

**Committee:** Special Political and Decolonization Committee

**Issue:** Combating political propaganda

**Student Officer:** William Lagkadas

**Position:** Co-Chair

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## PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is William Lagkadas and I am a student at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade at Moraitis School. This will be my first time chairing so it will be an educative and interesting experience for all of us. I sincerely hope that I will be a helpful and productive chair in this MUN conference. Being a person with a keen interest in politics, the topic of political propaganda seemed like a clear choice for me, and I hope you enjoy it as much as I do. As a former delegate myself, I would like to advise you to conduct research beyond this study guide, this can be in the form of researching terms and events for the topic itself or even contacting me regarding your resolution, (goulielmos.lang@gmail.com). I am always available to assist you, if you do not understand a specific aspect of the topic, as helping you in advance will make the committee ultimately better.

I would like to remind you that you should be as prepared as possible before the conference. To know in depth your delegation's policy is very important. This Study Guide, as aforementioned, should only be a stepping stone for further research, it will provide you with basic information in order to familiarize you with the topic, but more effort and research is needed, so as to have an effective resolution. I hope that this topic will create intense and productive debating sessions.

I am looking forward to seeing you in April.

Sincerely,

William Lagkadas

## TOPIC INTRODUCTION

We have witnessed how the United States government attempted to justify its military operation in Iraq with the possibility of Iraq developing nuclear weapons. This campaign, with the aim of capturing public support, is a prime example of modern propaganda, and it swayed the public opinion to the extent of supporting the war.

When people come across the term propaganda, they imagine it as a product of a by-gone era, but political propaganda has never ceased to exist. It is an instrument that is designed to influence, subvert and undermine people's thoughts, opinions and demands respectively. Only from an outside perspective, can propaganda be easily spotted. Political propaganda has been used throughout history and has taken multiple forms, as technology and society evolves, propaganda also "evolved" in order to remain effective. Political propaganda in its core has not really altered and continues to portray a twisted version of reality, trying to eliminate differing opinions and create a society where its individual parts espouse the same beliefs. It has to be noted that propaganda is mostly found in authoritarian states where many human rights are being ignored and or violated.

Propaganda is such an important issue these days due to its current effectiveness, with organizations and states being able to spread information at a moment's notice and propaganda being spread fast and effectively. Recent crises have given renewed strength to propaganda campaigns, such as the 2008 financial crisis and the ongoing refugee crisis, and the instability that has been created is attempted to be quelled with large scale propaganda campaigns and or taken advantage of by other actors such as hacker groups independent or not. For example, 90% of U.S. media is controlled by six companies (GE, News-corp, Disney, Viacom, Time Warner, and CBS), meaning we are increasingly becoming more vulnerable to propaganda, this shift has been recorded in the last 40 years, that is why the issue of propaganda is so important today.

All in all, the democratic process and the right to freedom of information are at stake, with foreign powers influencing domestic elections and the consumer market itself shaped by corporate propaganda campaigns the structure of modern day society is very much malleable and susceptible to propaganda.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Political Propaganda

Information which is false or which emphasizes just one part of a situation, used by a government or political group to make people agree with them.<sup>1</sup>

### Black Propaganda

Black propaganda is false information and material that purports to be from a source on one side of a conflict but is actually from the opposing side. It is typically used to vilify, embarrass, or misrepresent the enemy.<sup>2</sup>

### White Propaganda

The term white propaganda refers to propaganda which does not hide its origin or nature.<sup>3</sup>

### Authoritarian regime

Favoring or enforcing strict obedience to authority and or the government at the expense of personal freedom.<sup>4</sup>

### Fascism

A political philosophy, movement, or regime that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> PROPAGANDA Dictionary, PROPAGANDA | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary  
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<sup>4</sup> authoritarian regime, TheFreeDictionary.com  
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<sup>5</sup> Definition of FASCISM, Merriam-webster.com  
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## **Nazism**

National Socialism, more commonly known as Nazism, is the ideology and practices associated with the Nazi Party – officially the National Socialist German Workers' Party – in Nazi Germany, and of other far-right groups with similar aims.<sup>6</sup>

## **Fake news**

Fake news is a type of yellow journalism or propaganda that consists of deliberate disinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional print and broadcast news media or online social media.<sup>7</sup>

## **Freedom of expression**

Freedom of expression is the right of every individual to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.<sup>8</sup>

## **Freedom of thought**

Freedom of thought is the freedom of an individual to hold or consider a fact, viewpoint, or thought, independent of others' viewpoints.<sup>9</sup>

## **Cult of personality**

A situation in which a public figure (such as a political leader) is deliberately presented to the people of a country as a great person who should be admired and loved.<sup>10</sup>

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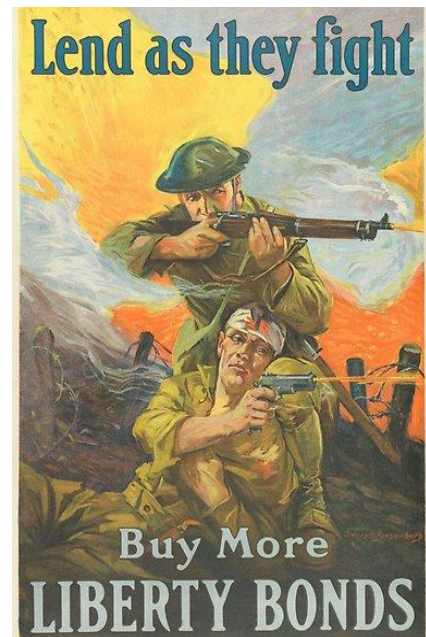
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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Understanding and knowing the history of political propaganda can help to assess the current situation and find possible solutions to this problem under the current circumstances. Propaganda has been used mostly in cases where understandably the ruling regime/government was under threat of losing power. Losing stability and therefore grip on power mostly occurs during times of war, or if the ruling government ignores/violates human rights. Meaning authoritarian governments are more likely to use and spread messages of propaganda. Therefore, analyzing the structure and properties of authoritarian governments in the past can be imperative in recognizing and combating new forms of propaganda.



*# 1 British civilian propaganda poster*

### Wartime propaganda in World War 1

In the outbreak of World War 1, both the Entente (an alliance between the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Italy, Japan) and other secondary powers, mainly the United Kingdom and the Central Powers (an alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottomans), and mainly Germany, employed mass scale forms of propaganda. For the first time, governments used propaganda on an “industrial” scale, using new technologies such as the film, along with traditional



*# 2 German volunteer mobilization poster*

mediums such as the poster. The purpose, as always, was to showcase the superiority of each respective side and show the inferiority of the other. Both sides created special departments of government with the task of issuing and spreading propaganda. Initially, the theme of domestic propaganda mainly centered around patriotism, and in the case of the Germans the mythical “superiority” of their people. But as the war dragged on, both sides used more and more extreme forms of propaganda demonizing the other side, a notable example of British propaganda is the supposed “rape of Belgium” by German troops. During the war, propaganda was not only domestic, in many instances, international propaganda was also used. A prime example is wartime propaganda from the United Kingdom within the United States,

with the aim of swaying public opinion in favor of the Entente and against the Central Powers. This effort succeeded in convincing a great number of U.S. citizens that the USA should join the war on the side of the Entente.

### **Propaganda during the Russian civil war**

During the Russian civil war (1917-1922), a different kind of propaganda arose, one that specifically targeted political views and race. The White army accused the Bolsheviks of trying to establish a “Jew world order”, claiming that the Bolshevik party was truly serving the interests of the Jewish community. This anti-Semitic propaganda tried to prevent the West from recognizing the Soviet Union and discredit communism in general. Red army propaganda embraced the idea of agitprop, meaning agitation and propaganda. Agitation more specifically being the creation of political unrest and propaganda meaning spreading of communist thought.



*# 3 The red army advancing in the Soviet Civil War*

### **Propaganda in the Soviet Union post WW1**

Propaganda in the Soviet Union was not as extensive as in other authoritarian states, mainly focusing on creating a cult of personality around Stalin. Essentially, propaganda took the form of education, trying to spread the teachings of Marxism. The only form of serious propaganda, as aforementioned, had the purpose of idealizing Stalin’s rule as the father of the Nation, and it generally worked, despite the mass violation of human rights, the Soviet people were mostly content with his rule.

### **Propaganda in Nazi Germany**

After Germany's defeat in World War 1(1918), the Versailles treaty (1919) took a heavy toll on the German state both in terms of morale and economics. Far-right parties such as the German People's Party (DNVP) and later the National Socialist German Worker's Party (NSDAP) capitalized on this, prompting Germans to hate the Western powers that humiliated Germany as well as creating feelings of dissent for the Jewish populace of Germany. After the dissolution of the Weimar Republic and the creation of the Third Reich (Nazi Germany), the ministry of propaganda was created with Joseph Goebbels at its head, he famously stated, "The best propaganda is that which, as it were, works invisibly, penetrates the whole of life without the public having any knowledge of the propagandistic initiative". Nazi Germany employed tactics from the British, Russians and Americans and with the state's full support Joseph Goebbels used mediums such as pamphlets, newspapers, radio, television, and film. National propaganda targeted Jews, Communists, homosexuals and even modern art. It created the vision of a greater Germany, uniting all its "lost" brethren by conquering lands in Czechoslovakia, France, Poland, Austria, and Russia. Simultaneously it tried to create the image that Germans were a superior race, the so-called "Aryan" race that had the task of spreading civilization all across the world.

### **Propaganda during the Cold War (1947-1991)**

During the Cold War tensions were high and after Khrushchev's liberalization attempts, it was no longer possible for the Soviet Bloc to remain separate from the rest of the world. Both sides used white forms of propaganda to "showcase" the prosperity on their side, whilst "independent" media provided gray forms of propaganda. The practice of demonizing the other side continued in the Soviet Union up until the glasnost era, whilst in the U.S. state-run propaganda never really ceased, only subsided. New state-run offices of propaganda were created in multiple countries of the Western block, specifically with the task of halting the spread of communism, whilst in the Soviet bloc propaganda was mostly meant to solidify the Soviets control over the satellite countries.



*# 4 U.S. cold war anti-communist propaganda*



*# 5 Soviet cold war propaganda around Lenin's cult of personality*

### 21st Century propaganda

In the 21st century, most propaganda is in the form of fake news, meaning the spread of false information and hoaxes, through the internet and social media (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram). The use of such mediums has greatly expanded their reach and effect to the whole world. This new form of propaganda as any propaganda has an intention of manipulating people's views, it uses social networks as a platform and bots as means of spreading the information. These new technologies provide access to information all throughout the world and at an extreme speed, the origin of the source remains oblivious to most users and the algorithms used by internet platforms encourage material that trends. If a specific organization wants for example to spread a specific message, all they have to do is to enlist a number of bots to re-post and spread the message and after that, the social network platform continues to promote that content because of its "popularity" with users. This process is really simple due to the nature of the internet and limited regulations.

Very recent examples include the pro-Brexit campaign within the United Kingdom in 2016. The pro-Brexit campaign spread misinformation about financial arrangements between the European Union and the United Kingdom, it also falsely announced that Turkey was joining the European Union. More specifically the pro-Brexit campaign announced that 350 million pounds that are supposedly sent to the European Union as a membership fee could be allocated on the National Health Service (NHS). It is also important to clarify that numerous advocates for Brexit such as Boris Johnson falsely announced that Turkey was in the process of joining the European Union.



Another example is the involvement of fake news in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections, the term fake news became viral in 2016. President-elect Donald Trump used the term in numerous instances to condemn media outlets that criticized him. The term fake news was also a large component in the discussion on whether the Russian Federation had interfered in the election by spreading fake news. On the other side of the fence, president-elect Donald Trump accused media outlets such as CNN to be promoting and spreading fake news about him and intentionally undermining his campaign.

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

### People's Republic of China

The Communist Party of China has been using propaganda to sway public opinion in favor of its policies and manage domestic crises since its inception. This includes censorship of numerous media outlets and cultivation of views favourable to the government. The first office of propaganda was established in 1983, but propaganda was used earlier during the civil war period and the Cultural Revolution under Mao's regime. Techniques that were used by the CCP include incarceration for re-education, control of the system of education and the media, ideological monitors, and the creation of role models and the dream of a communist utopia. In recent years the PRC has undertaken the task of altering the opinions of foreigners on the PRC by creating western style news outlets and reporting positive events while censoring violations of human rights and disasters, like the 2008 Tibetan unrest.

### Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The DPRK employs numerous tactics of propaganda, namely banning all forms of foreign media and digital content. It also uses its system of education to indoctrinate children into the regime's beliefs and its Juche (self-reliance) philosophy. Yearly celebrations honour Kim Jong Un's father and grandfather. In the DPRK, a cult of personality has been created around the Kim family, achieved through posters, art, music, film and pamphlets along with the state-controlled television. In addition, the DPRK also employs black propaganda, accusing South Korea, Japan and the US of trying to enslave North Korea and its people.



*# 6 DPRK official flag*

### United States of America

In the U.S. propaganda has been used to sway public opinion on matters of drug consumption and the war in Iraq in the domestic sector. Namely the Drug-Free Media Campaign Act of 1998 was used to

limit drug consumption and people's views on drug abuse. In 2002 the department of defense launched an information operation to spread and convince people on the administration's policies regarding Iraq and the future Iraq war. The U.S. also tried to influence international audiences in the form of Muslim communities outside its borders through the campaign CAMU (Council of American Muslims of Understanding). On the 22 of May 2008, the House of Representatives banned domestic propaganda which up to now has been enacted. Most recently, in the 2016 presidential election between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, the term was used by both campaigns to condemn the other. In the case of the Trump campaign, it was used to dismiss criticism from media outlets that did NOT support Donald Trump's campaign, while in the case of Hillary Clinton's campaign, it was mostly used post-election to delegitimize the election of Donald Trump, because of the possible involvement of the Russian government in the election process.

### Russian Federation

The Russian Federation has mostly tried to establish propaganda outlets in foreign countries, one of those outlets is Russia Today (RT). RT is a Russian international media news outlet funded by the Russian government, it provides news in English, Spanish and Arabic having stations all throughout the



# 7 RT official logo

world, this was a form of soft diplomacy trying to improve Russia's image in the eyes of Westerners. It operates an international news television network broadcasting documentaries, debates and news, trying to promote the "Russian Viewpoint", it also has international internet websites operating under different languages. It has bases in the United States, United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, France and other regional networks.

The only major form of domestic propaganda is the cult of personality created around Vladimir Putin, called Putinism. This cult of personality focuses on Putin's strong personality and leadership skills and achievements, it was created by both the government itself and "independent" reporters. In Russia, there is also an important issue regarding journalism, meaning the censorship and death of many journalists. The national government control all the television networks, 2 major newspapers, 3 out of 5 local newspapers and 2 radio stations.

### Egypt

After Mohammad Morsi was overthrown in a military lead coup in 2013, the Egyptian state intervened largely in all outlets of media and journalism. Many media sources that condemned the regime were banned, fined or persecuted. At the same

time, the Egyptian state rewarded loyalist journalists with multiple rewards mostly financial. Thus, many journalists dissented to the side of the state praising the regime and its practices. Any reports on casualties of wars and other violations of human rights would be silenced.

### Israel

The state of Israel in its efforts to promote its agenda and policies has been trying to counter the efforts of other actors to smear the state’s legitimacy through social media platforms. The public image policy employed by the state was named “Hasbara”, it initially urged private individuals (young people, students, military personnel) to spread positive messages about Israel on internet platforms customizable by the users such as Wikipedia and YouTube. After that efforts became more centralized, establishing the Israel Citizens Information Council (ICIC), rewarding journalists for positive messages about Israel in foreign countries, these rewards were in the form of lunches, free trips, meeting with congressmen and monetary rewards for election campaigns.

### TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
1914-1918	With the First world war propaganda creation and distribution became a systemized process.
13 <sup>th</sup> of May 1933	The Third Reich establishes its ministry of propaganda with Joseph Goebbels at its head.
September 1933	The League of Nations sign a treaty prohibiting the distribution of propaganda within their respective borders.
3 <sup>rd</sup> of November 1947	The United Nations sign a resolution (Draft Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) with the aim of limiting propaganda that could be used to incite conflict.
1962	The draft Covenant On Civil And Political Rights defended and reaffirmed the right to information and speech, only justifying propaganda during times of war.
1972	UNESCO passed a resolution championed by the USSR against the use of propaganda in support of war, racialism and apartheid.
1980	The Council of Europe passed a resolution through the European Parliament, in order to combat resurgent fascist sympathies and fascist propoganda.
1985-1991	During the time Gorbachev was the secretary general of the Soviet Union he implemented a policy of liberalization known as Perestroika, allowing foreign media sources within the Soviet Union and more freedoms.

1990-1991	During the Gulf War, the United States spread messages against Iraqi forces, such as falsely accusing Iraqi forces of killing 100 babies. This was trying to increase public support.
2016	The referendum held within the United Kingdom in 2016 regarding Brexit created a lot of controversy around the pro-Brexit campaign and its use of “Fake News”.
2016	The United States Presidential Elections were also accused of being manipulated by foreign propaganda and fake news. Donald Trump accused liberal media outlets such as “CNN” and the “New York Times” of purposefully trying to undermine his campaign.

## RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

### The Draft Convention on Freedom of Information

This convention had the task of studying measures for counteracting the persistent spread of demonstrably false or tendentious reports which confuse the peoples of the world, aggravate relations between nations, or otherwise interfere with the growth of international understanding, peace, and security. It was proposed by the Interim committee in the second session of the General assembly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1947.

### Draft Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

This dealt mainly with freedom of information and expression. The covenant commits its parties in the protection and assurance of the aforementioned human rights. More specifically article 19 and 20 refer to freedom of expression and being exempt of hatred.

### Declaration on Fundamental Principles Concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to countering Racism, Apartheid and Incitement to War

This Declaration clarifies that if countries believe that prejudicial and or false views are spread against their interest, they have the right to publicize their own view. It also clarifies that mass media ought to ease tensions between the peoples of the world and not the contrary. Article VIII more specifically condemns the spread of propaganda, because it supports the spread of objective truths and the flow of information.

**Measures to be taken against propaganda and the inciters of a new war (A/RES/2/110)**

This resolution mainly urges states to ban propaganda that disturbs peace both in a national and international level. It encourages states to commit to spreading peace by supporting views friendly to other nations so as to avoid conflict that could lead to war. The specific clauses are:

1. Condemns all forms of propaganda, in whatsoever country conducted, which is either designed or likely to provoke or encourage any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression;
2. Requests the Government of each Member to take appropriate steps within its constitutional limits.

**EU strategic communication to counteract anti-EU propaganda by third parties (P8\_TA (2016) 0441)**

This resolution was mainly focused on combating propaganda instigated by the Russian government through media outlets within the European Union. It encourages countries to counter cyber-attacks and to limit the effect of Russian state media outlets, while encouraging the support of independent Russian media outlets within the borders of the European Union.

**PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE**

It must be noted that propaganda is quite hard to detect on a mass-scale, terrorist organizations and states have used social media platforms to spread their message. The European Union has made numerous attempts to detect and minimize radicalization efforts while respecting the right to freedom of information and speech. The E.U. has urged countries to step up counter-propaganda efforts and has signed treaties such as the “EU strategic communication to counteract anti-EU propaganda by third parties”. The European Union/Community has been passing resolutions against propaganda since its inception, urging member states to ban propaganda which incites racial, military, political and social tension.

Social media platforms have also made an effort in the effort against propaganda, Facebook and Twitter, for instance, removed numerous propaganda pages from their platform, they were mostly pages against people in the United Kingdom, United States and the Middle East. More specifically, accounts linked with Russian hackers that had interfered within Democratic National Committee servers were suspended from using platforms relating with Facebook.

Amnesty International has also made attempts towards combating propaganda and related violations of human rights by promoting and spreading counter-propaganda campaigns. Notable examples include the Amnesty International campaign against the anti-Homosexual campaigns and laws within the Russian Federation.

Independent organizations such as PolitiFact have also made contributions to the fight against propaganda and political falsehoods. PolitiFact is a non-profit project enlisting numerous independent journalists with the aim of evaluation US politician's remarks and statements. PolitiFact has been accused by both sides of the political spectrum, but it certainly has helped a lot of people in fact-checking their politician's statements, reducing the effect of political propaganda.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Since propaganda is a tool for authoritarian regimes to stay in power, it would not be wise on their part to abandon a tool that supports their reign. Only pressure from the outside world, be it through everyday counterpropaganda, deals within the international community, and mediums such as the Internet, can address the issue.

New ways of communication for citizens and civil discourse are possible and effective solutions. Each state can provide internet or physical platforms for different individuals and key-note speakers to deliver a speech, raising their concerns and opinions. Establishing communication between the people and the government is also very important so that the government can see and tackle possible misunderstandings. Questionnaires and polls are very effective tools in establishing an understanding of the perception of the general public. These measures could be either funded from the government itself or multinational organizations such as the European Union.

Protection of journalists is also imperative in the fight against propaganda. Journalists seeking asylum from regimes persecuting them without justification could help uncover facts being suppressed by the aforementioned governments. In the fight for polyphony, smaller news outlets must be protected, subsidizing them under the condition of being impartial in the way and content of the news they provide. Establishing a minimum cap for the time and programs a single news company can broadcast can hinder the monopoly of companies, independent or backed by foreign countries, on the provision of information. Thorough corruption checks and the establishment of corruption indexes for journalists and news, companies alike paired with punishments, such as stripping journalist licenses and

finer, could minimize the spread of misinformation. All these measures could be enforced by single states or multinational organizations.

Education is also always a great way to combat propaganda. Journalism ethics courses and media literacy courses could be very effective and they can be provided during university courses for people seeking to become journalists or even during their career. By familiarizing citizens with propaganda techniques, propaganda can be seriously limited in its effects. These courses could be incorporated to the current educational curriculum. Raising awareness for the issue and involving the public in the effort against propaganda employed by foreign countries and domestic entities can lead to greater results. This can be done using conferences with free attendance, special messages distributed through internet banner ads or on national television networks and pamphlets. States themselves or independent non-profit organizations can be good candidates for providing the aforementioned educational material.

New technologies can also be used to counter propaganda if paired with already established national institutions such as universities, the press and ministries. These technologies could be used to find efficient ways to track and check propaganda techniques, internet trolls, supposed "facts" and reveal them. These fact checks can provide additional information further weakening the grip of political fanaticism and propaganda on ultimate voters. BBC reality check and PolitiFact are good examples of established fact checking institutions.

Ultimately if state intervention is necessary, sanctions and fines could be an effective way of countering propaganda outlets from spreading. The effort has to be decisive and entities within multinational organizations must cooperate in combating both foreign and domestic propaganda. If states prove that foreign countries have intervened in national information agencies, have tampered with democratic processes, or are silencing the domestic and foreign press, sanctions could be applied so as to discourage further expansion of foreign propaganda and violations of human rights such as the freedom to information and expression. Establishing organizations under the mandate of impartial actors such as the United Nations or the European Union tasked with finding and evaluating the state of propaganda, freedom of information and expression within a country could help to establish transparency within the sector of news and information.

It has to be noted that impartiality and efficiency are key to combating political propaganda, which means the less unbiased or efficient a specific solution is the less effective and legitimate it becomes.

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