

SESSION 7, MARCH, 2023  
ANNA SHAVIT

---

# THE ART OF PROPAGANDA II.

---

# PROPAGANDA

- ▶ There has been dozens of attempts to define the term propaganda, scholars were defining it from the perspectives of history, sociology, strategic communication, psychology or political science.
- ▶ Using the most common and neutral definition of propaganda we can look at it as means to disseminate or promote particular ideas.
- ▶ Originates from Latin; means to promote or to sow (Jowett, O'Donnell: 2006). Refers to the biological reproduction of flora and fauna, that is, to the propagation of plants and animals
- ▶ The first use of the term in 1622, when the Pope established the sacred congregation aimed at the Roman Catholic faith propaganda (Sacra Congregation de Propaganda Fide).
- ▶ The word lost its neutral sense since the Catholic Church was not only spreading its faith to the New World, but also opposing protestants. (Aimed at systematic spread of Catholic
- ▶ Doctrine throughout the world to win new converts and stem the rising tide of Protestantism. Propaganda thus came to connote the dissemination of religious ideas in order to shape the opinions and behaviour of mass audiences.)

---

# WWI, WWII

- ▶ In the 18th and 19th centuries, propaganda took on greater importance, politicians and governments of all types recognised the importance of winning over and molding public opinion through propaganda and other methods of mass persuasion, creation of 'marketplace of ideas'
- ▶ However, WWI witnessed the public discovery of propaganda as a powerful weapon for shaping public opinion and behaviour. All the major governments employed writers, artists, and filmmakers to craft
- ▶ political messages aimed at mobilising their populations for war, at weakening the enemy's morale and will to fight, and at winning over audiences in neutral countries.
- ▶ After World War I, propaganda became a subject of considerable debate and study throughout the western world, but particularly in the United States and Germany. The term came to be perceived in a
- ▶ negative light and identified in many circles with lies, manipulation, and falsehood (unregulated propaganda would destroy the foundations of democracy)
- ▶ Nazi propagandists drew upon the successful techniques and strategies used by the Allies, Socialists, Communists, and Italian Fascists to advance their political campaigns, win public support, and to wage war. Once in power, the Nazis eliminated the "marketplace of ideas" through terror and media manipulation and mobilized propaganda as a weapon to unite the German people around a "leader" and to facilitate aggression, mass murder, and genocide.

---

# MODERN PROPAGANDA

- ▶ Nowadays, to identify message as propaganda has mostly negative or pejorative connotations. Common synonyms for propaganda are thus lies, manipulation, control of mind, brainwashing etc.
- ▶ Biased information designed to shape public opinion and behavior
- ▶ The latest terms implying propaganda are spin and news management, which both refer to the coordinated strategy to minimize negative information and present in a favorable light a story that could be damaging to self-interests.
- ▶ Therefore, propaganda is generally seen as unethical, harmful and unfair technique.

---

# CATEGORIZING PROPAGANDA

Jowett and O'Donnell categorize it into white, grey and black propaganda.

- ▶ **white propaganda** comes from an identified source mostly during peacetime attempting to build credibility with the audience (e.g. some over patronized national celebrations or certain international sports events);
- ▶ **black propaganda** is based on hidden or false sources aiming to spread lies, fabrications and deceptions (e.g. fake radio broadcasting; supplying false news to news organizations etc.).
- ▶ in between these two categories we can identify **grey propaganda**, which operates with not always correctly identified sources and uncertain accuracy of the news of information (state news organization denying or omitting invasion of other state; government officials supplying favorable news to cooperating journalists; letters from non-existing readers describing positive attempts of the government etc.).

# HOW DOES PROPAGANDA WORKS?

- ▶ modern propaganda draws upon techniques and strategies used in advertising, public relations, communications, and mass psychology.
- ▶ simplifies complicated issues or ideology for popular consumption
- ▶ always biased
- ▶ geared to achieving a particular end
- ▶ employs symbols (written, musical, or visual), plays upon and channels complex human emotions towards a desired goal.
- ▶ employed by governmental and private organizations to promote their causes and institutions and denigrate their opponents.

---

# HOW DOES PROPAGANDA WORKS?

- ▶ functions as just one weapon in the arsenal of mass persuasion
- ▶ In contrast to the ideal of an educator, who aims to foster independent judgment and thinking, the practitioner of propaganda does not aim to encourage deliberation by presenting a variety of viewpoints and leaving it up to the audience to determine which perspective is correct.
- ▶ The propagandist transmits only information geared to strengthen his or her case, and consciously omits detrimental information.
- ▶ Not all propaganda is bad.
- ▶ Propaganda is used to shape opinion and behavior.
- ▶ Public health campaigns, for example, can utilize propaganda. Elections, even in democratic states, often display elements of propaganda, as candidates and political parties vie for office.
- ▶ The real danger of propaganda lies when competing voices are silenced – and unchecked, propaganda can have negative consequences.

---

# WHEN IS P. EFFECTIVE?

- ▶ Propaganda, of course, is not always successful.
- ▶ Its effectiveness depends upon a variety of factors, including the receptivity of an audience to the message and a favorable social context.
- ▶ Propaganda alone, regardless of the skills of its users, cannot win wars or transform thinking human beings into mindless automatons.
- ▶ Regardless of the power of their messages, for instance, the Nazis could not turn back the tide of Allied victory after the middle of 1943. Nazi propaganda delayed defeat but it could not bring Germany victory.

---

# NAZI PROPAGANDA

- ▶ <http://www.ushmm.org/propaganda/exhibit.html#/themes/>
- ▶ Making the leader
- ▶ Rallying the nation
- ▶ Indoctrinating the youth
- ▶ Defining the enemy
- ▶ Writing the news
- ▶ Assessing guilt
- ▶ Deceiving the public

---

# COMMON TECHNIQUES

## Word games

- ▶ Name-calling (links a person, or idea, to a negative symbol)
- ▶ Glittering generalities (virtue words about which we have deep-set ideas e.g. civilization, Christianity, good, patriotism etc.)
- ▶ Euphemisms (attempts to pacify the audience in order to make an unpleasant reality more palatable)

## False connections

- ▶ Transfer (transfer authority, sanction, and prestige to the propag. program in order to have people accept something which otherwise they may reject.)
- ▶ Testimonial (unfair and misleading use of testimonials)

## Special Appeals

- ▶ - Plain Folks (to convince their audience that they, and their ideas, are "of the people.")
- ▶ - Bandwagon (everyone else is doing it, and so should you.)
- ▶ - Fear

---

# 7 DOMAINS OF PROPAGANDA

In order to investigate it Johnson-Cartee, Copeland (2004) distinguish among

- ▶ Political propaganda
- ▶ Economic propaganda
- ▶ War/Military propaganda
- ▶ Diplomatic propaganda
- ▶ Didactic propaganda
- ▶ Ideological propaganda
- ▶ Escapist propaganda
- ▶ Art

---

# ANALYZING PROPAGANDA

- ▶ ideology&purpose of propaganda campaign
- ▶ context in which prop. occurs
- ▶ identification of the propagandists
- ▶ structure of propaganda organization
- ▶ target audience
- ▶ media utilization techniques
- ▶ special various techniques (tactics)
- ▶ audience reaction to various techniques (tactics)
- ▶ counter-propaganda
- ▶ effects and evaluation (Jowett and O'Donnell: 1992)

---

# POLITICAL PR

definition

---

# POLITICAL PR

- ▶ In general, when talking about public relations we mean a set of strategies and methods aimed at creating the best possible image and impression of a
- ▶ certain politician's or political party's actions. At the same time, the same strategies and methods might be applied in order to put a negative shade on the activities of the opposition.
- ▶ Professionals in this field are called press agents and sometimes also spin-doctors.
- ▶ Generally public relations can be defined as the management of mutually influential relationships within a web of stakeholders and organizational relationship. (Coombs, Holladay: 2007)

---

# POLITICAL PR

- ▶ PR agents' main goal is to get their message to media through journalists unchanged, in other words to set their own agenda in the media.
- ▶ Good professionals in this field should very well understand the journalists' routines; know the public structures and have detailed information about their target groups; understand or conduct themselves public polling and use the information databases; operate with details about the activities of the opposition; deploy political marketing techniques; have alternative and crisis communications plans available; focus on the positive image of the politician or the party (McNair: 2007).
- ▶ state leaders, members of parliament and other government officials have all adopted media strategies and thereby they allowed journalistic norms to
- ▶ influence the process of governance. Press relations can hardly be separated anymore from policy-making. (Esser: 2001)

---

# MEDIATED PR

- ▶ Studies on media effects on society and voters
- ▶ direct effects → opinion leadership → limited effects → indirect effects
- ▶ social construction of reality

---

# LASSWELL

- ▶ Propaganda is the technique of influencing human action (Lasswell: 1934)
- ▶ Propagandist not only manipulates symbols, but seek to manipulate public's attitudes and behavior as well → Successful propaganda has real consequences.
- ▶ Who (accurate or false identification)? Says What (Information/Disinformation)? With Whom (Internal/External Propaganda)? With What Effects?

---

# SPINNING, SPIN-DOCTORING

- ▶ Term spin-doctor was created in the US in 1980s to describe CIA disinformation activities.
- ▶ It can be defined as a management of how political messages are going to be interpreted by the media in the tiny space between when a political event takes place and when it is first reported (McNair: 2005).
- ▶ To `spin' is to give the words describing a policy, personality or event a favorable gloss with the intention that the mass media will use them to the political advantage of the spinner and so gain public support (Maloney 2000).
- ▶ The term itself has rather sinister connotation such as manipulator, propagandist, conspirators or even sometimes it is pictured as evil force in the politics. (McNair: 2005)
- ▶ When speaking about a spin-doctor, the common definition talks about a person in politics, who tries to influence the public opinion by putting a positive bias on the information about one candidate or party and negative bias on the competitors.

---

# POLITICAL PR, SPIN-DOCTORING

- ▶ Example of expansion and influence of spin-doctoring: contemporary Britain, where spin-doctoring reached form of aggressive pol. PR
- ▶ It is another step towards what Deacon and Golding (1994: 3, 4) have called the rise of the 'public relations state' (Maloney: 2000) or 'public relations democracy' (Davis:2002; Franklin: 2004)
- ▶ However, the term spin doctoring seen unscientific neologism coined by journalists to describe the complex process of intensifying pol. PR and pol. marketing. Spin-doctoring is neither a neutral scientific concept (such as communication) nor the self-labeling of a branch (such as PR). (Esser:2001)
- ▶ The demonization of spin is to be understood as an element of a journalistic counterstrategy: where political PR and marketing have developed a high degree of professionalism, journalism is developing counterstrategies to prove its independence and legitimacy (McNair: 2000)

---

# SPIN VS PROPAGANDA

Spin can be related to the propaganda concept in the following way:

- ▶ It is one-sided, biased information put in the public domain by government or opposition party with what Ellul (1962) identifies as one of the determining marks of propaganda: the intention to create a 'will to action' among, in this case, voters, so that they will support the propaganda sender.
- ▶ Spin is a weak or soft form of propaganda, where 'weak/soft' means that the activity happens in a dem. state; where the activity can be identified as information manipulation; where the information is more accurate than inaccurate, and where the purpose of the spin is known, i.g. to enhance the standing of the government or opposition party.
- ▶ Governments and political parties have to communicate persuasively with their various publics if they want to maximize the number of their mandates.
- ▶ Other forms of government and political party persuasive communications (e. g. speeches in Parliament; party broadcasts; el. advertising, and public information campaigns) but spinning is above all associated with the persuasive management of journalists to secure favorable media coverage.

# ARGUMENT, PERSUASION, OR PROPAGANDA?

	Argument	Persuasion	Propaganda
Goal	Discover the "truth"	Promote an opinion on a particular position that is rooted in truth	Offer "political advertising" for a particular position that may distort the truth or include false information
General Technique	Offers good reasoning and evidence to persuade an audience to accept a "truth"	Uses personal, emotional, or moral appeal to convince an audience to adopt a particular point of view	Relies on emotions and values to persuade an audience to accept a particular position
Method	Considers other perspectives on the issue  Offers facts that support the reasons (in other words, provides evidence)  Predicts and evaluates the consequences of accepting the argument	May considers other perspectives on the issue  Blends facts and emotion to make its case, relying often on opinion  May predict the results of accepting the position, especially if the information will help convince the reader to adopt the opinion	Focuses on its own message, without considering other positions  Relies on biases and assumptions and may distort or alter evidence to make the case  Ignores the consequence of accepting a particular position

---

# SPIN VS. PROPAGANDA

- ▶ Propaganda nowadays subsumed into the work of pol. advertising, permanent campaigning and PR state and is evidenced through the continued use of spin and news management (Lilleker: 2006)
- ▶ At the heart of true propaganda: rhetoric, myth, symbols
- ▶ Academic discussion: P. endangers democracy vs. modern audience active (different decoding of messages, access to alternative viewpoints etc.)

MARCH 7, 2017

---

THANK YOU FOR  
YOUR ATTENTION

Anna Shavit [anna.shavit@fsv.cuni.cz](mailto:anna.shavit@fsv.cuni.cz)