PROPAGANDA AND YOU
(and your devices)

How media is manipulated, and how individuals can cultivate a healthier diet of information
Overview

- Propaganda definition and short history
- Propaganda fundamentals
- Propaganda in the 4th estate (mainstream media)
- Propaganda in 21st century (rise of the machines)
- Fighting back
  - Hardening the human hardware and software
  - Using our machines to help against the fight
- Conclusion remarks
- References
Propaganda - As defined for this talk

- Advertising
- Public Relations
- Lobbying
- Social Engineering
- Telemarketing
- Soliciting
- Manufacturing Consent
- Sexting

...and it goes by many other names
Propaganda - A history

- Etymology of the word (from etymonline.com)
  - "committee of cardinals in charge of Catholic missionary work," short for Congregatio de Propaganda Fide "congregation for propagating the faith," a committee of cardinals established 1622 by Gregory XV to supervise foreign missions
Fast forward to WWI (1914)
- First major world power conflict since Napoleon (circa 1799-1815)
- Each country needed to think of ways to motivate their populations into fighting a gruesome war of attrition

Adolf Hitler
- Recognized that the Germans failed in this department when compared to the British
- Germans would do much better the 2nd time around

Edward Bernays
- Helped President Wilson’s image by sculpting message about ‘spreading democracy’
- Encouraged by this success, started thinking about how to sell his services and expertise to businesses
Propaganda - A history (cont)
Propaganda - The Basics
Appendix D

Propaganda Assessment

Propaganda is any form of communication in support of national objectives designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, or behavior of any group in order to benefit the sponsor, either directly or indirectly. By policy and practice, PSYOP forces use the term to indicate PSYOP, or information activities, conducted by enemy or hostile forces, elements, or groups against U.S. or coalition forces.

Propaganda Examples
The broadcasts of Lord Haw Haw (William Joyce) to the British Isles during the Battle of Britain and of Tokyo Rose in the Pacific theater during World War II are excellent examples of skewed information. The programs were deliberately designed to attack the will of nations to resist and the will of Soldiers to fight. These propagandists attempted to mix truth and lies in a way that was imperceptible to the listener.

COUNTERPROPAGANDA EFFORT

D-1. Support to the counterpropaganda effort is usually a responsibility of PSYOP units within an AOR and a joint operations area (JOA). Other government agencies counter propaganda on an international scale and within the United States. Often, PSYOP forces must depend upon the information networks of U.S. allies to counter propaganda within their own borders. However, PSYOP forces may provide assistance when requested. The ideal counterpropaganda plan incorporates a loose network of organizations with common objectives. Many elements of IO can play a role in supporting the counterpropaganda plan; however, PSYOP and public affairs normally play the most active roles in countering propaganda.

D-2. The Internet has presented PSYOP units with a new medium for exploitation by both friendly and opposing forces. Figure D-1 shows an example of electronic media propaganda.
Propaganda - The Basics

Steps for the propagandist

● ID target audience
● ID desired behaviour
● Scan for Vulnerabilities
● Choose the Theme of the message
● Plan for how to grab attention
● Test the message, measure impact, adjust the message as needed. Repeat.

Self-Defense steps

● Ask if the speaker can gain anything from having you listen to the message
● Ask if the source is verified
  ○ White - Source is identified
  ○ Grey - Source is unidentified
  ○ Black - Source is falsified
● Ask if the source is credible
● Ask if you've heard the message repeatedly
  ○ Repetition is key for propaganda, it builds familiarity
Propaganda - And the 4th estate

- Propaganda Model:
  - Ownership (size and concentration of media)
  - Advertising
  - Sourcing
  - Flak
  - Fear-based boogeymen
Propaganda - In the 21st Century

- Foucault’s Heterotopia (Other spaces)
  - A physical representation or approximation of a utopia
Propaganda - In the 21st Century (cont)

- How to read online comments:
  - Avoid reading online comments
The Kremlin's Troll Army
Moscow is financing legions of pro-Russia internet commenters. But how much do they matter?

Israel to pay students to defend it online
JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel is looking to hire university students to post pro-Israel messages on social media networks — without needing to identify themselves as government-linked, officials said Wednesday.

The Chinese government cranks out 488 million fake social media posts a year in an effort to divert attention away from sensitive issues, a new study estimates.

Hillary PAC Spends $1 Million to ‘Correct’ Commenters on Reddit and Facebook
FEC loopholes mean Correct the Record can openly coordinate with Clinton’s campaign.
Propaganda - Fighting Back

- The human hardware
  - Sleep, exercise, diet
  - Attention spans and concentration levels are like a battery that drain throughout the day
  - Cognitive biases

- The human software
  - Vocabulary
  - Hit the history books
  - Understand statistics and common statistical deceptions

- Machines as our allies
  - Adblockers and other plugins
  - Softbots and scripting
  - Open source heterotopias allow us to create personal media consumption platforms
Propaganda - Fighting Back (cont)

- Vocabulary
  - Know the definition of words (i.e. do not skip over them)
  - Know the ‘definition’ of words (i.e. hidden connotations)

Sanders’ backers want to exclude references to Jerusalem as belonging wholly to Israel, which Palestinians contest, and consider language that labels Israeli settlements in the West Bank “an occupation,” a notion adamantly opposed by Clinton supporters who warn it would undermine the peace process.

At the hearing, Zogby and West clashed politely with former Florida Rep. Robert Wexler, who currently heads the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace. In Wexler’s testimony, he argued that the Democratic platform was not the place to litigate views on Israel, nor should it diverge substantially from the United States’ long-standing position in support of Israel.

While the Sanders’ camp was not able to get language on “occupation” of the Palestinians into the platform, Zogby said he was happy the issue was debated and called the language “less egregious” than in the past. He said he would continue to make his case throughout the process.

Concerned that Zogby and West’s viewpoint may be gaining traction at least in the public narrative, Bakari Sellers, a former South Carolina representative and now a CNN commentator, sent a letter signed by 60 African-American politicians around the country to the co-chairs of the Platform Committee last week urging them to stick to the traditional language on Israel -- a counterpoint to West, a prominent member of the black community.

“Tribal planks of the previous platform” were carefully crafted and have served us well, “wrote Sellers, a Clinton supporter. “We would be well served to stick closely to our previous platform language and ensure that any changes ... do nothing to undermine the principles that have given such strength and clarity to our previous platforms.”
Propaganda - Fighting Back (cont)

2012 Benghazi attack

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

This article is about the deadly consulate attack in Benghazi, Libya. For worldwide protests in response to the movie trailer see 2012 U.S. diplomatic missions attacks.

On September 11, 2012, the United States consulate in Benghazi, Libya, was attacked. The assailants used the protests against an anti-Islam film produced in the United States as a backdrop and attacked the U.S. Consulate with rocket-propelled grenades and small arms, killing the visiting United States Ambassador to Libya Christopher Stevens, Foreign Service Information Management Officer Sean Smith,[3] American private security employee Glen Doherty,[3] former U.S. Navy SEAL Tyrone Woods,[3] and ten Libyan policemen[5] and injuring two others.

In later reports, officials said that the Benghazi attack appeared to be "complex" and professionally executed.[6] U.S. officials, speaking under anonymity, claimed that the Benghazi attack was planned in advance, and not prompted by the film.[6] An early report suggested that the U.S. may have had credible prior information about the attack,[7] although this was denied by the U.S. administration.[8] Libyan officials alleged it was part of a planned two-part attack that also included a raid on a safe house.[9]

2012 U.S. Consulate attack in Benghazi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Benghazi, Libya</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>September 11, 2012 22:00 - 02:00 CAT (UTC+02:00)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>United States consulate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attack type</td>
<td>Armed assault, rioting, arson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weapons</td>
<td>Rocket-propelled grenades, firearms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deaths</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-fatal injuries</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2012 Benghazi attack

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For concurrent protests and violent incidents around the world, see Reactions to Innocence of Muslims.

The 2012 Benghazi attack took place on the evening of September 11, 2012, when Islamic militants attacked the American diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya, killing U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens and U.S. Foreign Service Information Management Officer Sean Smith.[7] Stevens was the first U.S. Ambassador killed in the line of duty since 1979.[8] The attack has also been referred to as the Battle of Benghazi.[9]

Several hours later, a second assault targeted a different compound about one mile away, killing CIA contractors Tyrone S. Woods and Glen Doherty.[10][11] Ten others were also injured in the attack.

Many Libyans condemned the attacks and praised the late ambassador. They staged public demonstrations condemning the militias formed during the 2011 civil war to oppose leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi.[12][13][14] that was suspected of the attacks.

The United States immediately increased security worldwide at diplomatic and military facilities and began investigating the Benghazi attack.[10][15] In the aftermath of the attack, State Department officials were criticized for denying requests for additional security at the consulate prior to the attack. In her role as Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton subsequently took responsibility for the security lapses.[16]

On August 6, 2013, it was reported that the U.S. had filed criminal charges against several individuals, including militia leader Ahmed Abu Khattala, for alleged involvement in the attacks.[16] Khattala has been described by Libyan and U.S. officials as the Benghazi leader of Ansar al-Sharia, which was listed in January 2014 by the U.S. Department of State as a terrorist organization.[18][20][21] On the weekend of June 14, 2014, U.S. Army special operations forces, in coordination with the FBI, captured Khattala in Libya.[22]

Initially, top U.S. officials and the media reported that the Benghazi attack was a spontaneous protest triggered by an anti-Muslim video, "Innocence of Muslims."[23] Captured suspect Ahmed Abu Khattala stated that the assault was indeed in retaliation for the video "Innocence of Muslims."[24]
Propaganda - Fighting Back (cont)

AdBlock

uBlock Origin
Propaganda - Fighting Back (cont)
Propaganda - Fighting Back (cont)

- Making our reddit platform
  - Digital Ocean Ubuntu Droplet
  - Reddit install script handles most of the hard work
  - EFF’s certbot + Let’s Encrypt ensure it can be run over ssl :D
  - Python softbots automate most of the dirty work
Propaganda - Conclusionary remarks

- “If we allow the information superhighway to bypass the less fortunate sectors of our society, even for an interim period, we will find that the information rich will get richer while the information poor get poorer” - Al Gore

- Without proper education of this information superhighway, then the gap between the information haves and have-nots will remain.
Propaganda - References

Books

- Firewall: The propagandists’s guide to self-defense by Jack Nolan
- Manufacturing Consent by Ed Herman and Noam Chomsky
- Smarter than you think by Clive Thompson
- Propaganda by Edward Bernays
- Data Smog by David Shenk

Documentaries

- Manufacturing Consent - Can find it on youtube
- Century of Self - Also on youtube
Propaganda - Fin