109-023-00601-3>
- Ribeiro, N., Schmidt, A., Nicholas, S., Kruglikova, O., & Du Pont, K. (2019). World War I and the emergence of modern propaganda. *The handbook of European communication history*, 97-113.
- Rustamov, R. R., & Elboyeva, S. B. r. (2020). The Evolution Of The System Of Spiritual Propaganda. *Theoretical & Applied Science*(10), 218-221. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.15863/TAS>
- Shao, C., Ciampaglia, G. L., Varol, O., Yang, K.-C., Flammini, A., & Menczer, F. (2018). The spread of low-credibility content by social bots. *Nature Communications*, 9(1), 4787. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-018-06930-7>
- Stella, M., Ferrara, E., & De Domenico, M. (2018). Bots increase exposure to negative and inflammatory content in online social systems. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(49), 12435-12440. doi:<https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1802.07292>
- Wilde, G. (2024). From Panic to Policy: The Limits of Foreign Propaganda and the Foundations of an Effective Response. *Texas National Security Review*, 2. doi:<https://doi.org/10.26153/tsw/52238>
- Woolley, S. C. (2022). Digital propaganda: The power of influencers. *Journal of Democracy*, 33(3), 115-129.
- Karepova, S. G., Nekrasov, S. V., & Pinchuk, A. N. (2020). Propaganda as a Method of Influencing Public Consciousness: General Theoretical Aspect. *Bulletin of NSUEM*(4), 212-229. doi:10.34020/2073-6495-2020-4-212-229
- Patrakhina, T. N., & Shlamova, D. A. (2015). Propaganda: the Essence of Scientific Definition, Approaches to Classification. *Young Scientist*(4), 303-305.

