

"THE INFLUENCE OF INTELLIGENCE PROPAGANDA ON THE POLITICAL SECURITY OF THE U.S. AND THE SOVIET UNION (1950S–1960S)"

Ana Jikia

Invited Lecturer at Akaki Tsereteli State University, PhD Candidate in Political Science at Caucasus International University, Georgia

Edisher Mushkudiani

Journalist, Former Correspondent of Broadcasting Company "Rustavi 2", Georgia

Davit Kukhalashvili

Doctor of History, Doctor of Professional Security, Associate Professor at Caucasus International University, Georgia

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Abstract

In modern international relations, information warfare and intelligence propaganda play a crucial role in advancing states' strategic interests. The success of this process is determined by the effective planning and execution of intelligence propaganda. This study highlights the propaganda strategies, methods, and techniques employed by U.S. and Soviet intelligence structures during the Cold War, as well as their impact on both domestic and foreign political processes. The strategies of both states included information manipulation techniques such as disinformation campaigns, the use of media resources, and the discrediting of political opponents. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations are provided on how to prevent the use of such strategies and mitigate their negative consequences in contemporary international politics.

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Introduction

Information warfare has emerged as a crucial strategic tool in international relations, enabling states to weaken the influence of adversarial actors. To achieve this, ensuring the dissemination of their own ideology—particularly through mass media—becomes essential. The Cold War era stands out in this regard, as the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in a global struggle for political, economic, and ideological hegemony. The integration of intelligence operations with propaganda efforts significantly influenced not only governmental policies but also public perceptions.

As part of intelligence propaganda, both states actively engaged in the dissemination of disinformation, aiming to manipulate public opinion in target countries and instigate political, economic, and military destabilization. The primary means of countering intelligence propaganda involved a direct battle against the adversary's ideology. The strength of intelligence propaganda became a decisive tool in the victory of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency over the Soviet Union's Committee for State Security

(KGB), ultimately contributing to the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

This topic remains relevant today, as intelligence propaganda continues to play an active role in intelligence operations. Therefore, analyzing the objectives, methods, means, and threats of intelligence propaganda during the Cold War period will provide insights for developing policy recommendations to prevent or neutralize its harmful impact on political security.

Research Objective: The influence of intelligence propaganda on state political security.

Research Object: The political security of the United States and the Soviet Union.

Research Subject: Intelligence propaganda.

Hypothesis: Intelligence propaganda is a key method utilized in intelligence activities. It enables the orchestration of processes such as political destabilization, the discrediting of existing regimes, and the facilitation of recruitment for intelligence and counterintelligence purposes. The primary instruments of intelligence propaganda are the press and radio.

Research Questions:

1. What impact did U.S. intelligence propaganda have on the political security of the Soviet Union?
2. What impact did Soviet intelligence propaganda have on the political security of the United States?
3. What instruments were used by the United States and the Soviet Union in the implementation of intelligence propaganda?

Research Methodology: Content analysis.

Theoretical Framework

- **Hegemonic Stability Theory** – Rooted in political realism, this theory is primarily associated with Robert Gilpin. According to this perspective, the role of a hegemon is to coordinate various countries while establishing and enforcing specific rules governing their behavior and actions.¹
- **National Security Theory** – This theory emphasizes the government's ability to utilize various forms of power to ensure the security of its citizens, economic well-being, and the stability of civil institutions in the face of internal and external threats.²

U.S. Intelligence Propaganda Mechanisms

During the Cold War, the U.S. government and its intelligence agencies, particularly the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), played an active role in the information war against the Soviet Union and the spread of communism. One of the primary objectives was to disseminate U.S. ideology within the Soviet bloc while limiting the influence of Soviet propaganda in other nations. To achieve this, several key instruments were developed:

- **Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Voice of America (VOA)** – These radio broadcasts provided the Soviet Union and Eastern European societies with information aimed at discrediting, undermining, and weakening the Soviet regime.
- **Operation Mockingbird** – A covert CIA program designed to influence U.S. media by systematically conducting disinformation campaigns. This initiative focused on criticizing the

¹ Gilpin, R. (1987). *The Political Economy of International Relations*. Princeton, New Jersey, USA: Princeton University Press. ზოლო ნახვა: 03.03.2025.

² Кардашова, И. Б. *Основы теории национальной безопасности : учебник для вузов. — 3-е изд. — Москва: Издательство Юрайт, 2023. — 334 с. — (Высшее образование). — ISBN 978-5-534-15789-5. — Текст : электронный // Образовательная платформа Юрайт [сайт]. — URL: <https://urait.ru/bcode/509729>, ზოლო ნახვა: 03.03.2025.*

Soviet regime, promoting anti-communist propaganda, and constructing alternative narratives, effectively incorporating elements of political intelligence.

The effectiveness of these efforts is evidenced by the launch of **BBC Russian-language broadcasts on March 26, 1946**, and **Voice of America's Russian service on February 17, 1947**. These programs were integral to intelligence propaganda strategies.

One of the tasks of intelligence propaganda was³:

- ❖ Mobilizing the desired public opinion in one's own state in order to pursue counterintelligence interests;
- ❖ In the intelligence direction:
 - Mobilizing pro-American and anti-Soviet public opinion in states under US control;
 - Mobilizing pro-American and anti-Soviet public opinion in the Soviet Union and states under its control;
 - Mobilizing pro-American and anti-Soviet public opinion in states in the area of the US and Soviet Union's struggle for dominance;

This period is associated with Churchill's opinion that after World War II "an iron curtain descended on the continent..."⁴, which is considered the beginning of the Cold War. In practice, one of the main goals of the intelligence service was to politically destabilize the target states and bring in the desired governments.

It is important to review several methods of **anti-Soviet propaganda** implemented through media channels.

During the Cold War, "**white propaganda**" was widely used, which involved **the selective interpretation of real facts** to discredit the Soviet Union—without overt anti-communist commentary.

The **BBC actively employed "gray propaganda"**, which involved **reporting factual information accompanied by hostile commentary** to shape public perception against the Soviet regime.

"Voice of America" and "Radio Free Europe" actively employed "**black propaganda**," which involved the dissemination of **completely fabricated information** aimed at discrediting the Soviet Union.

The **Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)** operated a covert program called **Operation Mockingbird⁵**, which aimed to **influence the U.S. media** to serve the country's strategic interests. As part of counterintelligence measures, media representatives were vetted for reliability, ensuring that targeted individuals would not act against national interests.

Journalists who passed the reliability screening were recruited, allowing for **successful influence over public opinion** in target states, strengthening **anti-Soviet and anti-communist sentiments**. This approach facilitated **intelligence penetration**, expanding the CIA's espionage network while simultaneously enhancing **counterintelligence operations within the United States**.

Despite the declared independence of the **U.S. media**, in reality, **media ownership structures and government influence** played a significant role in shaping the country's **information policy**.⁶ Major newspapers such as **The New York Times** and **The New York Herald Tribune** stood out in

³ Kukhalashvili, D. (2004). *Central Intelligence Agency in the struggle to ensure U.S. international influence.* Tbilisi: SSUS Academy. ISBN: 99928-0-805-5.

⁴ Churchill, W. (1946, March 5). *The sinews of peace (Iron Curtain speech)*. Westminster College. <https://www.nationalchurchillmuseum.org/sinews-of-peace-iron-curtain-speech.html>

⁵ Powers, T. (1979). *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA*. Alfred A. Knopf.

⁶ Schrecker, E. (2002). *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents*. Bedford/St. Martin's. <https://archive.org/details/ageofmccarthyism02edschr>

advancing **U.S. strategic interests**, particularly in shaping and disseminating **foreign policy narratives**. These outlets were considered **highly influential sources**, actively contributing to the formulation and expansion of the **U.S. foreign policy agenda**.

During **World War II**, the **U.S. media** portrayed the **Soviet Union** as a **crucial ally** in the fight against **fascism**. This narrative aligned with **U.S. strategic interests**, as evidenced by the coordinated **military actions against the Axis powers**. However, this perception began to shift in the **summer of 1945**, following the inauguration of **Harry Truman's administration**. At this point, **American press coverage** of Soviet policies started incorporating **critical perspectives** alongside earlier **optimistic portrayals**.

With the increasing **counterintelligence penetration** into the **media sector**, a notable transformation occurred in **U.S. foreign policy decisions**. Following the announcement of the **Truman Doctrine**, the **Soviet Union's image** in the **American media** solidified as that of an **aggressor state and a proponent of communist expansionism**.⁷

It should be noted that propaganda posters were actively used as a tool in ideological warfare to mobilize public opinion. In this case, everything depended on the strategic interests of the United States. For example, pro-Soviet sentiments were reinforced through posters such as **"This is the Enemy"** (1942)⁸, which depicted Hitler as a symbol of tyranny and violence. However, with the shift in U.S. foreign policy, anti-Soviet propaganda campaigns were launched. For example, **"Is This Tomorrow? America Under Communism"** (1947)⁹ and **"Know Your Enemy: The Reds"** (1950)¹⁰ aimed to highlight the threats of communist ideology and instill fear within the public.

The effectiveness of intelligence-driven propaganda is evident from open-source information, which indicates that the coverage of the **"Russian question"** sparked significant interest among readers and viewers. In June 1950, radio commentator E. Merry surveyed 50 American journalists, asking: **"What headline would you most like to see for tomorrow's lead story?"** Eighty percent responded that they would choose topics related to U.S.-Russia relations, Russian disarmament, global peace guarantees, or war with Russia. Additionally, one-third of the journalists expressed a preference for a headline about a Russian people's revolution against the communist regime.¹¹ Intelligence propaganda thus yielded both intelligence and counterintelligence results aligned with U.S. strategic interests.

During the Cold War, ideological confrontation was an inseparable part of the broader struggle between global social and economic systems. However, the Soviet leadership's voluntary renunciation of this battle - driven by the policies of "New Political Thinking" and "Perestroika" - soon became one of the key factors leading to the dissolution of the USSR. The reasons behind the Soviet Union's defeat in this ideological war still require detailed historical analysis.

Soviet Intelligence Propaganda Mechanisms

In the Soviet Union, intelligence propaganda was primarily carried out under the organization and control of the **KGB** (Committee for State Security). One of the key activities of the Soviet intelligence services involved **"Active Measures"** (*Активные мероприятия*)¹² - intelligence operations aimed at

⁷ Leffler, M. P. (2007). For the soul of mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War. Harvard University Press.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269826535_Melvyn_P_Leffler_For_the_Soul_of_Mankind_The_United_States_the_Soviet_Union_and_the_Cold_War

⁸ Office of War Information. (1942). This is the Enemy. U.S. Government Printing Office.

⁹ Cate, C. (1947). Is This Tomorrow? America Under Communism. Cate Publishing.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Defense. (1950). Know Your Enemy: The Reds. Pentagon Archives.

¹¹ Puddington, A. (2000). *Broadcasting freedom: The Cold War triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*. University Press of Kentucky.

¹² Andrew, C., & Mitrokhin, V. 2005. *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World*. Basic Books,

influencing global political dynamics. As part of these operations, intelligence propaganda was actively implemented with the following objectives:

➤ **Counterintelligence Goals:**

- ✓ Promoting the mobilization of favorable public opinion within the Soviet Union.

➤ **Intelligence Goals:**

- ✓ Mobilizing public opinion in Soviet-controlled states in alignment with Soviet interests.
- ✓ Influencing public opinion in contested regions where the Soviet Union and the U.S. competed for dominance.

In practice, one of the main objectives of intelligence propaganda was to create **political destabilization in target states** and facilitate the rise of regimes favorable to Soviet interests.

The Soviet intelligence services also implemented **disinformation strategies**, which aimed to manipulate public perception by spreading false or misleading information. This approach sought to incite anti-U.S. and anti-capitalist sentiments among targeted audiences.

Additionally, the **manipulation of social and political groups** was a key instrument in Soviet influence operations. Through these efforts, the KGB actively supported and exploited **anti-capitalist movements**, using them to advance Soviet geopolitical interests on the international stage.

During the period of active control by the Soviet intelligence services, the **state news agency TASS (TACC)**¹³ played a significant role in carrying out intelligence-driven **propaganda and counter-propaganda**. The agency maintained **close cooperation with the KGB** (Committee for State Security) and actively participated in **the dissemination of disinformation**.

This collaboration highlights the **extensive infiltration capabilities** of the Soviet intelligence services, demonstrating their ability to influence both domestic and international narratives through controlled media channels.

During the Soviet era, the **information bureau "Novosti" (АИИ – Агентство печати «Новости»)**¹⁴ was actively used for **intelligence-driven propaganda**. Established in **1961** as a **state-run information organization**, its primary goal was to strengthen **the Soviet Union's position in the international media space**. The agency maintained **close cooperation with the KGB** (Committee for State Security) and was frequently used as a platform for **disseminating disinformation and executing propaganda campaigns**.

The Soviet Union **extensively utilized propaganda posters against the United States** to promote **anti-American narratives** and reinforce its own ideological stance. These posters were centered around several key themes, including **racial inequality, criticism of capitalism, militarism and imperialism, and countering anti-Soviet propaganda**.

For example:

<https://ia600606.us.archive.org/32/items/TheWorldWasGoingOurWayTheKGBAndTheBattleForTheTheThirdWorld/The%20World%20Was%20Going%20Our%20Way.pdf>

¹³ Чагинова, А. А. 2016. Роль ТАСС в государственной информационной политике: технологии коммуникационного воздействия. Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет. https://nauchkor.ru/pubs/rol-tass-v-gosudarstvennoy-informatsionnoy-politike-tehnologii-kommunikatsionnogo-vozdeystviya-587d363f5f1be77c40d58a76?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹⁴ Andrew, C., & Mitrokhin, V. 2005. *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World*. Basic Books.

<https://ia600606.us.archive.org/32/items/TheWorldWasGoingOurWayTheKGBAndTheBattleForTheTheThirdWorld/The%20World%20Was%20Going%20Our%20Way.pdf>

- **"Look, this is the peacemaker!"** («Взгляните, это же миротворец!»)¹⁵ – depicted an American soldier symbolizing **U.S. militarism**, aiming to criticize America's aggressive policies.
- **"To the warmongers..."** («Поджигателям новой войны...», 1948)¹⁶ – portrayed a critique of **Western countries, particularly the U.S.**, which, according to Soviet propaganda, were preparing for a new war.
- **"The forces of peace are invincible!"** («Силы мира непобедимы!»), 1949)¹⁷ – emphasized the **strength of peace movements** and called for **international solidarity**.

Just like the **United States**, the **Soviet authorities** actively relied on **state-controlled media and official institutions** to conduct **"white propaganda"** through the use of intelligence agencies. In the realm of **"gray propaganda"**, the **Soviet Ministry of Defense** played a significant role by establishing **fictional international organizations** and **clandestine radio stations**, particularly in foreign countries, to disseminate **propagandistic messages**.¹⁸

Conclusion

- During the **Cold War**, both the **United States** and the **Soviet Union** actively employed **intelligence-driven propaganda** to assert dominance on the **international stage**, aligning with their **foreign policy interests**.
- A key objective of **intelligence propaganda** was to mobilize **public opinion** in a manner that served ideological and strategic goals:
 - ✓ The **United States** promoted **anti-communism**.
 - ✓ The **Soviet Union** advanced **anti-capitalism**.
- Intelligence propaganda was implemented by both superpowers in three main spheres:
 - ✓ **Domestically**, to shape internal public perception.
 - ✓ **In target countries**, where intelligence penetration and influence were already established.
 - ✓ **In contested regions**, where intelligence operations aimed to **undermine adversaries** and impose **strategic influence**.
- Under the **intelligence framework**, **"white," "gray," and "black" propaganda** were utilized through various methods, including:
 - ✓ Discrediting target countries **by disseminating** accurate **information** without **additional hostile commentary**.
 - ✓ Discrediting target countries **by spreading** real **information** accompanied by hostile **commentary**.
 - ✓ Spreading **entirely fabricated** information to manipulate public opinion.
- Throughout the **Cold War**, both **radio** and **press media** were instrumental tools for intelligence propaganda.

¹⁵ RIA Media Bank. (n.d.). *Советский пропагандистский плакат «Дезинформация»*. Retrieved February 28, 2025, from <https://riamediabank.ru/media/435719.html>

¹⁶ Советский антиамериканский плакат. Плакаты времён холодной войны.2020. <https://tramvaiiskusstv.ru/plakat/articles-plakat/item/6980-14-10-2020-sovetskij-politicheskij-plakat-plakaty-vremjon-kholodnoj-vojny-antiamerikanskije-plakaty-nato.html>

¹⁷ Советский антиамериканский плакат. Плакаты времён холодной войны.2020. <https://tramvaiiskusstv.ru/plakat/articles-plakat/item/6980-14-10-2020-sovetskij-politicheskij-plakat-plakaty-vremjon-kholodnoj-vojny-antiamerikanskije-plakaty-nato.html>

¹⁸ Shultz, R. H., & Godson, R. (1984). *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy*. Pergamon-Brassey's. <https://archive.org/details/dezinformatsiaac0000shul/page/n5/mode/2up>

- ✓ Personnel working within these **state-controlled** media outlets were often subject to **counterintelligence oversight** and operated in service of their respective country's **intelligence agenda**.
- The **United States** and the **Soviet Union** also relied heavily on **propaganda posters** to mobilize **public sentiment** and reinforce their **strategic objectives**.

Recommendations

1. **To safeguard national political security**, it is crucial to minimize the risks posed by intelligence-driven propaganda, which aims to:

- Generate **destabilizing sentiments** that threaten the political order of target countries.
- Facilitate **political destabilization** and promote **proxies of the adversary state** into power.¹⁹

To counter this threat, **intelligence and counterintelligence agencies** must implement **coordinated actions**, both domestically and internationally, to **detect and neutralize** individuals, groups, or organizations involved in:

- ✓ **Political destabilization** and attempts to **overthrow** the existing government through violent means.
- ✓ **Covert operations against national interests** under the guise of intelligence propaganda.

Key countermeasures include:

- **Enhancing agent-operational activities** to uncover and disrupt espionage networks.
 - **Developing counterintelligence propaganda** to counter hostile narratives.
 - **Expanding intelligence and counterintelligence penetration** into adversarial networks.
1. **Reducing the risks of intelligence propaganda infiltration requires:**
- **Establishing agent-operational control** over **decision-making groups** in the target country's foreign policy sector, ensuring the necessary intelligence and counterintelligence access.
 - **Timely and reliable intelligence collection, analysis, and threat identification** regarding prospective foreign policy decisions of target states.
 - **Providing policymakers with analytical intelligence assessments** to enable proactive measures against potential threats.

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