



Expanding the Field of Political Communication: Making the Case for a Fresh Perspective Through “Propaganda Studies”

Piers Robinson*

Organisation for Propaganda Studies, Bristol, United Kingdom

Understanding how power is exercised through communication is central to understanding the socio-political world around us. To date, however, political communication research has been limited by an over-emphasis on ‘problem solving’ research which, by and large, reflects the interests and concerns of more powerful political actors. Even the marginalized critical political communication literature is limited by its focus on only media. To resolve these limitations, this paper argues that propaganda studies can help to widen and deepen the reach of existing political communication research. It can do so by alerting us to the wide range of actors involved in propaganda production and dissemination, including governments, academics, NGOs, think tanks and popular culture, as well as the manipulative, and non-consensual modes of persuasive communication, including deception, incentivization, and coercion. As such, a research agenda based on propaganda studies can provide a fuller and more accurate understanding of the role of communication in the exercise of power, serving better the objectives of speaking truth to power, holding power to account and facilitating better, more democratic, forms of organized persuasive communication.

OPEN ACCESS

Edited by:

Daniel Broudy,
Okinawa Christian University, Japan

Reviewed by:

Rasha El-Ibiary,
Future University in Egypt, Egypt
Robert L. Walsh,
University of Maryland University
College, United States

*Correspondence:

Piers Robinson
piers.robinson@
propagandastudies.ac.uk

Keywords: propaganda, political communication, public relations, strategic communication, deception, lying

OVERVIEW

Understanding communication is central to understanding how power is exercised in the world today. In recent years, controversy regarding the election of Donald Trump and rising tensions between Western governments and the Russian Federation have brought debate about communication and power into sharp focus. For some, the Trump presidency abuses power through deceptive and manipulative communications whilst the Russian government stands accused of *information warfare* aimed at disrupting democratic processes throughout Western states (Bennett and Livingston, 2018). For others, deceptive and manipulative political communication have always been part and parcel of democratic politics (Bakir et al., 2019a). Running through these debates are concerns about the emergence of Internet-based communication challenging traditional information providers (mainstream and corporate media) and giving rise to alternative and independent information providers such as *Consortium News*, *21st Century Wire* and *Infowars*. Across all of these debates, few dispute that understanding how power is exercised through communicative processes is of central importance to understanding the contemporary world.

Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Political Communication,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Communication

Received: 06 December 2018

Accepted: 27 May 2019

Published: 02 July 2019

Citation:

Robinson P (2019) Expanding the
Field of Political Communication:
Making the Case for a Fresh
Perspective Through “Propaganda
Studies”. *Front. Commun.* 4:26.
doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2019.00026

The academic field of political communication, however is in need of a rethink, to the extent that its horizons must be broadened if it is to succeed in furthering our understanding of the relationship between power and communication and addressing major issues shaping current debates. I will argue that much of the existing political communication field reflects a *problem solving approach* (Cox, 1981; see also Lazarsfeld, 1941; Mosco, 1996) which funnels time and energy toward addressing narrowly focused “instrumental” (Mosco, 1996) or “administrative” (Lazarsfeld, 1941) concerns that frequently only reflect the interests and concerns of powerful actors in society. A second problem concerns over-attention to media itself which, in turn, diverts attentions away from broader and more deep-rooted institutions, structures and processes that are involved in the manipulation of information. Ironically, as we shall see, this problem affects even the most critical accounts of the relationship between media and politics such as Herman and Chomsky’s (1988) *propaganda model* of the media. In order to help political communication scholars to overcome these limitations, I present an argument in favor of *propaganda studies*. This approach encourages scholars to study the subject of political communication from a broader and deeper perspective and one that understands the multifaceted ways in which political, economic and social power are exercised through communicative processes. In doing so, *propaganda studies* is more effective at “speaking truth to power” and holding powerful actors to account. I also argue that *propaganda studies* is well-placed to engage with ethical questions regarding democratically acceptable forms of persuasive communication.

The article proceeds in three stages: Section State of the Field provides a brief review and critique of existing tendencies in the field of political communication and identifying its key limitations. Section Learning to Appreciate the Importance and Ubiquity of Contemporary Propaganda discusses propaganda studies (and related approaches examining “persuasive communication”) and shows how *propaganda studies* can help orientate political communication scholars toward a deeper and wider understanding of the role of communication in the exercise of power. Section Developing a Research Agenda sets out a research agenda with respect to future theory development, empirical research and engagement with practice. The paper concludes by reiterating the main points of the argument.

STATE OF THE FIELD

Mainstream Political Communication Research

Although there is a wide range of political communication research, there are also distinct biases regarding both the questions scholars ask and their normative underpinnings. Reviewing the history of the field of communication can help us to understand these biases and normative underpinnings. As Simpson describes in *Science of Coercion* (1994), the shape of today’s communication studies field has been determined by its origins during the early part of the 20th century. Key figures

such as Lippman (1922, 1925, 1955) and Lasswell (1927, 1951); Lasswell et al. (1935) believed that, in democracies, management and control of public attitudes and behaviors was an essential task for governments. (Simpson, 1994, p. 17) explains that:

Persuasive communication aimed at largely disenfranchised masses became central to Lippman’s strategy for domestic government and international relations. He saw mass communications as a major source of the modern crisis and as a necessary instrument for any managing elite. The social sciences offered tools that could make administration of what would otherwise be highly unstable social structures relatively rational and effective, he contended.

For both Lasswell and Lippman, the intelligent manipulation of the public mind through *propaganda* was an essential task for governing elites. This “instrumentalist” (Mosco, 1996) approach led to what was to become a mantra for communication research. (Simpson, 1994, p. 19) explains:

For Lasswell, the study of all social communication could be reduced to “who says what to whom and with what effect”-a dictum that is practically inscribed over the portals of those U.S. colleges offering communication as a field of study.

Historical circumstances further reinforced this problem-solving mindset. During the 1930s, fear of world war and the threat of fascism propelled both the US government and powerful organizations to support research that would serve the goals of influencing and controlling public perceptions. Specifically, the Rockefeller Foundation funded a large proportion of research including Lasswell’s content analysis project for the Library of Congress, Hadley Cantril’s Public Opinion Research project at Princeton University, the creation of the journal *Public Opinion Quarterly* at Princeton University and Paul Lazerfeld’s Office of Radio Research at Columbia University (Simpson, 1994, p. 22). The outbreak of World War II intensified these tendencies as key academics joined the war effort and conducted research into areas such as “(a)llied troop morale, public opinion (both domestic and international), clandestine OSS operations, or the then-emerging technique of deriving useful intelligence from analysis of newspapers, magazines, radio broadcasts, and postal censorship intercepts” (Simpson, 1994, p. 25). As Simpson (1994, p. 26) describes:

Sociologists and anthropologists such as Alexander Leighton and Margaret Mead concentrated on identifying schisms in Japanese culture suitable for exploitation in U.S. radio broadcasts in Asia, while Samuel Stiuffer’s Research Branch of the U.S Army specialized in ideological indoctrination of U.S. troops. Hadley Cantril meanwhile adapted survey research techniques to the clandestine intelligence collection, including preparations for the U.S. landing in Northern France.

Across all of these academics the prevalent attitude was to view mass communication as a tool for “social management” and “as a weapon in social conflict” (Simpson, 1994, p. 29). In methodological terms, they were particularly partial to

quantitative research, measuring media effects, public opinion and media content via content analysis (Simpson, 1994, p. 29).

These early years had a lasting effect on the contours of both communication studies and the field of political communication. On the one hand, scholars of political communication tend to focus on the formal and most visible democratic institutions and processes, in particular elections. They, for example, devote significant energy to studying executive (e.g., presidents and prime ministers) communication, messaging and advertising by political parties during election campaigns and public opinion formation (again, especially during elections). Much of this research is orientated toward the “who says what to whom and with what effect” dictum and is frequently analyzed as a top-down process: i.e., what governments and political actors say, to which audiences, and to what effect. As such, the research is frequently *instrumentalist* in nature and defined in terms of *solving problems* which are of greatest interest to powerful actors (e.g., government, politics parties etc.). Similarly, the question of *media effects* has been critical in shaping political communication research. A brief examination of the recently published *Oxford Handbook of Political Communication* (Kenski and Jamieson, 2017), in which ~25 out of 36 chapters are concerned with the issues surrounding media effects, is indicative of this pattern. Moreover, much of this research, again, reflects a hierarchical and top-down orientation that examines the effects upon public opinion of media and political communication strategies coming from relatively powerful elite groups: For example Green’s et al (2017) chapter on field experiments into media effects addresses “public information campaigns,” “individually targeted information designed to encourage voters and tax payers’ and the “electoral effects of television and radio advertisements”. More broadly, as Weaver and Choi (2017) point out, one of the major research strands in political communication has been *agenda setting theory* which is itself dominated by questions of media effects on public opinion.

These biases are also reflected in how major *research questions* are defined. For example, a popular debate during the 1990s concerned the so-called CNN effect, a thesis that suggested news media coverage of humanitarian suffering was causing Western governments to militarily intervene in countries around the world in order to protect human rights (Robinson, 2002). Whilst some academics approached the research topic from the point of view of progressive humanitarian actors who were seeking to harness news media to facilitate the protection of human rights, many were concerned primarily with whether or not control of the foreign policy making process had been lost to actors outside the elite foreign policy making establishment and how that control might be regained (Robinson, 1999). Another example of elite-orientated problem definition is the current “fake news” crisis. The problem of “fake news,” or rather distorted and manipulated information (a.k.a. propaganda), is not a new problem (Coles, 2018) and, as we know from the long-standing critical political communication literature (Glasgow University Media Group, 1985; Hallin, 1986; Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Bennett, 1990; McChesney, 1997; Wolfsfeld, 1997; Bagdikian, 2004; Mills, 2017), mainstream media have frequently been implicated in its circulation. The current “fake

news” crisis, however, is being defined as a problem that resides primarily in the relatively weak non-elite actors across social media and independent/alternative media outlets (Bennett and Livingston, 2018), rather than in the relatively powerful mainstream corporate/elite news media. Moreover, just as Simpson (1994) described how funding grants helped consolidate the elite-orientated nature of early communications research, this definition of the “fake news” problem is underpinned by powerful political actors and research funding allocations (e.g., European Union, 2018; The Computational Propaganda Project, 2018).

Another research area that has been shaped in ways which are conducive to the interests of power actors is that of Public Relations (PR) and other areas concerned with “persuasive communication.” Although processes of manipulative persuasion, historically known as “propaganda,” have been prevalent in liberal democratic states throughout the 20th century, the majority of academic research has either ignored manipulative persuasion tactics involving deception, incentivization and coercion or otherwise relegated such work to either historical wartime examples or non-democratic/authoritarian states (Bakir et al., 2019a, p. 1). Research has thereby obfuscated the existence of manipulative persuasion through propaganda in liberal democracies. For example, Moloney (2006, p. xiii) describes how Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) four models of PR has been interpreted in a way that over-emphasizes PR “as a practice of virtuous messaging, known as two-way communications between equal, listening, negotiating, mutually respectful message senders and receivers.” This has taken the “PR academy into a Neverland of perfection” (Moloney, 2006, p. xiii) and, ultimately, curtailed the development of more critical questioning of powerful actors seeking to manipulate beliefs and behavior in order to further particular interests. Also, on the relatively rare occasions where attention is paid by mainstream scholars to manipulative persuasion and propaganda, the focus is on the weaker party “in an asymmetric power relationship” (see for example Andrews, 1969; Simon, 1972; Manheim, 2011): For instance, Andrews (1969) and Simon (1972) focus on protest and civil unrest when examining “coercive persuasion” (i.e., its use by these relatively weak actors) rather than its routine use by powerful actors.

Overall, then, mainstream political communication research, influenced heavily by its instrumentalist and problem solving origins, has been too focused on research that reflects the “who says what to whom and with what effect” dictum and in ways that reflect a hierarchical and top-down research agenda that addresses questions relevant to powerful actors.

Critical Political Communication Research

Of course, there is a rich vein of critical research that explores communication processes, elites vs. non-elites, and related unequal power relations. Building upon classic work by Adorno and Horkheimer (1972), Habermas (1989) and the Frankfurt School, research by scholars such as Glasgow University Media Group (1985); Hallin (1986); Herman and Chomsky (1988); Lance Bennett (1991); McChesney (1997); Klaehn (2002, 2010a); Bagdikian (2004); Klaehn and Mullen (2010); Pedro (2011a,b); Mills (2017); Pedro-Caranana et al. (2018), and Wolfsfeld (1997)

highlights the close proximity between media organizations and both political and economic elites. This literature identifies multiple factors as having a significant inhibiting effect on news media output in liberal democracies. One set of factors are economic and concern the size, concentration and profit orientation of the corporate media (Herman and Chomsky, 1988) as well as their reliance upon advertising. Here, the economic interests of corporations, either through ownership and control or via advertising, significantly shape the behavior of editors and journalists and, ultimately, news output. Another set of factors relate to both journalistic norms involving reliance upon official news sources (see in particular Hallin, 1986; Bennett, 1990), the disciplining effects of public attacks on critical voices (Herman and Chomsky, 1988), and the overarching consequences of ideology (see in particular Hallin, 1986 and Herman and Chomsky, 1988). The end result of these factors is that much news media output fits within the contours of viewpoints consistent with dominant economic and political elites.

However, and corresponding to the argument made about the elite-orientated, instrumentalist and problem solving nature of political communication research, this stream of critical research has frequently been side-lined (Herring and Robinson, 2003; Woods, 2006; McChesney and Pickard, 2017; Zollmann, 2018b). McChesney and Pickard (2017) recently noted that the elite-driven paradigm, “with its emphasis on political economic and normative questions, has often been marginalized in American mass communication scholarship.” This is partly due to the continuing influence of the formative years of the discipline, but it is also maintained by active constraints upon academia. As Herring and Robinson (2003) explain, the very same factors frequently identified as influencing mainstream and corporate media are also relevant to academia. With respect to economic factors, for example, they argue that:

US universities have for a long time been integrated into the US corporate-government nexus (the corporate filter), and this integration is deepening. This manifests itself in many ways: business people are on the board of trustees of most US universities; one of the main functions of US universities is to produce graduates who are useful to the state and to business; US university research is heavily dependent on funding from the state, corporations and foundations which have their origins in corporate profit; and there is a revolving door of personnel between the universities, corporations and the state (Herring and Robinson, 2003: 562).

Herring and Robinson (2003) go on to show how the other factors hypothesized to affect mainstream/corporate media, such as dependence on elite sources for information and ideological constraints, also impact the academy in such a way as to “minimize fundamental criticisms of elite power” (p. 563) (for further evidence of this see (Coser, 1965; Mills, 1968; Jacoby, 1987; Cromwell, 2005; Eglin, 2005; Klaehn, 2005, 2010b; Jensen, 2010; Van der Pijl, 2014).

Marginalization is not the only problem afflicting critical political communication research. Even in its own terms, much of this work actually detracts from a full analysis of political

communication and power structures. Some critical political communication accounts operate with a truncated normative critique. For example, Bennett’s (1990) widely cited *indexing hypothesis*, which theorizes the close relationship between corporate/mainstream journalism and political power, also sets forth a normative framework which appears to justify this relationship. As Herring and Herring and Robinson (2003, p. 565) explain, Bennett (1990, p. 2014) falls back on a “normative” position that “indexing” is problematic only when:

The range of official debate on a given topic excludes or “marginalizes” stable majority opinion in society, and ... official actions raise doubts about political propriety. In these “exceptional” circumstances, it is reasonable for the press to foreground other social voices ... in news stories and editorials as checks against unrepresentative or otherwise irresponsible governments.

Ironically, this results in Bennett reflecting a mainstream position that media deference to elite viewpoints is only a problem in exceptional, corrupt circumstances (Herring and Robinson, 2003, p. 565).

Furthermore, critical accounts are also limited by their focus upon only the media itself. One aspect of this can be seen in the focus on the “official sources-media.” So, whilst Herman and Chomsky (1988) *propaganda model* outlines the structural economic factors, ideology and reliance upon official sources as key determinants of media performance, Bennett’s widely cited and adopted *indexing hypothesis* encourages focus instead on the official sources-media relationship and, in doing so, downplays those broader economic and ideological factors. More importantly, because of its analytical focus on mainstream media, even the work of Herman and Chomsky is limited (Robinson, 2018). Specifically, their *propaganda model* of media performance is focused solely on media and how structural constraints shape its output in ways conducive to political and economic power. This media-centric focus, however, means that their propaganda model fails to explore more deeply the ways in which officials, and the governments and business interests that they represent, manipulate information even *before* they communicate with journalists and the media: To put this another way, before the point is reached at which an official source passes information to the journalist there has already been a significant process of information “management” and manipulation: however, because they focus on source-media relationships, key elite-driven paradigm models provide minimal insight into these all-important processes of “information management” and “propaganda production” (Robinson, 2018, p. 55; for further recent discussion of the propaganda model see Klaehn, 2010a,b; Mullen, 2010a,b; Fuchs, 2018; Media Theory, 2018; Zollmann, 2018a,b).

Summing up, for all its strengths the elite driven paradigm is marginalized by mainstream political communication scholars and, critically, has over-emphasized media at the expense of a fuller exploration of the biggest and most important processes involved in shaping and manipulating political information. And

it is to the issue of the largely unobserved phenomenon of *contemporary propaganda* that we now turn.

LEARNING TO APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANCE AND UBIQUITY OF CONTEMPORARY PROPAGANDA

Although the term “propaganda” is now used pejoratively to mean bad or untruthful communication and is frequently associated either with blatant historical cases such as Nazi Germany or with non-democratic states, it was once widely accepted as a term used to identify processes of manipulative persuasion that occurred in all states, including liberal democratic ones (Bakir et al., 2019a). Early key thinkers included political scientist Lasswell (1927, 1951); Lasswell et al. (1935), journalist-intellectual Lippman (1922, 1925, 1955) and (Bernays 1928/1984). As noted earlier, for these thinkers propaganda was necessary in contemporary democracy in order to effectively manage populations and to ensure that governments had the ability to “manufacture consent” (Lippman, 1922) for “necessary” policies:

The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country (Bernays 1928/1984).

By the mid 20th century, however, propaganda was “rebranded” as public awareness of its manipulative nature significantly increased. As Bernays described, “propaganda” got to be a bad word because of the Germans ... using it [during WW1]. So what I did was to ... find some other words. So we found the words Counsel of *Public Relations*’ (*emphasis added*; Bernay’s cited in Miller and Dinan, 2008, p. 5). Since then terms such as *strategic communication*, *public affairs*, *political marketing*, *public diplomacy*, *perception management* and *psychological operations* (*psy ops*) have come to be used in order to describe activities that would have once been called propaganda. As (Taylor, 2002, p. 20) notes, this rebranding of propaganda works to inhibit awareness of manipulation through propaganda:

“... an entire euphemism industry has developed to deflect attention away from the realities of what they do, ranging from “spin doctoring” and “public affairs” at the political level to “international information” or “strategic influence” at the diplomatic level and “information operations” and “perception management” at the military level. They (*Western governments*) are of course worried about the historical associations of propaganda as an activity of totalitarian regimes. But, despite the euphemism game, democracies have grown ever more sophisticated at conducting propaganda, however labeled, which only they deny to be propaganda in the first place.” (*Words in Italics added for clarity*)

I define propaganda as the “co-ordinated attempt to influence large or small numbers of people to some idea or action” (Organisation for Propaganda Studies., 2018) through a process

of persuasion that is non-consensual. Manipulation can occur through deception including lying, distortion, omission, and misdirection (Bakir et al., 2019a) but it can also involve *incentivization* and *coercion*. So, for example, communicative strategies involving the promise of tax cuts during elections or legal sanctions with respect to smoking in public places represent “non-consensual” approaches to persuasive communication that involve, respectively, incentivization and coercion. Propaganda can work through written, verbal, or visual language, for example press briefings, speeches and films, but it can also involve physical acts such as blowing up a building or deploying military force.

The Scale and Reach of Contemporary Propaganda Activities

Propaganda is ubiquitous to contemporary democracies. It is also a major industry drawing upon huge resources from government, commercial and political actors. The scale of activities is vast. For example, between 1979 and 1998 the PR consultancy industry in the UK mushroomed by a factor of 31 (11-fold increase in real terms) and this sector has “acted largely for business interests” (Miller and Dinan, 2000, p. 10–14, 29; see also Sussman, 2010). UK and US governments spend large sums on promotional activities: according to a 2002 report by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, it spent £340 million annually on public diplomacy operations in London (Miller, 2004, p. 80), whilst the US federal government spent \$16 billion on outside advertising and PR contractors between 2002 and 2012. State-driven propaganda also includes activities related to the intelligence services (Keeble, 2010): for example, a now seminal propaganda case study is that of the use of intelligence prior to the 2003 Iraq War. During the run-up to this war, intelligence services were closely involved in helping the UK and US governments present an exaggerated impression of the alleged threat posed by Iraqi WMD (weapons of mass destruction) (Herring and Robinson, 2014). Even well before the invasion of Iraq, during the 1990s, MI6 Operation Rockingham was involved in cherry picking intelligence from the UN weapons inspections (set up after Gulf War 1) in order to, as a former chief UN weapons inspector put it, skew “UK intelligence about Iraqi WMD toward a preordained outcome that was more in line with British government policy that it was reflective of the truth” (Curtis, 2004). These activities were geared toward influencing the UN Security Council and also shoring up public support for the UK sanctions regime against Iraq: The goal of Operation Mass Appeal, initiated in the late 1990s, was to influence public opinion by exaggerating the threat posed by Iraqi WMD (Curtis, 2004).

Contemporary propaganda activities, however, go beyond government and business “PR” and include a variety of organizations and institutions from across civil society. As already suggested in the above discussion, mainstream media and academia are important sites upon which manipulated and propagandistic information is produced and disseminated, but there are more institutions involved in propaganda. For example, think tanks play a crucial role in shaping political and public discourse via the production of knowledge and the promotion of particular world views (e.g., Parmar, 2004 Giles

Scott-Smith, 2014). Current major players in the “information war,” in particular in relation to the alleged threat posed by Russia (Van der Pijl, 2018; Boyd-Barrett, 2019), include the *Atlantic Council*. This think tank is an important source of information regarding both the alleged threat posed by Russia and the 7-year long war in Syria. It has also been employed by social media giant *Facebook* in order to advise on what is, and what is not, “fake news” (Facebook, 2018). Of course, in their drive to promote particular world views, think tanks can become involved in the production and dissemination of information that is significantly distorted. For example, the Henry Jackson Society was established in 2005 and presented as a bipartisan think tank. However, a *Spinwatch* report showed that it was being funded by undisclosed donors and was “promoting a strongly pro-Israel agenda, organizing anti-Islam activities ... (and) advocating a transatlantic military and security regime” (Griffin et al., 2015, p. 74). Interestingly, it was revealed in a leaked document that the Henry Jackson Society sought to discredit Professor Noam Chomsky via a campaign coordinated with mainstream media writers including allegedly Oliver Kamm, leader writer for the *Times of London*, a Murdoch owned newspaper (Sayeed, 2016). Both the Atlantic Council and the Henry Jackson Society would appear to fit within a broader pattern seen over many years whereby think tanks have played crucial roles in promoting particular world views and agendas (e.g., Parmar, 2004; Scott-Smith, 2014).

NGOs (non-governmental organizations) are also important elements with respect to propaganda. Specifically, in recent years humanitarian NGOs have been criticized for their role with respect to the circulation of misinformation and disinformation. Since the 1990s Western military operations have frequently been framed in terms of the doctrine of “humanitarian” intervention whereby military action has been rationalized and promoted with respect to human rights concerns (see Robinson, 2002). The concept of “humanitarian intervention” has now been codified in the *Responsibility to Protect* (R2P) which allows the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to authorize the use of military force against sovereign nations when severe human rights violations are occurring. Humanitarian operations have also increasingly been built into Western military doctrine, as part of “winning hearts and minds” (Barnett, 2005; Counter Insurgency Operations, 2009): As Admiral Sir Philip Jones, First Sea Lord, stated “So the hard punch of military power is often delivered through the kid glove of humanitarian relief” (Jones, 2016). Barnett argues that these military doctrines have often co-opted humanitarian NGOs. Set in this context, it is perhaps not surprising that NGOs have at times been caught up, perhaps unintentionally, in the dissemination of propagandistic information. For example, with respect to the 2011 war in Libya, *Amnesty International*, in a press briefing (2011), appeared to reinforce claims regarding potential human rights abuses by the Libyan government as well as implicitly push for intervention (Kovalik, 2012). This occurred in the run-up to an R2P authorized intervention to protect human rights which led, ultimately, to the overthrow of the Libyan government. A subsequent report, by the UK’s House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, did conclude, however, that widespread

concerns prior to the R2P intervention regarding the “the scale of threat to civilians was presented with unjustified certainty” and were “overstated” by government officials (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, 2016, p. 15 and p. 3). It appears then that *Amnesty International* had become swept up in a widespread misrepresentation of events in Libya¹.

Regarding the 7-year-long war in Syria, a controversy is currently emerging regarding the so-called “White Helmets,” a group which claims to be an independent NGO set up to save civilians. Critics, however, argue that the group is largely a propaganda construct designed to promote the interests of groups seeking the overthrow of the Syrian government (Morningstar, 2014; Beeley, 2017). Certainly, one available UK government document indicates that the organization has been funded as part of broader attempts to support “moderate opposition to provide services for their communities and to contest new space,” and to empower “legitimate local governance structures to deliver services [and giving] credibility to the moderate opposition” (UK Government Document 2017). The document also states that the White Helmets have served an important public relations purpose by providing “an invaluable reporting and advocacy role” and “confidence to statements made by UK and other international leaders made in condemnation of Russian actions” (Mason, 2017). The White Helmets have also been cited as a major source of information for human rights groups such as *Amnesty International* and *Human Rights Watch* (U. K. Government Summary Document., 2017). Because the White Helmets only operate in areas held by opposition groups, they can only present a partial picture of events. The utility of this organization, intentional or not, for propagandistic purposes is without question. Indeed, a film about the White Helmets was even awarded an Oscar in 2016².

Finally, beyond government agencies, media, academia, think tanks and NGOs, popular culture is a further important site upon which propaganda is produced and disseminated. The history of Hollywood movies is replete with films that play important ideological and propagandistic functions. Few would today dispute that the “cowboy and Indians” genre of Hollywood movies presented a highly distorted, extremely politicized, and ultimately propagandistic representation of Native Americans and one which whitewashed the crimes and suffering inflicted upon that particular indigenous population. Schou (2016) argues that there has always been a close relationship between the CIA and Hollywood whilst Secker and Alford (2019) claim that the Pentagon has had considerable influence on many major Hollywood movies, even to the extent of scripts being edited. Whether these patterns of influence involve direct censorship or more mutually exploitative relationships and/or co-optation probably varies from case to case. However, the result is the same in terms of the creation of systematic bias across important elements of popular culture which can serve ideological and

¹For a critique of Amnesty International and its relationship to Western power see (Boyle, 2012)

²The White Helmets and other matters relating to UK government ‘info ops’ in Syria are currently being researched by some members of the Working Group on Syria, Propaganda and Media <http://syriapropagandamedia.org>.

propagandistic purposes (Bergman, 2018). Popular culture is also critical to understanding the potential reach and depth of propaganda in western societies as the audience for popular films and entertainment reaches well beyond the relatively small segment of the population that is attuned to current affairs and “serious news.”

Propaganda, then, is ubiquitous to modern democracies. To a very large extent, this has been hidden by the fact that so much propaganda production occurs across institutions of government and civil society, some of which are not readily associated with propaganda, as well as by an under-appreciation of the scale of resources devoted to “non-consensual organized persuasive communication” (Bakir et al., 2019a). The tendency to avoid the use of the term propaganda, and its association only with its crude and blatant manifestations, has further closed both academic and public minds to the presence of propaganda in liberal democracies.

Advancing the Field of Political Communication Through Propaganda Studies

Recognizing the scale and reach of propaganda activities rectifies the problems identified above afflicting both mainstream and critical scholarship which included the tendency to focus on only the most visible formal institutions of government, orientation toward analysis that reflects the “who says what to whom and with what effect” dictum and conceived of us a primarily top-down process and the acceptance of elite influenced problem definitions and sole focus on media itself.

First, propaganda analysis directs us to look beyond the formal and visible institutions of government (executive, legislative etc.) and toward a closer examination of the bureaucracies and networks of power behind governments. It is not simply enough to start academic analysis at the point of communication, when a politician speaks or a government department issues a press release. It is also important to examine the constellation of interests and actors who work to shape the message or, as Bernays describes it, the “unseen mechanism” and “invisible government.” Propaganda studies draws attention to the examination of the myriad of institutions—media, academia, think tanks, NGOs and popular entertainment/culture—that are involved in the production of knowledge. In doing so, propaganda studies helps us move away from research agendas that tend to benefit powerful actors (by only asking questions based around who says what to whom and with what effect etc.) and toward an agenda that scrutinizes and holds to account powerful actors by revealing the hidden networks, interests and persuasion strategies that lie behind official pronouncements and policy initiatives.

Second, propaganda studies shifts the center of gravity for political communication research away from problem-solving orientated effects research which, to a large extent, focuses on the effect of media messages upon publics and audiences. It does so by refocusing analytical attention to the processes that work to shape the message in the first instance. In other words, it is important to understand how messages come into being,

where they are produced (i.e., media, government, think tanks, NGOs, popular entertainment) and the persuasion strategies involved (e.g., deception through lying, omission, distortion or misdirection, incentivization, or coercion), rather than simply analyzing the effect a particular message has on the public.

Third, with its concern over understanding how powerful actors seek to exercise power through manipulation of information and material contexts, propaganda studies is inherently set against the tendency to accept elite-orientated definitions of what “the problem” is and what constitute “important research issues.” In this sense, propaganda studies can be seen as a progressive, democratic and empowering research approach relative to the mainstream. Connected with this are the benefits accrued through recognizing the manipulative and deceptive dimensions of persuasive communication. As noted earlier, much of the current mainstream literature on persuasion and “PR” sanitizes persuasive communication in a way that obfuscates manipulative persuasion. Few would seriously doubt that deception plays a major role in politics, and yet this difficult and controversial matter is rarely discussed. Propaganda studies, with its superior grasp of manipulative forms of persuasion can help draw this matter to the center of scholarly attention.

Fourth, and finally, with respect to political communication research, propaganda studies works to correct over-emphasis upon the media itself as the primary site of inquiry. Most importantly, as set out in the previous section, understanding the multiplicity of locations upon which propaganda is produced and disseminated should encourage critical political communication scholars to reach much more widely and deeply than they do at present. In other words, as scholars of political communication we need to cast our analytical net much wider than just the mainstream media, if we are to fully understand and explain the role of propaganda in contemporary democracy. Connected with this is the obvious logical possibility that, when one recognizes quite how widespread and deep rooted propaganda processes are, the problem of “manufacturing consent” in contemporary democracies is likely far worse than even the most critical accounts (e.g., Herman and Chomsky, 1988) currently suggest. Put bluntly, they may well have been under-measuring levels of “manufacturing consent” (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). Propaganda studies can help correct this under-measurement issue and offer, ultimately, a more accurate rendering of the distribution of power, particularly in democratic states.

DEVELOPING A RESEARCH AGENDA

Having made a case for propaganda studies, I now turn to sketching a preliminary research agenda covering conceptual/theoretical issues, empirical analysis and engagement with professionals and publics. Each will be discussed in turn.

Developing Theories and Concepts

A key consequence of mainstream academic aversion to questions of deception and lying, coupled with the tendency of PR scholarship (and related fields) to ignore the manipulative aspects of persuasive communication, is a poor understanding of what deception and other forms of manipulative persuasion

actually look like in practice. The recent conceptual framework by Bakir et al. (2019a) provides one starting point for a more nuanced conceptualization of propaganda. Their typology of propaganda forms, ranging from deception involving lying, omission, distortion and misdirection through to incentivizing and coercive persuasion tactics, provides the basis for further development and refinement. It is also worth connecting these fledgling conceptualizations with broader theoretical accounts that seek to explain how powerful groups seek to mobilize support and bias in their favor, for example Schattschneider's "mobilization of bias" idea and Wolfsfeld's (1997) political contest model.

Another avenue for exploration is the development of explanatory models which can help to explain when and why political actors come to employ such techniques, as well as developing an understanding of when and why they are effective. There already exists, across the field of PR (and related fields), a substantial social scientific literature examining the effects and utility of various forms of "persuasive messaging" but this literature fails to distinguish between manipulative (i.e., propagandistic) and non-manipulative modes of persuasion, thus limiting its potential with respect to developing persuasion strategies that are both ethically grounded and effective.

Of course, this kind of explanatory research needs to be conducted with a weather eye on the dangers of "reverse engineering" whereby models might come to be used by powerful actors seeking to make their propaganda more effective. This problem can probably never be entirely avoided, so, to the extent to which such research is justifiable from a propaganda studies perspective, such dangers need to be kept in mind.

Following on from this issue is the related normative matter of ethical forms of persuasion. On the one hand, one might reasonably expect academics to be, broadly speaking, committed to developing ethical and non-manipulative forms of persuasive communication, i.e., persuasion that is not propagandistic. Here, normative work is necessary with respect to developing modes of persuasion which can be agreed as relatively non-manipulative and consensual in nature. Again, the initial work by Bakir et al. (2019a) provides a framework, drawing in part upon the work of Habermas (1984), which defines what they label as "consensual organized persuasive communication" and which involves the absence (or relative absence) of deceptive, incentivising and coercive mechanisms. As such it provides an initial starting point for developing work into forms of persuasion that are inherently democratic and which can facilitate genuine consensus building. At the same time, it also needs to be remembered that manipulation through propaganda can be justified, for example in situations where the aim is to prevent harm. There is in fact an extensive literature on the issue of deception in politics (Bakir et al., 2019b), but little normative work aimed at thinking through the conditions under which deception (and hence propaganda) might be justified. Important work by Bok (1999), Carson (2010), and Cliffe et al. (2000) provides a basis for such ethical considerations; and work should be carried synthesizing this literature with work on consensual vs. non-consensual organized persuasive communication in order to develop ethical criteria for guiding when propaganda might be justified.

Finally, on a broader theoretical level, understanding propaganda processes provides an important opportunity to understand how ideology works (Sussman, 2012). Ideology is frequently discussed in terms of it being an internalized set of ideas and rules that structure how people think and act. As such, ideology is understood to reside in people at a sub-conscious level and involves basic beliefs and worldviews that are taken as given. Miller (2002) points out, however, that this underplays the ways in which ideology has to be created and maintained via intentional actions by individuals:

Rather than seek power in some mysterious unobservable process of ideological interpellation or articulation, or simply in understanding language, we must seek it in the actions of real people in the (would-be) secret (but sometimes discoverable) low conspiracies which are a continuous and inevitable part of capitalist rule; in censorship, spin, lobbying, public relations, marketing, and advertising; in the institutions of "disinformation and distraction" as Raymond Williams put it (Miller, 2002).

Miller's point here is that ideology does not simply emerge from nowhere and maintain itself as if it were an autonomous and self-sustaining phenomena. Rather, that it has to be created and maintained through human action. For example, the ideology of capitalism involves people believing in concepts such as the primacy of self-reliance, wage labor and capital accumulation. But these beliefs have not simply spontaneously emerged. They have been created through deliberate decisions to promote one set of values over another and this has, at key points in history, involved constellations of actors (groups and organizations) promoting a capitalist world view. Continued belief in capitalist ideology has been maintained through a daily diet of advertising and programming which, more often than not, reinforces basic capitalist ideas about what people should value in life and the things they should aspire to. Likewise, the ideology of anti-communism, referred to by Hallin (1986) in his seminal work on US media and the Vietnam War, did not simply happen. Americans were taught to hate communism through sometimes aggressive promotion such as Senator McCarthy's witch hunt during the 1950s, Hollywood films and a continual barrage of statements from politicians, journalists, and intellectuals. Propaganda studies, through its focus on the range of actors involved in shaping and manipulating information, is well-placed to analyse and explain how ideologies are created and maintained through the "actions of real people."

Gramsci's concept of hegemony is another macro-theoretical issue which propaganda studies can contribute to. Many academics interpret hegemony as a fluid and consensual form of ideology (e.g., Hallin, 1994) in which there is (a) greater scope for groups to contest, influence and change dominant narratives and, associated with this, (b) at least some level of consent involved. Part of this understanding is based upon maintaining a sharp distinction between "force" and "consent": people consent to dominant beliefs and ideas via a process of persuasion rather than physical threats. Propaganda studies, with its attention to manipulative persuasion through, for example, deception, problematizes these ideas. When people have been "persuaded"

of a particular set of beliefs and ideas through deception it cannot be argued that they have consented to those beliefs and ideas. As already noted above by highlighting the non-consensual nature of propaganda due to the role of deception, incentivization and coercion, propaganda studies suggests that contemporary democratic society might well be far more coercive, and far less consensual, than is suggested by mainstream academic interpretations of Gramsci.

In short, propaganda studies can be of great value in terms of deepening and strengthening our understanding of ideology as well as lead to a rethink regarding key ideas regarding hegemony, force and consent.

Empirical Research

Theory-driven empirical research should focus on three areas. First, propaganda studies needs to establish a fuller understanding of the institutions, doctrines, and practices involved in contemporary propaganda. Regarding institutions, the key sites of production outlined in this article are worthy of close attention and empirical research needs to document more fully how these various organizations become involved in the production and dissemination of propaganda as well as the doctrines and practices which shape their behavior. It is also necessary to critically evaluate the resources and interests that lie behind these organizations as well as the networks of power that they represent (Miller et al., 2019). Here, the extent to which various organizations and institutions represent overlapping interests and work, to varying degrees, in a co-ordinated fashion to promote specific agendas needs to be analyzed. For example, as already noted, the on-going 7 year-long war in Syria has highlighted the role of government information operations and ostensibly non-governmental (NGOs) civil society groups and media. A key empirical question concerns the extent to which apparently autonomous institutions are actually linked, via personnel, funding or shared objectives, with specific political strategies. Overall, this research would provide important empirical insights regarding the reach of contemporary propaganda activities.

Second, case study research focusing on specific issue areas needs to be undertaken. A good example of such work can be found in Oreskes and Conway (2011) who explore how the tobacco and the fossil fuel industries sought to shape (or more accurately to limit) public understanding of the harmful effects of, respectively, smoking and the role of human activity in influencing climate change. The issue of climate change and the ways in which powerful actors might be seeking to shape public understanding of it remains a pressing topic for detailed research. Other issues which stand out for attention include the post 9/11 “war on terror” and the Syrian war already mentioned. With respect to the former, whilst the role of deceptive propaganda in the case of the 2003 Iraq invasion is relatively well-documented, much more work is needed in other associated conflicts (Afghanistan, Libya, Pakistan, Yemen and Syria) as well as the overall 9/11 “war on terror”. Regarding the 9/11 triggered “war on terror,” the recent UK Chilcot Report has corroborated claims that the perceived threat of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism was intended to be exploited in order to mobilize support for a number of regime-change wars (Robinson,

2017) whilst multiple questions have now been raised about a wide variety of official claims made during the establishing phase of the “war on terror” immediately following 9/11 (e.g., Griffin and Woodworth, 2018). Regarding the war in Syria, there is already a *prima facie* case that the war has involved extensive and wide-ranging approaches to mobilizing support for the overthrow of the Syrian government, involving a complex network of government information operations, civil society activist groups and NGOs, as well as journalists and media organizations. Both of these topics now require full and thorough investigation. Finally, the emerging tensions between Russia and the West have included allegations of election interference by Russia as well as an apparently concerted propaganda drive to demonize Russia in the eyes of both Western publics and the international community. High-profile events such as the Skripal poisoning, the downing of MH17 and the UK’s Brexit vote have all been fiercely contested events and raise substantive questions regarding propaganda activities and the potential role of deception in both domestic and international affairs (Van der Pijl, 2018; Boyd-Barrett, Unpublished). Indeed, the widespread sense that we are into a new Cold War scenario is likely to elevate the importance of propaganda activities.

The third area demanding sustained empirical investigation concerns new forms of propaganda that are enabled by today’s ubiquitous digital internet-based information environment. The combination of mass surveillance by state authorities as revealed by the Snowden leaks, the development of algorithms capable of systematically manipulating the fabric of the internet, and the emergence of Bots designed to target political activity (Wooley and Howard, 2017), all highlight new opportunities for political actors seeking to deceive and manipulate. For example, political Bots have been used to variously smear and support political opponents (Metaxas and Mustafaraj, 2012) whilst intelligence services have engaged in digital deception aimed at disrupting illegal activity on the web (Greenwald, 2014; Greenwald and Fishman, 2015). Most seriously, there now appears to be a concerted drive to initiate some level of censorship across the Internet justified by the so-called “fake news” crisis. Political pressure on technology companies has been increased in recent years to control the content on their sites, in particular *Facebook*, *YouTube* and *Twitter*. For instance, the ongoing UK government investigation into “fake news” has recently discussed making tech companies liable for “harmful and misleading material” on their sites (Culture Media Sport Committee House of Commons U. K., 2018) whilst the European Union has been developing policy responses to so-called hybrid threats including the perceived “impact of Russian disinformation: (European Union, 2018, p. 2). In the US, congressional hearings have seen the tech giants grilled over allegations of, for example, Russian interference with social media platforms during the 2016 US presidential election. It seems likely that this political pressure will increasingly manifest itself in invasive and censorious strategies, deploying algorithms, designed to remove content or de-rank content on the web. The most remarkable aspect of this so-called crisis is the way in which elite problem definitions, as noted earlier, have framed the debate: “fake news” is frequently seen as primarily a problem emanating from social media and foreign actors and relatively little attention is paid to the circulation of propagandistic

information emanating from establishment political actors and establishment-orientated mainstream media. It is also reasonable to expect that a considerable amount of research funding will be directed toward the study of “fake news” defined in terms of this particular elite definition of the problem. Propaganda studies should approach the issue with an open mind as to the nature of “fake news” and where the biggest problems actually lie and avoid the mainstream stereotyping of “fake news” as a problem only associated with social and alternative media and/or foreign governments. More generally, understanding the multiplicity of ways in which propaganda operations have sought to both cope with and exploit social media networks and patterns of many-to-many communication is clearly an urgent task for academics.

Engagement and Practice

Finally, theory building, conceptual development and empirical research should, ultimately, serve practical purposes. At the broadest level, understanding the extent to which manipulation is occurring in liberal democracies can usefully inform public and policy debates over steps needed to reduce the level of propaganda and foster more consensual and democratic patterns of persuasion. The ultimate goal here would be to find ways of reducing levels of non-consensual propagandistic communication in order to strengthen the quality of our democracies. Combinations of theoretical and conceptual development married with detailed empirical research would play a key role in informing such debates. One important element of this task would be to foster greater awareness amongst professional communicators as to the importance of ethical modes of persuasion which are compatible with a democratic society. At the same time, ethical guidance as to the conditions under which propaganda can be justified could usefully inform policy makers as to when and where propaganda might be used as a legitimate tool of persuasion. Propaganda studies, most importantly perhaps, can be used to help educate citizens in ways that provide them with the opportunity to defend themselves against manipulation. Understanding the strategies and techniques employed by political actors is an important first step with respect to this form of cognitive self-defense.

CONCLUSION

The field of political communication is in need of a rethink—and propaganda studies offers a way forward. Historically, communications studies had been profoundly influenced by its instrumentalist and problem-solving beginnings that are rooted in US academic institutions and the context of the geopolitical situation experienced during the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. The demands of World War II and the ideological confrontation with Russia set the scene for the fledgling discipline of communication studies resulting in scholarship which has focused on only the most visible aspects of politics and governance, which is largely informed by the dictum of “who says what to whom and with what effect” and which is conceived in terms of a top-down process, frequently accepting elite-defined interpretations

of what constitute legitimate and worthwhile research questions. Even the largely marginalized critical literature is bounded by its focus on analyzing only the media itself when trying to understand how power is exercised through communication.

Propaganda studies can serve to rebalance the field of political communication. Although frequently associated with non-democratic states, propaganda continues to play a major role in contemporary liberal democracies as evidenced by the resources devoted activities which are euphemistically referred to as “strategic communication,” “political marketing,” “advertising,” “public diplomacy,” and “psychological operations.” Moreover, multiple institutions across government and civil society, including governments, political parties, intelligence services, news media, think tanks, academia, and popular culture (e.g., films and TV) have been identified as being involved in the production of propaganda.

Recognizing the significance of propaganda rectifies key limitations afflicting current political communication research. Propaganda studies encourages academics to look beyond their current focus on the formal and most visible aspects of government and toward analysis of the complex networks of power through which information is shaped and manipulated. It encourages research into understanding how messages come into being and the persuasion strategies involved including manipulation through deception, incentivization, and coercion. Furthermore, with its focus on how elite actors exercise power through manipulation of information and material contexts, propaganda studies is inherently set against elite-problem definitions. Finally, propaganda studies broadens the horizon beyond the media itself toward the much broader array of institutions (intelligence services, think tanks and NGOs, popular culture) involved in political communication.

Future work research might include theoretical and conceptual work on forms of manipulation, the ethics of propaganda and relating propaganda to concepts such as ideology and hegemony. Empirical analysis of the institutions involved in propaganda as well as politically important case study research (e.g., war, environment and inequality) and understanding propaganda in the age of digital communication are all essential areas for theory-driven research. Finally, engagement with publics and practitioners is essential in fostering greater awareness of propaganda and the need to develop more democratic and ethical forms of persuasion.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The research for this paper did not require approval from an ethics committee and the author has no known conflicts of interest. Sole responsibility for the opinions and analysis is held by the author.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

REFERENCES

- Adorno, T., and Horkheimer, M. (1972). *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York, NY: Herder and Herder.
- Amnesty International (2011). *Libya: Organisation Calls for Immediate Arms Embargo and Assets Freeze*. Available online at: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/libya-organization-calls-for-immediate-arms-embargo-and-assets-freeze/> (accessed September 22, 2018).
- Andrews, J. R. (1969). Confrontation at Columbia: a case study in coercive rhetoric. *Q. J. Speech* 56, 187–195.
- Bagdikian, B. (2004). *The New Media Monopoly*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Bakir, V., Herring, E., Miller, D., and Robinson, P. (2019a). Organised persuasive communication: a new conceptual framework for research on public relations, propaganda and promotional culture. *Crit. Sociol.* 45, 311–328. doi: 10.1177/0896920518764586
- Bakir, V., Herring, E., Miller, D., and Robinson, P. (2019b). “Deception and lying in politics,” in *Oxford Handbook on Lying*, ed J. Mauber (London; Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Barnett, M. C. (2005). Humanitarianism Transformed. *Perspect. Politics* 3, 723–740. doi: 10.1017/S1537592705050401
- Beeley, V. (2017). *Investigation: White Helmets Committing Acts of Terror Across Syria*. Mintpress News. Available online at: <https://www.mintpressnews.com/investigation-white-helmets-committing-acts-terror-across-syria/231597/> (accessed May 15, 2018).
- Bennett, W. L. (1990). Toward a theory of press-state relations in the United States. *J. Commun.* 40, 103–127.
- Bennett, W. L., and Livingston, S. (2018). The disinformation order: disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions’ *Eur. J. Commun.* 33, 122–139. doi: 10.1177/0267323118760317
- Bergman, T. (2018). “American television: manufacturing consumerism in Joan Pedro-Caranana,” in *The Propaganda Model Today: Filtering Perception and Awareness*, eds D. Broudy and J. Klaehn (London: Westminster University Press), 159–172.
- Bernays, E. (1928/1984). *Propaganda*. New York, NY: Ig Publishing.
- Bok, S. (1999). *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*. Sussex: Harvester.
- Boyd-Barrett, O. (2019). *Fake News: “Russiagate” as Disinformation in the Age of Social Media*. London; New York, NY: Routledge.
- Boyle, F. (2012). ‘Amnesty International: Imperialist Tool’ Boyle, Francis, *Amnesty International: Imperialist Tool*. Available online at: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2324944> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2324944> (accessed September 23, 2018).
- Carson, T. L. (2010). *Deception and Lying: Theory and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cliffe, L., Ramsay, M., and Bartlett, D. (2000). *The Politics of Lying: Implications for Democracy*. London: Macmillan.
- Coles, T. J. (2018). *Real Fakes News: Techniques of Propaganda and Deception-Based Mind Control, from Ancient Babylon to Internet Algorithms*. Otto, NC: Red Pill Press.
- Coser, L. (1965), *Men of Ideas*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Counter Insurgency Operations (2009). *US Department of Defence*. Available online at: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_24.pdf (accessed March 12, 2013).
- Cox, R. W. (1981). Social forces, states and world orders. *Millennium J. Int. Stud.* 12, 162–75.
- Cromwell, D. (2005). “Absurd silence and misplaced pragmatism: how dissent is kept to manageable levels,” in *Bound by Power: Intended Consequences*, ed J. Klaehn (Montreal, QC: Black Rose), 90–104.
- Culture Media and Sport Committee House of Commons U. K. (2018). Available online at: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/digital-culture-media-and-sport-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/fake-news-17-19/> (accessed October 3, 2018).
- Curtis, M. (2004). *Unpeople: Britain’s Secret Human Rights Abuses*. London: Vintage.
- Eglin, P. (2005). “Partnership in an evil action: canadian universities, indonesia and east timor and the question of intellectual responsibility again,” in *Bound by Power: Intended Consequences*, ed J. Klaehn (Montreal, QC: Black Rose), 217–230.
- European Union (2018). *Joint Report to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council on the Implementation of the Joint Framework on Countering Hybrid Threats From July 2017 to June 2018*. Available online at: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/46398/joint-report-implementation-joint-framework-countering-hybrid-threats-july-2017-june-2018_en (accessed October 3, 2018).
- Facebook (2018). *Announcing New Election Partnership with the Atlantic Council*. Available online at: <https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/05/announcing-new-election-partnership-with-the-atlantic-council/> (accessed October 5, 2018).
- Fuchs, C. (2018). “Propaganda 2.0: Herman and Chomsky’s Propaganda Model in the Age of the Internet, Big Data and Social Media,” in *The Propaganda Model Today: Filtering Perception and Awareness*, eds J. Pedro-Caranana, D. Broudy, and J. Klaehn (London: Westminster University Press), 71–92.
- Glasgow University Media Group (1985). *War and Peace News*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Green, D. P., Carnegie, A., and Middleton, J. (2017). “Political communication: insights from field experiments,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*, eds K. Kenski and K. H. Jamieson (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 500–513.
- Greenwald, G. (2014). How covert agents infiltrate the internet to manipulate and deceive. *Intercept*. Available online at: <https://theintercept.com/2014/02/24/jtrig-manipulation/>
- Greenwald, G., and Fishman, A. (2015). GCHQ unit engaged in domestic law enforcement and online propaganda. *Intercept*.
- Griffin, D. R., and Woodworth, E. (2018). *9/11 Unmasked: an International Review Panel Investigation*. Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press.
- Griffin, T., Aked, H., Miller, D., and Marusek, S. (2015). *The Henry Jackson Society and the Degeneration of British Neoliberalism: Liberal interventionism, Islamophobia and the ‘war on terror’*. Spinwatch, Public Interest Investigations. Available online at: <http://www.spinwatch.org/index.php/issues/more/item/5777-new-report-on-the-henry-jackson-society> (accessed June 23, 2017).
- Grunig, J., and Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing Public Relations*. New York, NY: Rhinehart.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, Trans. T. McCarthy. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, J. (1989). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Hallin, D. (1994). *We Keep America on Top of the World: Television Journalism and the Public Sphere*. London; New York, NY: Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9780203977477
- Hallin, D. C. (1986). *The Uncensored War*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Herman, E., and Chomsky, N. (1988). *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. (New York, NY: Pantheon).
- Herring, E., and Robinson, P. (2003). Too polemical or too critical: chomsky on the study of the news media and US Foreign policy. *Rev. Int. Stud.* 29, 561–580. doi: 10.1017/S0260210503005539
- Herring, E., and Robinson, P. (2014). Report X marks the spot: the british government’s deceptive dossier on Iraq and WMD. *Polit. Sci. Q.* 129, 551–584. doi: 10.1002/polq.12252
- House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (2016). *Libya: Examination of Intervention and Collapse and the UK’s Future Policy Options*. HC119. Available online at: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/foreign-affairs-committee/inquiries1/parliament-2015/libya-policy/> (accessed September 22, 2018).
- Jacoby, R. (1987). *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe*. New York, NY: Perseus Books.
- Jensen, R. (2010). “The faculty filter: why the propaganda model is marginalized in U.S. Journalism Schools,” in *The Political Economy of Media and Power*, ed J. Klaehn (New York, NY: Peter Lang).
- Jones, S. P. (2016). *First Sea Lord’s Defence and Security Lecture to the City of London*. Available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/first-sea-lords-defence-and-security-lecture-to-the-city-of-london> (accessed October 5, 2018).
- Keeble, R. (2010). “Hacks and spooks-Close Encounters of a Strange Kind: a critical history of the links between mainstream journalists and the intelligence

- services in the UK,” in *The Political Economy of Media and Power*, ed J. Klaehn (New York, NY: Peter Lang), 87–112.
- Kenski, K., and Jamieson, K. H. (2017). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Klaehn, J. (2002). Corporate hegemony: a critical assessment of the globe and mail's news coverage of near-genocide in occupied east timor 1975–80. *Int. Commun. Gazette* 64, 301–321. doi: 10.1177/174804850206400401
- Klaehn, J. (2005). (ed.). *Bound by Power: Intended Consequences*. Montreal, QC: Black Rose.
- Klaehn, J. (2010a). (ed.). *The Political Economy of Media and Power*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Klaehn, J. (2010b). Behind the Invisible Curtain of Scholarly Criticism: revisiting the propaganda model. *J. Stud.* 4, 359–369. doi: 10.1080/14616700306487
- Klaehn, J., and Mullen, A. (2010). The Propaganda Model and Sociology: understanding the media and society. *Synaesthesia* 1, 10–23.
- Kovalik, D. (2012). Libya and the human rights double standard. *Counterpunch*. Available online at: <https://www.counterpunch.org/2012/10/23/libya-and-the-human-rights-double-standard/>
- Lance Bennett, W. (1991). Toward a theory of press-state relations in the United States. *J. Commun.* 40, 103–127. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.1990.tb02265.x
- Lasswell, H. (1927). *Propaganda Technique in the World War*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Lasswell, H. (1951). “Political and psychological warfare,” in *Propaganda in War and Crisis*, ed D. Lerner (New York, NY: George Stewart), 261–66.
- Lasswell, H., Casey, R., and Smith, B. L. (1935). *Propaganda and Promotional Activities: An Annotated Bibliography*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Lazarsfeld, P. (1941). Remarks on administrative and critical communication research. *Stud. Philos. Soc. Sci.* 9, 2–16.
- Lippman, W. (1922). *Public Opinion*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace.
- Lippman, W. (1925). *The Phantom Public*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace.
- Lippman, W. (1955). *Essays in the Public Philosophy*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.
- Manheim, J. (2011). *Strategy in Information and Influence Operations*. London: Routledge.
- Mason, J. (2017). *Power, Petroleum and Propaganda: Identifying the Role of the White Helmets in the Syrian Civil War* (MA Dissertation), University of Sheffield.
- McChesney, R. W. (1997). *Corporate Media and the Threat to Democracy*. New York, NY: Seven Stories Press.
- McChesney, R. W., and Pickard, V. (2017). “News Media as Political Institutions,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*, eds K. Kenski and K. H. Jamieson (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 263–274.
- Media Theory (2018). Special section: Edward S. Herman and the propaganda model today. *Media Theory* 2, 91–239.
- Metaxas, P. T., and Mustafaraj, E. (2012). Social media and the elections. *Science* 338, 472–473. doi: 10.1126/science.1230456
- Miller, D. (2002). “Media power and class power: overplaying ideology,” in *A World of Contradictions, Socialist Register 2001*, eds L. Panitch and C. Leys (London: Merlin Press; US: Monthly Review Press, Canada: Fernwood Publishing), 245–264.
- Miller, D. (2004). “The propaganda machine,” in *Tell Me Lies: Propaganda and Media Distortion in the Attack on Iraq*, ed D. Miller (London: Pluto Press), 80–99.
- Miller, D., Brown, L., Dinan, W., and Stavinoha, L. (2019). *Researching the Powerful: Public Sociology in Action*. London: Routledge.
- Miller, D., and Dinan, W. (2000). The rise of the PR industry in Britain 1979–1998. *Eur. J. Commun.* 15, 5–35. doi: 10.1177/0267323100015001001
- Miller, D., and Dinan, W. (2008). *A Century of Spin*. London: Pluto Press.
- Mills, C. W. (1968). *Power, Politics and People: Collected Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mills, T. (2017). *The BBC: The Myth of a Public Service Broadcaster*. London; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Moloney, K. (2006). *Rethinking Public Relations: PR propaganda and Democracy, 2nd Edn*. London: Routledge.
- Morningstar, C. (2014). *Syria: Aavaaz, Purpose and the Art of Selling Empire*. Available online at: <http://www.wrongkindofgreen.org/2014/09/17/syria-aavaaz-purpose-the-art-of-selling-hate-for-empire/> (accessed May 15, 2018).
- Mosco, V. (1996). *The Political Economy of Communication*. London: Sage.
- Mullen, A. (2010a). Twenty years on: the second-order prediction of the Herman-Chomsky Propaganda model. *Media Cult. Soc.* 32, 673–690. doi: 10.1177/0163443710367714
- Mullen, A. (2010b). “Bringing power back in: the Herman-Chomsky Propaganda model, 1988–2008,” in *The Political Economy of Media and Power*, ed J. Klaehn (New York, NY: Peter Lang), 207–234.
- Oreskes, N., and Conway, E. M. (2011). *Merchants of Doubt*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.
- Organisation for Propaganda Studies. (2018). Available online at <http://www.propagandastudies.ac.uk/about/> (accessed March 24, 2019).
- Parmar, I. (2004). *Think Tanks and Power in Foreign Policy*. London; New York, NY: Palgrave, Macmillan.
- Pedro, J. (2011a). The Propaganda model in the early 21st century (part 1). *Int. J. Commun.* 5, 1865–1905.
- Pedro, J. (2011b). The Propaganda model in the early 21st century (part 2). *Int. J. Commun.* 5, 1906–1926.
- Pedro-Caranana, J., Broudy, D., and Klaehn, J. (2018). *The Propaganda Model Today: Filtering Perception and Awareness*. Westminster: University of Westminster Press.
- Robinson, P. (1999). The CNN effect: can the news media drive foreign policy? *Rev. Int. Stud.* 25, 301–309.
- Robinson, P. (2002). *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy and Intervention*. London; New York, NY: Routledge.
- Robinson, P. (2017). Learning from the Chilcot Report: Propaganda, deception and the “War on Terror.” *Int. J. Contemp. Iraqi Stud.* 11, 47–73. doi: 10.1386/ijcis.11.1-2.47_1
- Robinson, P. (2018). “Does the Propaganda model actually theorise propaganda?” in *The Propaganda Model Today: Filtering Perception and Awareness*, eds J. Pedro-Caranana, D. Broudy, and J. Klaehn (London: Westminster University Press), 53–67.
- Sayeed, T. (2016). “Chomsky and his critics,” in *Mondoweiss, 19 February 2016*. Available online at: <http://mondoweiss.net/2016/02/chomsky-and-his-critics/> (accessed June 23, 2018).
- Schou, N. (2016). *Spooked: How the CIA Manipulates the Media and Hoodwinks Hollywood*. New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing.
- Scott-Smith, G. (2014). Maintaining transatlantic community: US public diplomacy, the ford foundation and the successor generation concept in US foreign affairs, 1960s–1980s. *Glob. Soc.* 28: 90–103. doi: 10.1080/13600826.2013.848189
- Secker, T., and Alford, M. (2019). New evidence for the surprisingly significant propaganda role of the central intelligence agency and department of defense in the screen entertainment industry. *Crit. Sociol.* 45, 347–359. doi: 10.1177/0896920517739093
- Simon, H. (1972). Persuasion in social conflicts. *Speech Monogr.* 39, 227–247. doi: 10.1080/03637757209375763
- Simpson, C. (1994). *Science of Coercion*. Oxford; London: Oxford University Press.
- Sussman, G. (2010). “A regime of Propaganda: the systemic bases of promotional political culture,” in *The Political Economy of Media and Power*, ed J. Klaehn (New York, NY: Peter Lang), 113–142.
- Sussman, G. (2012). Systematic Propaganda as ideology and productive exchange. *Triple C Commun. Capital. Crit.* 10, 474–487. doi: 10.31269/triplec.v10i2.370
- Taylor, P. M. (2002). Perception management and the ‘war’ against terrorism. *J. Inf. Warfare* 1, 16–29.
- The Computational Propaganda Project (2018). Available online at: <http://comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk> (accessed September 1, 2018).
- U. K. Government Summary Document. (2017). Available online at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630409/Syria_Resilience_2017.pdf (accessed May 9, 2018).
- Van der Pijl, K. (2014). *Discipline of Western Supremacy*. London: Pluto Press.
- Van der Pijl, K. (2018). *Flight MH15, Ukraine and the New Cold War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Weaver, D. H., and Choi, J. (2017). “The media Agenda: who (or what) sets it,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*, eds K. Kenski and K. H. Jamieson (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 359–376.

- Wolfsfeld, G. (1997). *The Media and Political Conflict: News from the Middle East*. Cambridge and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Woods, L. (2006). Where's Noam? On the absence of references to Noam Chomsky in introductory international relations textbooks. *New Polit. Sci.* 28, 65–79. doi: 10.1080/07393140500518257
- Wooley, S. C., and Howard, P. N. (2017). *Computational Propaganda Worldwide: Executive Summary*. Computational propaganda research project, Working Paper No. 2017. Oxford: Oxford University.
- Zollmann, F. (2018a). Bringing propaganda back into news media studies. *Crit. Sociol.* 45, 329–345. doi: 10.1177/0896920517731134
- Zollmann, F. (2018b). “Corporate-market power and ideological domination: the Propaganda model after 30 years-relevance and further application,” in *The Propaganda Model Today: Filtering, Perception and Awareness*, eds

J. Pedro-Caranana, D. Broudy, and J. Klaehn (London: Westminster University Press), 223–236.

Conflict of Interest Statement: The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Copyright © 2019 Robinson. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.