



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK
Udenrket

ДЕТЕКТОР M MEDIA
ПРОПАГАНДСКА ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ

Ihor Kulas

edited by

Nataliya Lyhachova and Otar Dovzhenko

HOW

TO RECOGNIZE PROPAGANDA IN THE MEDIA

Ihor Kulas

edited by
Nataliya Lyhachova and Otar Dovzhenko

HOW
TO RECOGNIZE
PROPAGANDA
IN THE MEDIA

Kyiv — 2018

UDK 32.019.5
K90

Kulias I.

K90. **How to recognize propaganda in the media / edited by N. Lyhachova, O.Dovzhenko, Kyiv, 2018. — 40 pages**

Propaganda in our time went beyond totalitarian regimes. Today, it is also poses danger to democratic states that only learn to resist propaganda attacks. Ukraine, with its unstable society, the situation of the undeclared war with Russia (and, consequently, continuous information attacks within the so-called hybrid war) and media space controlled by the oligarchs is particularly vulnerable to propaganda manipulations both from the side of the aggressor country and the internal ones. Media expert Ihor Kulias considers propaganda in the media through the prism of professional journalism standards. He gives examples of the most typical manifestations of propaganda, which at the same time are violation of standards. This simple and obvious set of indicators of propaganda can be used by anyone who does not want to be deceived and distribute false or distorted information among others. The text will be useful for teachers of media literacy, journalists, analysts and just responsible citizens.

UDK 32.019.5

The production of this brochure became possible with the financial support of the Danish International Development Agency (Danida). The content of the brochure is sole responsibility of Detector Media NGO and does not necessarily reflect the position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

© NGO Detector Media, 2018

© Kulias I., 2018

© Pocheptsov H., 2018

CONTENT

Introduction. Heorhiy Pocheptsov. How the information world has changed	6
Foreword	10
What is the propaganda picture of the world built of	13
Three phenomena of mass consciousness that help propaganda	17
How propaganda violates and imitates the standards of journalism	19
Afterword	36



INTRODUCTION

HOW THE INFORMATION WORLD HAS CHANGED

In our eyes, the status of information and information space has changed. We were growing up and living in one space, but now it is fundamentally different. Once, Francis Fukuyama wrote about the end of history, which the humanity had reached, but with the advent of the Internet one can say that the mankind received new history. And propaganda reappeared in this new history. But now it is implemented in the digital world and is based on other media. It found itself a basic safe harbor in social media.

Today's propaganda first came back in positive contexts, such as promoting the healthy lifestyle. This also happened because in the West the term "propaganda" was, roughly speaking, forbidden. Students simply did not want to take such courses at universities because, as it seemed to everyone, propaganda died together with totalitarian states. But instead of it, it was easy to use the terms "information wars", "information operations", "operations of influence" or "public diplomacy". But they only describe a slightly different reality: it is influence on the audience of another coun-

try. And Soviet propaganda was born and firmed up to influence its own people. Incidentally, in the United States there is even a ban on using such methods for their own population.

Today, propaganda has returned to politics as promotion of own view of the world, which differs from the views of another social group. Prior to this, Joseph Nye introduced the notion of attractive soft power, in contrast to coerce hard power. Developing on this his idea, it should be emphasized that the hard power is more likely to be aimed to change behavior in the nearest future and more often these changes are expected in physical space, and the soft power is aimed at the value changes in the minds, therefore, it works in long-term projects and changes our vision of the world.

Propaganda has returned to the new digital world together with fakes. The British Government asks to abandon this term and to call all these things misinformation. Many scientists in their classifications try to take motivation into account, because only a conscious distortion of information can be a fake. If a person had no desire to deceive, this could have been a mistake.

Propaganda is systemic rather than accidental distortion of information. Social media have provided all the opportunities for this. It was never before that billions of people could be addressed instantly and anonymously, but the Internet and social media made it possible. Examples of this were Russian information interventions in the presidential elections (USA and France) or referendums (Brexit and the independence of Catalonia). There are also examples of attempts to intervene in parliamentary elections in some European countries. All this has attracted particular attention, since it was an attempt from another country to exert such influence.

How was it done? Trolls in uniforms and without had instructions on political targeting, that is to influence a person, based on their psychological portrait. This psychological portrait of a person and of the corresponding group of people who think the same way was made on the basis of the likes and other information that a person leaves behind on Facebook. So it was possible to get into the well-established preferences which make it possible to understand the points of vulnerability: for what and against what the

person is, what worries them the most today, for what they will stand, whom they consider as their main enemy, and who is their ally.

At these information groups of people the messages from a conditional citizen of the same country were directed and for this reason fake accounts on Facebook were created. These messages had to strengthen the polarization which already existed in the mass consciousness.

The purpose in the United States, for example, was to create chaos in the heads because, as you know, conservative voters do not like changes; the Democrats are for changes but not the Republicans. The use of such methods in some other countries, such as Germany, also led to the right parties getting into the parliament.

A characteristic feature of our time is the significant polarization of the population. People do not want to listen to the opposite arguments at all; they try to be in their informational environment, because it is more comfortable for them. Therefore, they love to share messages that correspond to their picture of the world with others. And they share them exclusively with their like-minded fellows. This life in the same information atmosphere is called “echo chamber”.

Fakes include negative content, because such content spreads faster and wider than positive content. And the main spreader is a person whose point of view coincides with this content. The following three things are needed for the success of a fake campaign: the methods of psychological profiling and targeting, the development of negative content that corresponds to the polarization which is in the heads of the inhabitants of the country, and the bots that carry out the work of the initial dissemination, in order to reach as many people as possible. And then people send these texts to their acquaintances themselves. This is a model that once worked to share jokes and rumors.

Even after attracting attention to this problem, mass consciousness is still not ready to distinguish between true and false news. For example, recent studies have shown that even students at Stanford University are following content without paying attention to the sources of information. And without the source, it is difficult for us to assess the authenticity of what we get.

Man was not ready for the new information world. A newspaper or television as a source of news have a professional journalist in their structure who finds the facts, and an editorial review of the facts for authenticity. Only after this, the information is being spread. Social media do not have such levels of information protection before spreading them. Therefore, a massive amount of facts that do not correspond to reality comes to the world. This can be an accidental action by one person. But when this is a systemic action by organizations aimed at influencing the mass consciousness, it becomes dangerous.

We make decisions based on the information we have. If the information is true, our decision will be correct. If the information is distorted, our decision will be erroneous, one that will cause negative consequences.

Journalism has become a place where propaganda has found its safe harbor, since both the journalist and the reader have lost the ability to distinguish between facts and interpretations. A journalist thinks something is true, and the reader reads about it as about the plain truth.

Propaganda exists and will exist, as there will always be social groups with different views. And every such social group will promote its views into the public space. Therefore, important becomes the struggle against its manifestations at the level of the media content: non-dissemination, blocking, contradiction and debunking of attempts to manipulate social consciousness.

The text of Ihor Kuliash is useful because it transfers the concept of “propaganda” that is applied to media content from the plane of evaluative judgments (“we do not like it, therefore, it is propaganda”) in the plane of specific features that can be defined and measured. It is important that the signs of propaganda which the author describes are tied to violations of well-known by media professionals and recognized professional standards. This means that propaganda can not only be effectively recognized, but also separated from genuine journalism, the one that adheres to standards.

FOREWORD

“All propaganda is lies, even when one is telling the truth.”

George Orwell

Propaganda is spreading of certain views and ideas for managing the behavior of society in the direction desired by the propaganda ordering party through the media and in other ways (for example, in artistic works, on billboards and city-lights, and once before, simply on posters). This is one of the possible definitions of this phenomenon. What does it bring to society? Benefit or harm? Things that are likely to be useful to society (for example, a healthy lifestyle) can be propagated; but it is not the fact that these things are really useful for the whole society and at the same time for each individual.

But in the history of mankind, the greatest damage was caused and is caused by political propaganda. Through manipulations with information, it disseminates certain views and ideas in the mass consciousness. The views and ideas which ultimately make it possible for certain political forces to fight for power, and then hold that power. With the help of propaganda, political forces can fool “the population under their jurisdiction”, sow hate and intolerance in society, cover up corruption and theft of budget money, launch wars and avoid responsibility for their actions.

Political propaganda may be fragmentary when politicians promote a certain message through certain media. But where the totalitarian or authoritarian state manages to take control of all or almost all of the media, propaganda becomes all-pervading and systematic. It draws an

unreal “picture of the world” for society and society begins to live in this world created by the propagandists. The whole content of all media is solely subordinated to the tasks of state propaganda. For example, in the totalitarian Soviet Union, the mass media were called “mass communication and propaganda media”. Because it was believed that Soviet propaganda is about the good and the eternal.

The biggest part of the population of most post-Soviet countries now receives information from television programs, fewer from the radio, and even less from online media outlets. The study, conducted at the request of the non-governmental organization Detector Media, showed that 86% of Ukrainians receive news primarily from Ukrainian TV channels. A totalitarian or authoritarian government may not get rid of separate online outlets, but they are still read by a minority of people. Or, such a government may even quite deliberately leave small “gaps” for the dissatisfied (as for example outlets such as “Echo of Moscow”, “Dozhd” or “Novaya Gazeta” in Russia). But they will be read or listened to by a few people. The majority will still stay in the large propaganda media field.

Among examples of systemic propaganda, Soviet and Russian ones are the closest to us. And if the first one was mainly for “internal use”, then the second one is a “dual-use commodity”. On the one hand, Russian propagandist media keep the lion’s share of the population of their country in a fictional world; on the other hand, they use their own external media (such as Russia Today) or the media in post-Soviet countries owned by the allies of the Kremlin for hybrid war.

Unlike Russia, there is a bigger, though, somewhat bizarre pluralism in the Ukrainian media space. This is due to the fact that various media belong to different oligarchs, which, in their turn, support different political forces. Therefore, any propaganda in Ukrainian mass media can only be considered as fragmentary. In Ukrainian audience, unlike the same Russian, there is at least a choice in any segment of the media world. And also there is the opportunity to compare how the same events are presented by the media from various political camps, if desired. We now have media that propagate in favor of the current government; media

that propagate in favor of the opposition; even media, which promote the propaganda of the aggressor state - Russia - in Ukraine. There is a small number of independent outlets, some of which are self-funding, some are supported by the non-oligarchic businesses, some exist at the expense of foreign grants. And there is also maybe not ideal, but a public broadcaster. In the early 2000s, under the presidency of Leonid Kuchma, the head of his administration – Viktor Medvedchuk – tried to take Ukrainian media under the full control by temnyks [rules that set guidelines on what can be covered and how it should be covered in the media – Translator]. And he succeeded partly. In 2003-2004, most of the major media published identical content ordered from Bankova [The street where the Administration of Ukrainian President is located – Translator]. But in the end, this system crashed because of massive journalistic protests during the Orange Revolution.

This text does not claim to be scientific; it is rather a collection of hints on how you can distinguish propaganda products in the general information flow that falls on our heads every day. To do this, first we will examine what any propaganda products generally contain of, and with what methods and means are they created. The key to understanding is the fact that the creators of any political propaganda always carefully disguise it as journalism, as media product (news, political essays, public-political talk shows, etc.). This means that the propaganda product has all the visible signs of a media product. But even with the minimal critical analysis of such a product, one can always find out that **the objective of propaganda is achieved by deliberate and conscious violation of the standards of journalism**. This means that the standards (or the laws of the journalistic profession) are either violated by the propagandists in a subtle way, or simply imitated.



WHAT IS THE PROPAGANDA PICTURE OF THE WORLD BUILT OF?

The author in advance apologizes for the large number of quotation marks in this section. It is impossible to do without them when talking about specific quotes, or about concepts manipulated and distorted by propaganda.

Propaganda (especially of the state level in totalitarian or authoritarian states) is most often a powerful systemic phenomenon where all propagandist materials without exception form a single, coherent, internally consistent (for uncritical perception, of course), and at the same time, a picture of the world that is relatively easy for the average person to understand, which is beneficial to the subject of propaganda. Often, the government is this subject, because the government usually has more levers of media influence than the opposition. But in non-totalitarian countries, oppositional forces including those that are, for example, supported from abroad can act as subjects of propaganda. This picture of the world is being created using a certain set of propaganda tools.

First of all, **this picture of the world is “black and white”**. Everything in it receives clear evaluation (what is “correct”, and what is “wrong”, what is “good”, and what is “evil”). Accordingly, in this picture of **the world, the division into “friends” and “enemies”, “our” and “their” is very clear**. In the propaganda picture of the world there are no half-tones. Everything should be “compartmentalized”.

And according to this, propagandists **give** to all and everyone **clear labels** – definitions that should immediately give the audience a “proper understanding” what is it about – whether it is about “good” or “bad”. So, Russian state propaganda says today that “*junta*” rules in Kyiv, that there is a “*fascist regime*” in Ukraine and that “*militiamen*” and “*rebels*” are fighting in the east of Ukraine. For comparison: Chechens who fought for Chechnya’s independence from Russia have always been called by

Russian propagandists, in contrast, “*Chechen terrorists*” and “*assailants*.” It was even when they did not commit terrorist attacks against the civilian population and fought with regular Russian troops. Labels can be quite creative, for example, the humorous term “*green men*” launched in March 2014 was the perfect trick to substantiate the thesis “*we are not there*”. It sounded humorous, non-threatening and even positive, despite the fact that in fact these “*green men*” were Russian soldiers, armed to teeth and ready to kill Ukrainians.

The next step is dehumanization of the “*enemies*”. On the one hand, propaganda depicts these “*enemies*” in the darkest colors (“*The West is rotting*”, “*Europe is Sodom and Gomorrah*,” “*bloodthirsty Ukrainians ruthlessly destroy the peaceful population of Donbas*,” etc.). On the other hand, it emphasizes purportedly the insignificance of entire social groups or even nations (“*khokhol*”, “*bulbash*”, “*churka*”, “*gayropeans*”, “*pindos*”, etc.).

Further, propagandists in every possible way **substantiate the “correctness” of what “their ones” or “friends” do**. For example, any action by the government, any words by a pro-government politician are reported by the propagandists as something uniquely correct and meaningful. One can recall here all the nonsense that the Soviet authorities did, and how the Soviet mass media presented all these endless materials of the twenty-something Communist Party Congress. Everything was reported by the Soviet propaganda from the following standpoints: “the government cannot be mistaken”, “the government knows better”, “the governments know what they are doing”. Now in Russia, the sufficient reason for “infallibility” is that “*Putin HIMSELF said so*.”

On the contrary, **it is the justification that “enemies” do everything “wrongly” and “badly”**. In general, there is a constant filtering of any information in such a way that only positive news is published about “theirs”, and only negative about the “enemies”.

In addition, **conspiracy theory** is included. The “enemies” are only busy inventing different ways to “play dirty tricks on our country, our government, our people” (“*Russia is a besieged fortress*”, “*The US orchestrate Russophobia all over the world*”, etc.).

Propaganda creates a systematic foundation for its “world”, **constantly rewriting history for current needs**. That is where mythologems, convenient for propagandists, come from; such as, for example, the widely spread by Russian propaganda idea that *“Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians are one nation.”* In spite of the fact that these are three different nations, each of which has its own history. Or the false mythologem about *“the primordially Russian Crimea” serves as the “argumentation” of even more bizarre myth of “Chersonesus as the Russian Korsun, where Vladimir baptized the Russians”* (which still did not exist as a nation at that time). Propaganda for personal needs can rewrite not only history but also other sciences.

Another commonly used method of propaganda is the **substitution of notions**. The meaning of individual words is completely distorted, or the definition is used not as intended. For example, Russian propagandist media call assailants in the Donbas “militiamen”. Meanwhile, the meaning of the word “militiamen” is civilians who help their army defend the country from an external enemy. Donbas assailants of Ukrainian origin, on the contrary, help the army of a foreign invader to fight with the army of their country. Another example: from the Soviet times the word “fascism” was, for some reason, used to call German Nazism or, more broadly, any Nazism, although in reality, the word “fascism” was the self-determination of purely Italian Nazism – the ideology and the state system of the dictator Mussolini.

Another technique is the **division of notions**. For example, Russian propaganda and its disseminators in Ukraine actively promote the idea of “compromise peace” (of course, on the conditions of complete surrender of Ukraine), justifying it with the false idea that *“a wedge was driven between us by Ukrainian politicians, and there is nothing for ordinary Russians and Ukrainians to divide”* and so on.

An extremely powerful method of propaganda is **generalization**. We speak about it when an individual event is generalized to the level of a tendency with the following “conclusions” of the propagandists: *“all Ukrainians are so”, “all Georgians are so”,* etc. (“so” means, of course, “bad”). And then the same generalization is used in the opposite direc-

tion: *“As they are all so bad, it means that this one is just as bad, because he is one of them.”*

Propaganda consists not only of the media product: certain things have a completely material nature. Thus, in order to give propaganda the possibility to **imitate “pluralism” and “democracy”** in Russia, long ago, the government created a quasi-opposition (the “opposition” Communist Party of the Russian Federation and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia constantly and tirelessly simulate for the media the struggle against the government, which does not prevent them from receiving their guaranteed places in the State Duma on fake elections. They “oppose” the government with argument, safe for the latter, while on all major issues, they vote in favor of the ruling party).

Propaganda creates **propagandist clichés** which are stereotypic expressions that briefly and mainly in the form of slogans give an unambiguous assessment of the subjects of politics, socio-political phenomena, etc., and often at the same time are a call to certain actions beneficial to the propaganda ordering party (*“no one is forgotten, nothing is forgotten”, “we can repeat”, “Crimea is ours”, etc.*).

Frequent repetition of the message with minor variations. For example, before the referendum in Russia in April 1993 (in essence, concerning confidence in President Yeltsin or composition of the State Duma), propaganda replicated and reiterated repeatedly in various mass media and in outdoor agitation a simple for a layman message *“yes, yes, no, yes”* to achieve the desired result for the president in the plebiscite on four different questions. And in the end, this propaganda reached its goal.

When the truth which is uncomfortable to the authorities cannot be completely hidden, the **multiplicity-of-versions** tool is turned on. To blur the real circumstances of certain events and to distract public attention from the real version, the propaganda machine alternately launches a variety of pseudo-versions of the events. Vivid example: as during these years Russian officials and propagandistic mass-media circulated multiple versions of shooting down the MH17 flight, first that it was “shot down by a Ukrainian fighter aircraft”, then it was “shot down by the Ukrainian Buk missile system”, and so on.

THREE PHENOMENA OF MASS CONSCIOUSNESS THAT HELP PROPAGANDA

It is unlikely that the ideologist of the Third Reich Joseph Goebbels was the pioneer of the first propaganda phenomenon, but he first formulated that: “The bigger the lie, the more it will be believed”. Post-war Soviet propagandists and present-day Russian ones actively used and use the Goebbels’ guidelines. The latter have also significantly improved them. Plus, they have in their hands a much more powerful weapon of mass destruction of consciousness than Goebbels had - they have television and the Internet to their services.

The second phenomenon of propaganda is based on the laziness of the average laymen. They are not accustomed to looking for true information, but consume what is given to them. And the television plays a major role in this, because there is no need to make any effort. Because in a beautiful wrapper of alleged news, of alleged feature programs, of alleged social-political talk shows, propaganda “feeds” these laymen with the wrong picture of the world. The rule of the “mashed herring” (this is, by the way, a term of Soviet counter-propaganda) works here when a certain message is repeated everywhere and many times in different variations and forms. And fake facts, thanks to multiple repetitions, become for the laymen their usual “reality”. Their picture of the world consists of them, politicians and officials speak about them with intelligent faces on the television and they are “analyzed” by “respectable experts”. And when it became already for the laymen “the world in which they live”, changing their beliefs becomes almost - and for many - absolutely impossible.

Because the third phenomenon switches on. The laymen do not want to consume information that does not even break their picture of the world but just minimally puts it in question. And therefore they choose only those sources of information, those media which constantly confirm their picture of the world, and reject all others which do not confirm it or even – what is more – contradict it. It is not for nothing that it took not years but decades to break in the public consciousness a completely fake picture of the world, which was painted for decades of the Soviet time by the newspaper *Pravda* and the program *Vremya*, “History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union” and “Marxist-Leninist philosophy”. But even now, in a pluralistic Ukraine, where it is possible to freely choose sources of information, there are a lot of people (mostly in the older generations) who continue to live in the imaginary Soviet world.



HOW PROPAGANDA VIOLATES AND IMITATES THE STANDARDS OF JOURNALISM

1.

BALANCE OF OPINION STANDARD

Brief essence of the standard.

Giving word to all parties to the conflict that underlies the events that became the subject of the journalistic material. A clear indication of the refusal to comment by the separate parties to the conflict. A skilled expert assessment of the arguments of the parties to the conflict.

Types of violations of the standard by propagandists

- **Complete absence of balance of opinions.** The easiest way for a propagandist is to pretend that a certain party to the conflict does not exist at all. And this same party to the conflict is not given word in the material at all without any explanations. In systematic propaganda, editorial teams have full bans on giving word to specific opposition politicians. For example, at the time of *temnyks*, major Ukrainian TV channels did not give word to the main then-rival of the government - Viktor Yushchenko. Or now, in the Russian propagandist media, no word is given to the oppositionist Nawalny.
- **Imitation of the balance of opinions with formal provision of the word to the opponent.** In the material, the word can be given to the op-

ponent's representative, but they will provide unconvincing arguments (which propagandists will carefully choose from what was said, and sometimes, completely twist the meaning of it with the help of editing). Sometimes, as answer to the representative of this "friendly" political force, in the material, the opponent will say something related to a completely different topic. Through these two simple for implementation methods, propagandists not only add "persuasiveness" to the material by imitating the balance of opinions, but also create an impression in the audience that the opponent does not even have anything to say in terms of matter.

■ **Imitation of the balance of opinions in the form of "expert assessment"**. This way, firstly, creates in the audience the illusion of pluralism of opinions, and secondly, adds "persuasiveness" to the words and deeds of the propaganda ordering party, since "experts" in the material will always comment in favor of this party's arguments. This imitation can be achieved in different ways. The experts can be quite real and comment in favor of the ordering party because they consciously support them.

The experts can be quite real but comment in favor of the authorities under pressure, for example, because of being "on the hook" of secret services, the prosecutor's office, the police or the tax authorities. Or they are experts which the ordering party manages to bribe – whether with money, offices, or some kind of preferences for their companies, etc.

Of course, when real experts comment in such a way, it is not easy to determine the moment of manipulation. In such cases, it makes sense to dig in the past, where it is possible to find interesting things. For example, what the expert says today can completely be discordant with what he or she said on the same topics earlier. Or it turns out that the analytical structure of this expert had problems with the law enforcement or the tax authorities some time ago, and then these problems were solved quietly.

Another kind of "expert assessment", which is beneficial for propagandists, is the presentation of political consultant of specific political

forces in the role of unbiased “political scientist”. In these cases, the interdependence of these “political scientists” is easily traceable in their background; it is enough just to google them.

And, finally, another common type of “expert assessment” is provided by pseudo-experts who constantly work for propagandists. This practice is rather widespread on some Ukrainian TV channels. In particular on Inter, NewsOne and channel 112, comments are given by personalities in the role of experts but their background and experience is in no way able to confirm their competence in the issues they comment. These “experts” work with propaganda media “on long distance.” These same media, first of all, the television, specially hype them into the role of “experts”. There is another sign of the unreal competence of such “experts”, except for their background. This is their anything-goes approach: the day before yesterday they commented on the conflict between anti-corruption bodies, yesterday, it was the quality of the new armament of the Ukrainian army, and today they comment on the topic of the single local church.

2. INFORMATION ACCURACY STANDARD

Brief essence of the standard.

Presentation of the facts that exist in reality. Literality of citation of subjective thoughts. Correlation of the images and the comments to them.

Types of violations of the standard by propagandists

- **Fictional facts and events.** Propagandists operate not only with real facts, but also they invent certain facts and events that did not take place for real in order to confirm certain mythologems. A classic exam-

ple is the story disseminated by the Russian propagandist media in July 2014 stating that *“Ukrainian soldiers in Slovyansk crucified a three-year-old boy in full view of his mother”*. This fictitious story was told for Russian television by an “eyewitness”. It is clear that numerous attempts by journalists from different countries to find confirmation of this story by other residents of the city did not yield any results. That does not prevent Russian propagandists from continuing to recall this story as real. It is very difficult to distinguish fictional facts promptly, because their refutation requires time. But even when these refutations appear, the majority of the audience loyal to the propagandistic media will not hear them, because here work the three phenomena of public consciousness mentioned above. That is why propagandists have one more Goebbels rule: “The thicker you grease, the more will remain.”

■ **Distorted facts, or arbitrary interpretation of facts.** This is a separate case of prior violation of the standard. But in this case, propagandists chose not a fictional story, but real facts, which they distort to some extent in order to justify a particular propaganda mythologem. This distortion is easy to notice by comparing the propaganda reports on facts with the way they are presented by high-quality media. For example, on September 28, 2018, the Russian propaganda channel “Russia-24” in support of the mythologem about *“the beginning of the religious war in connection with the process of providing autocephaly to the Ukrainian Church”* broadcasted a “news material” stating that *“in Ivano-Frankivsk region, nationalists seized a temple of the Moscow Patriarchate”*. In fact, the local authorities decided to return to the music school a room that was rented out 17 years ago to a neighboring church of the Moscow Patriarchate. Remarkably, a little later, the presenter on Ukrainian TV channel NewsOne Vyacheslav Pikhovshek used the same interpretation of events as the Russian channel.

■ **Fictional thoughts.** The propagandists may attribute words to a particular person that this person did not say, using the fact that the propagandist media will not give that person the word to refute. Or it

may be the interpretation of the words by this person with a partial or complete distortion of the content of what was said. Thus, in September 2018, Russian propagandist media followed by the pro-Russian media in Ukraine, claimed that the Speaker of the Ukrainian Parliament Andriy Parubiy “called Hitler the biggest Democrat” (which was a good confirmation of the Russian mythologem about “fascist government in Kyiv”). In fact, Parubiy mentioned Hitler as the greatest manipulator who skillfully used democratic instruments, in particular the referendum, to obtain sole dictator powers in Germany.

Another way of manipulating a person’s mind is to quote their words, taken out of context, when they present words said in certain circumstances, as said in totally different circumstances. To determine such .

- **Use of wrong images.** On television or on the Internet, propagandists can illustrate a specific mythologem with images that have nothing to do with the true circumstances of the events described. So, for example, in 2014, Russian propagandist media repeatedly illustrated the reports on the war in the Donbas with images shot before in Iraq, Afghanistan and other areas of hostilities.

- **Using the staged images.** The propagandists themselves organize certain “events” in order to illustrate their own mythologems. For example, Russian propagandists organized “mass protests” in European countries during the largest European crisis with migrants, and then they used images of these “protest” in their mass media. To create the image of the “crowd”, it is actually enough to get a group of a dozen “activists” which are paid to be involved in. But to organize really mass “demonstrations in support of the government”, dependent public sector workers are brought in. This non-wise technology is widely used in Russia, and was practiced in Ukraine during the days of Leonid Kuchma and Viktor Yanukovych. But even now, the regular formal opening ceremonies of something by the same President Petro Poroshenko or Prime Minister Volodymyr Hroysman, are also beginning to become “crowded” due to doctors, teachers and students who are forced to attend them.

■ **Using questionable sociology.** “The data of sociological surveys” on a variety of topics is a very common way of confirming the propagandist mythologems. The “sociology” which is needed by propagandists can come from different sources.

In the last two decades in Ukraine, both pro-government and opposition propaganda machines create pseudo-sociological services in the same way as they create pseudo-experts. These “agencies” have no serious history, but they have loud and convincing names (such as “All-Ukrainian Sociological Service”, “Freedom and Democracy Foundation”, “All-Ukrainian Institute of Sociology”, “Institute of Global Strategies”, etc.). It is enough to say that in Ukraine, according to the database of the resource texty.org.ua, about seven dozen of such pseudo-sociological services were created. These services give their creators the necessary results, which are then voiced by propagandist media. The untrustworthiness of such surveys is evidenced by the real background of these agencies: they are not members of authoritative sociological associations, they do not work with businesses, that is, they do not earn money by surveys for business structures, their “polls” appear once in a blue moon, often closer to the election, and almost always it is not known who their true founders and owners are.

But the situation with sociology may be worse: when the results which are needed by propagandists are provided by quite real sociological agencies. This can happen through bribery or blackmail. A classic example of the great manipulation with sociology is the history of the second round of the 2004 presidential elections in Ukraine. Then, two real Ukrainian sociological agencies with experience and reputation (Socis and Social Monitoring) falsified the results of the exit polls in favor of the candidate Viktor Yanukovich. Judging by the nervous reactions of representatives of these sociological agencies to the exposure of their manipulation, they did so under pressure from the authorities. But the fact remains, and the reputation of these agencies has been completely lost.

What concerns electoral sociology, the following should be kept in mind. In totally or partially totalitarian and dictatorial states, even

well-conducted sociological surveys give uncertain results, because people surveyed by sociologists are often afraid to frankly express their true thoughts and preferences that are contrary to the official course. Hence, unrealistic (from the point of view of sociology as a science) almost 100-percent support of the dictator or the wars he unleashed, as is the case in the same Russia in the polls of the VTsIOM [Russian Public Opinion Research Center], the Public Opinion Foundation or the Levada Center. The high level of support for the current government can be explained by the high level of fear in society.

However, propagandists can also manipulate the real results of surveys. Therefore, according to the standards of journalism, when publishing sociological data, it is always necessary to indicate not only the surveying agency, but also the ordering party of the research (it is one thing, if it was the party of power, the other, if it was an opposition party, and a different one, if it was a public organization, etc.).

Propagandists can manipulate the data of sociologists, replacing the wording of the question. It is quite common practice in Ukraine to order sociologists to ask the following questions: “Who, in your opinion, will become the next president of the state?”, and the results of this poll are presented as answers to the classic electoral question: “For whom would you vote if the elections were held the next Sunday?” Of course, in case of such a manipulation, the candidate of the ruling party or a popular populist, “receive” considerably more votes, because, answering the first question, people predict the victory of such a candidate through falsifications, popularity, etc., although they themselves may actually vote for another candidate. In order to see this manipulation, one should look at the official report of sociologists, which they certainly publish on their own website on the Internet.

3. INFORMATION RELIABILITY STANDARD

Brief essence of the standard.

Every fact in journalistic material must be checked in competent sources. The sources of each fact must be clearly indicated. The authors of any subjective thought provided in the material should also be clearly identified.

Types of violations of the standard by propagandists

Note: *in most of the post-Soviet countries, journalism has inherited from the Soviet journalism a rather lighthearted attitude to professional standards. In particular, this also applies to certain lack of commitment towards full references to sources of information, the approximation, the blurriness of these references, the desire for unjustified generalizations, and so on. Therefore, in itself the violations of the standard of reliability, which will be discussed further, may occur in those materials that have nothing to do with propaganda. The presence of such violations in the material may indicate probable propaganda only in combination with violations of other important standards: accuracy, balance of opinions and the standard of separation of facts from opinions (which we are going to discuss later).*

■ **References to sources on the Internet** (and it does not matter whether we talk about pages in social networks, Internet media or pages of official organizations). Such references in real journalism are intrinsically unreliable in the absence of any confirmation from trusted sources as the Internet is too dynamic and too vulnerable. In any segment of the Internet, there is a high probability of inaccurate information emerging due to technical failures and human errors, or due to targeted hacking attacks. The latter circumstance is extremely aggravated by the hybrid war that Russia leads around the world, and the information component of its war against Ukraine is crucial.

A striking example occurred on May 26, 2014, the day after the vote on the extraordinary elections of the President of Ukraine. The Russian propagandist “First Channel” has shown in the news broadcast a fake screenshot of the Ukrainian Central Election Commission’s website with the results of the still ongoing counting of votes. From that screenshot, you could see that the candidate Dmytro Yarosh from the “Right sector” was leading explicitly. In fact, the Security Service of Ukraine managed to prevent a hacker attack on the website of the Central Election Commission, and propagandists of the First Channel probably did not receive from the Federal Security Service the order to cancel the material and broadcasted this fake. An open question remains: and if the Security Service of Ukraine could not prevent the hacker attack? Then this fake almost surely would have been shown by dozens of television broadcasts, including Ukrainian ones!

■ **Internet as a technology for “stovepiping”.** For the “stovepiping” of false facts and thoughts, the propaganda machine uses a simple technique: one-time or “long-playing” pseudo-media are created on the Internet. From these, using the copy and paste method, fake information goes hell for leather spreading over real Internet media, the editorial teams of which do not have too high requirements for information verification (and this, unfortunately, is the majority of them). From there, these fictional facts go to propagandist media with references to more authoritative sources.

Although sometimes propagandists do not even wait for reposts. So, for example, in June 2016 a series of materials was published in Russian propagandist media about *“Ukrainian doctor proudly telling how he disposed of wounded militias on a surgical table”*. At the same time, the reference to the source of information was as follows: *“Ukrainian television”*. In fact, the *“Ukrainian television”* was a newly created website *ukrlife.tv*, where at that time there was only one looped video with the “doctor”, moreover, with the caption *“live broadcast”*.

■ **References to blurred sources of information about facts.** In high-quality media, the journalist receives information from a particular person and, according to the reliability standard, submitting this information, should refer to this particular person with a brief explanation of the person’s competence. The references of such kind, as *“our sources in the government”*, *“they say in the mayor’s office”*, *“the police do not report”*, etc., are incorrect and untruthful (which automatically violates the standard of information accuracy, as the information told by one particular person to the journalist is for some reason presented using plural form). In propagandist materials, such references disguise the complete lack of sources when publishing false information, but they also seems to add credibility to what the propagandists said.

■ **Links to completely anonymous, in no way defined sources.** This is even a higher level of unreliability, because it is not possible to understand from these references at all who the people talking are and how these sources are related to this information. On Russian propagandist channels, pseudo-references of the following type are very popular: *“some sources report”*, *“as reported by different sources”*, *“was reported in the media”*, *“according to sources familiar with the situation in the Verkhovna Rada”*, etc. This experience is actively copied by Ukrainian propagandist resources.

■ **Generalized reference to undefined groups of people.** These are pseudo-references of such a kind as *“people say”*, *“many are confident”*,

“*commonly known*”, etc. These pseudo-references indicate that the propagandist has no real source of information. Moreover, any generalization is not true by definition.

■ **Presentation of facts without any reference to their source.** This can only testify that these facts are invented by propagandists.

■ **Presentation of a subjective opinion with a generalized reference to its authorship.** This is even a more gross violation of the standard than the presentation of facts without correct references to the source. A subjective opinion is inseparable from the subject who expresses it. Therefore, references that imitate the credibility of the authors of opinions without naming them are completely incorrect. They look as follows: “*experts believe*”, “*analysts say*”, “*experts are confident*”, etc. Hereby in most cases, the opinions of the propagandists themselves are expressed.

■ **Complete generalization of subjective opinion to large groups of people.** This technique is actively used by propaganda in order to impose an opinion on the “correctness” of a certain message on the audience, because (according to the Soviet habit) “the majority cannot be mistaken” (“*the entire Soviet people in a single impulse are warmly supporting the peaceful course of the Communist Party and the Soviet government and angrily condemn the malicious intrigues of world imperialism*”). Incorrect and untruthful are generalized pseudo-references of propagandists of the following type: “*The majority of the inhabitants of the occupied territories support*”, “*almost all Ukrainians are concerned*”, “*residents of Kyiv believe*”, “*residents of Odesa hope*”, etc. It is clear that pseudo-references of this kind, which do not rely on solid data of real sociology, are at the same time a violation of the information accuracy standard (because it is not a fact whether the “majority” actually support something, or it is the “minority”, and definitely it is not a fact that “all” do). The standard of balance of opinions is violated here too, because in these cases the audience does not hear those who think differently than propagandists.

4. STANDARD OF SEPARATION OF FACTS FROM THOUGHTS

Brief essence of the standard.

In journalistic material, it should always be clear where the facts and where the subjective opinions of people are presented. Any opinions in the material must be clearly separated from the facts and from other opinions. In news, the journalist does not have to provide his own opinions at all (evaluations, conclusions, generalizations, etc.). In publicism (authorial programs, articles, blogs), the journalist must clearly mark each own opinion as a personal one.

Types of violations of the standard by propagandists

- **Subjective opinions of the author or the central figure of the material are presented as a fact.** This is well illustrated by the already mentioned story with the “crucified boy”, because an invention of a pseudo-eyewitness was presented as a fact. Often, unproved accusations can be presented as facts (“*he is a corrupt official and a bribe taker*”, “*she stole budget money*”, “*they are agents of the Department of State*”, etc.).
- **Subjective opinions of the author of the material not supported by facts.** A fairly common technique is when a propagandist makes absolutely unfounded conclusions.
- **Subjective opinions of the author of the material based on false facts.** This violation works together with the violation of the accuracy of information standard, which has already been discussed. Often in this scheme, first comes the opinion, conclusion or evaluation needed by the propagandist, and already for it, a fact is invented and put into circulation.

- **Subjective opinions of the author of the material built on a tendentious (incomplete) selection of facts.**

The selective presentation of facts that are convenient for the propagandist's "conclusion", and the dissembling of facts that contradict this "conclusion" are at the same time also a violation of the standard of information completeness (which will be discussed below).

- **Subjective evaluations that give beneficial to the propagandist emotional coloration** to certain facts, ideas, individuals or groups. For this, epithets with a clearly defined positive or negative connotation are used. Therefore, in the Russian propaganda, along with the label "*Donbas rebels*" often stands the identification "*heroic*", and next to the label "*Kyivan junta*", on the contrary, stands the identification "*cowardly*".

- **Subjective assessments that substitute facts.** It happens when the propagandists say that "*the authorities are doing a lot*", instead of saying how much exactly have they done.

- **Judgmental vocabulary which plays the role of some kind of terminology and labels.**

In propaganda materials, there are clear markers of "bad" and "good". In the current hybrid war against Russia, propagandists use a large number of such words: "*Banderites*", "*Ukrainian fascists*", "*punishers*" on the one hand and "*rebels*", "*residents of young republics*", "*militias*" on the other hand.

- **Judgmental audio noise.**

This may be, for example, a sarcastic music combined with the image of those who are the target of the propagandist. In propagandistic talk shows on television and on the radio, there is a specially organized noise of approval and applause when a "friend" says something "right" and, conversely, an outraged noise and whistling when a "foe" says something "wrong". This is done so that the audience understands everything "correctly".

5. INFORMATION COMPLETENESS STANDARD

Brief essence of the standard.

All basic facts and thoughts on the topic of the material must be presented. In addition, there must be all the necessary backgrounds (background and explanatory information) and contexts without which the topic will not be completely understandable to the audience.

Types of violations of the standard by propagandists

- **Selective presentation of facts to the topic of the material.** In propagandist materials, almost all the facts in any topic are not provided in full. The propagandists carefully select from the real facts only those which confirm the picture of the world that is represented by propaganda. For example, in May 2010, all pro-government Ukrainian media concealed the incident with a falling wreath and President Viktor Yanukovich during laying wreaths along with Medvedev in front of the Unknown Soldier's monument in Kyiv.
- **Lack of important backgrounds to understand the topic.** The most widespread here is the lack of mentioning of what the politician or official said or did before about the topic which is important today. In fact, such backgrounds often are completely discordant with today's statements and actions. The audience has mainly «short memory» and to remind it of things the politicians would like to forget is exactly one of the most important tasks of high-quality journalism. In propaganda, however, any backgrounds, negative for the ordering party, of course, are never mentioned.
- **Incomplete presentation of sociological data.** Propagandists can

present quite reliable results of sociology, but from these results they will only select figures beneficial for them, while hushing up other significant positions. So, in electoral surveys propagandists can say about the increase in the rating of a certain candidate, while concealing that the opponent's rating is even higher. Such “wonders of sociology” were shown by major TV channels in late 2003 on the threshold of the presidential election, where the main candidates were Viktor Yushchenko and Viktor Yanukovych. Sometimes concealing the statistical error declared by the sociologists will distort the real picture, as, for example, it may cast doubt on the “unconditional” leadership of a particular candidate when the difference in the results is within this error. Well, in the end, it would be correct to remind the audience that the results of sociological surveys are only predictions of true will, because they can be influenced by various additional factors, for example, by the same fear of the authorities and their special services, by the desire to be in mainstream of opinions, etc.

6. STANDARD FOR THE INFORMATION COMPREHENSIBILITY

Brief essence of the standard.

The information should be presented in a simple and comprehensible language for a wide audience. All complex concepts should be explained by backgrounds or experts. The images (both photos and videos) should be either clear or explained by voice-over commentary (on television, on the Internet) or by a caption (on the Internet).

Types of violations of the standard by propagandists

- **Using propagandist clichés instead of real information.** The propagandist language always uses a large number of fixed expression,

frequent repetitions of which works with the consciousness of people at the level of neuro-linguistic programming. Frequent repetition of these expressions constantly “confirms the correctness” of propagandist messages, adding to them “persuasiveness” for a non-critical viewer / listener / reader. Examples of such clichés from current Russian propaganda: “*getting up from the knees*”, “*spiritual bonds*”, “*values of the Russian world*”, etc. These clichés are more for domestic Russian consumption. But there are those that play a significant role in the hybrid war and are duplicated not only by Russian propagandist media, but also by pro-Russian mass media and pro-Russian politicians in Ukraine: “*civil war in the east*”, “*compromise is the foundation of peace*,” etc.

■ **Intentional complication to provide “additional persuasiveness”.** Due to this, propaganda can explain to the laymen the “correctness” of certain actions and opinions of the government. The mechanism of action of this violation of the standard is as follows: with help of this complication, the audience is compelled by the idea that “you see how difficult it is, you do not get a complete understanding of it, but the president and the government are unlike you and know what they are doing and are doing it for your sake.” Thus in the Soviet Union, the newscast *Vremya* told about how many centners of wheat per hectare were harvested by farmers in the Kuban, in the Kirovohrad region or in the Central Non-Chernozem Region. This is despite the fact that most of the audience of the *Vremya* was unlikely to know what a centner was, what a hectare was and why there are more of these centners per hectare in the Kuban or in the Kirovohrad region than, for example, in the Arkhangelsk region of Russia or in Karelia (which belonged to that same “Central Non-Chernozem Region”).

7

THE STANDARD OF PROMPTNESS

Brief essence of the standard.

Maximally possible reduction of time between the event and the reporting about it.

**Types of violations of the standard
by propagandists**

- **Complete concealing of facts, opinions and events which are inconvenient for propagandists.** For propaganda purposes, the standard of the prompt delivery of information is violated almost always by the absolute concealing of information which is inconvenient for propagandists. In editorial boards of propagandist media, there is always a written or unwritten prohibition on mentioning certain types of events, quoting particular individuals. There are always clearly highlighted labels in propagandist editorial boards: “we talk about this”, “we do not talk about this”. Therefore, certain events and certain personalities are not present in the information picture of every day, which is created by the propagandist media. In most cases, self-censorship of the editorial staff is enough for this. For separate events beyond the usual list of unwritten prohibitions, decisions are made by experienced censors – information service managers, or propagandist centers distribute special guidelines with prohibitions on covering important events which are not desired by the propagandists.
- **Publishing information with intentional delay.** Theoretically, it is also possible that certain information published with a deliberate delay may be perceived by the audience somehow differently than if it had been reported on time. It is due to a serious change in some contexts. It should not be forgotten that propaganda is becoming more inventive.

AFTERWORD

“*All propaganda is lies, even when one is telling the truth.*” This opinion by the author of *1984*, perhaps the most frightening dystopia novel, was made to the epigraph because Orwell knew very well what he was talking about. During the Second World War, he himself was forced to engage in propaganda on the BBC radio. And even though it was anti-Nazi propaganda which was made with an unquestionably good goal, George Orwell himself did not treat counter-propaganda much better than propaganda. And eventually, he wrote his novel in which the perhaps most important storyline was ruthless state propaganda. It transformed the life of the characters of the novel into hell.

In a normal democratic society, people do not need propaganda; they need genuine truthful information about what is happening in the world around them.

And a person who lives in a wrong world imposed by propaganda is forced to make false decisions. Starting with the everyday things – what to buy, how to save money, from what to protect yourself and your children – to the fundamental ones – for who to vote in elections, to lash out at your neighbors from national minorities or to protect them from pogroms, to go to anti-war rallies or go as “volunteer” to the armed forces to unjust war against neighboring countries and nations.

It is very difficult to distinguish propaganda from genuine information, from high-quality journalism, but one needs to learn how to do this; to understand which world we live in; and to make informed decisions, not imposed by propaganda. So that in the end, we do not have to hear from all mass media Orwell’s:

«*War is Peace.
Freedom is Slavery.
Ignorance is Strength.*»

This is what definitely no one of us needs!





POPULAR SCIENCE EDITION

Ihor Kulas

edited by
Nataliya Lyhachova and Otar Dovzhenko

**HOW TO RECOGNIZE PROPAGANDA
IN THE MEDIA**

Literary editor — Katrina Rozkladay

Design and layout: Yana Dobryanska

Passed for printing: 04.12.2018

Number of copies

NGO Detector Media
Kyiv — 2018