

## The Art of Bullshit

*Methods of dishonest communication.*

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## Introduction

In our time information is distributed instantly all over the globe. The traditional news outlets are challenged by the social media and blogs that offer non-stop news feed and an ongoing conversation that is open to everyone. Opinions are shaped daily by individuals and organisations with many different agendas, some well-known, some hidden.

Dishonest communication however is nothing new. Both the rulers and the revolutionaries have used these tricks to advance their cause, distorting information and misrepresenting any given situation to their benefit.

It appears to me that despite all the information available and endless possibilities to engage in honest and mutually productive exchange of ideas, the upper hand in these conversations is still often being taken by those who state their claims with least hesitation and those who make the boldest assertions. Also often the ones putting out the most outrageous one-sided and dishonest presentations, loudly accuse others of propaganda. To those, the word “propaganda” often simply means “saying things I disagree with”.

Therefore it seemed necessary to clarify to myself the methods of dishonest and agenda-driven communication and share this list with others.

I hope you enjoy it.

## Methods

This material was collected from publicly available online resources. Please see the sources listed in each segment. **In most cases, the text is directly copied from the source page**, with occasional changes to the wording or slight modifications for brevity. Some of the sources used are not neutral in tone. I have done my best to edit out all the biased language from the parts included in this document. The purpose of this article is not to make statements about any current world affairs.

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## Few quotes

*“You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.”*

- Abraham Lincoln

*“What difference does it make if it’s true? If it’s a story and it breaks, they’re gonna run with it.”*

-From a political comedy movie ‘Wag the Dog’ (1997)

*“How something is said is more important than what is being said, with made-up stories creating real motivations that may lead to a radical change of reality. The virtual reality thus affects and even replaces actual reality.”*

- <http://isiseurope.wordpress.com/2014/04/02/information-war-part-1/>

## About propaganda

*“Propaganda is a specific type of message presentation, aimed at serving an agenda. Even if the message conveys true information, it may be partisan and fail to paint a complete picture. The book Propaganda And Persuasion defines propaganda as “the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.”*

<http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Propaganda>

Often the techniques of propaganda are based on well-known logical fallacies. Propagandists use arguments which, although sometimes convincing, are not necessarily valid.

*“Propaganda shares many techniques with advertising or public relations; in fact, advertising and PR can be said to be propaganda promoting a commercial product. As commonly understood, however, the term usually refers to political or nationalist messages. It can take the form of leaflets, posters, TV broadcasts or radio broadcasts. In a narrower and more common use of the term, propaganda refers to deliberately false or misleading information that supports a political cause or the interests of those in power. The propagandist seeks to change the way people understand an issue or situation, for the purpose of changing their actions and expectations in ways that are desirable to the interest group. In this sense, propaganda serves as a corollary to censorship, in which the same purpose is achieved, not by filling people's heads with false information, but by preventing people from knowing true information. What sets propaganda apart from other forms of advocacy is the willingness of the propagandist to change people's understanding through deception and confusion, rather than persuasion and understanding. The leaders of an organization know the information to be one sided or untrue but this may not be true for the rank and file members who help to disseminate the propaganda.”*

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propaganda>

*“Some argue that all persuasive communication is propagandistic, while others suggest that only dishonest messages can be considered propaganda. Political activists of all stripes claim that they speak the truth while their opponents preach propaganda.”*

<http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/ww1.demons.html>

One difference between propaganda and other persuasive communication is that the propagandist is ready to go as far as it takes to win the argument. They stay within the truth when it is possible, but when the truth no longer serves them well, they will cross to line.

*“The professional propagandist realizes that, when a single lie is exposed, the entire campaign is jeopardized. Dishonesty is discouraged, but on strategic, not moral grounds.”*

<http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/ww1.demons.html>

## Confirmation bias

A very important concept to understand before going any further is confirmation bias. Many methods of dishonest communication rely on this well-known human weakness.

***“Confirmation bias, also called myside bias, is the tendency to search for, interpret, or prioritize information in a way that confirms one's beliefs or hypotheses. It is a type of cognitive bias and a systematic error of inductive reasoning. People display this bias when they gather or remember information selectively, or when they interpret it in a biased way. “***

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confirmation\\_bias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confirmation_bias)

## The tools

### Positives

Making “our side” appear more appealing.

#### Virtue words

*“We believe in, fight for, live by virtue words about which we have deep-set ideas. Such words include civilization, Christianity, good, proper, right, democracy, patriotism, motherhood, fatherhood, science, medicine, health, and love. This lowers our 'sales resistance' and makes us far less suspicious than we ought to be when the speaker begins telling us the things 'the United States must do to preserve democracy.'"*

*Virtue words are, in short, Name Calling in reverse.*

*Ask these questions:*

- *What does the virtue word really mean?*
- *Does the idea in question have a legitimate connection with the real meaning of the word:*
- *Is an idea that does not serve my best interests being "sold" to me merely through its being given a name that I like?*
- *Leaving the virtue word out of consideration, what are the merits of the idea itself?"*

<http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/ct.wg.gg.html>

See also “Name-calling”.

#### Plain folks

*“By using the plain-folks technique, speakers attempt to convince their audience that they, and their ideas, are "of the people." The device is used by advertisers and politicians alike.*

*Ask these questions:*

- *What are the propagandist's ideas worth when divorced from his or her personality?*
- *What could he or she be trying to cover up with the plain-folks approach?*

- *What are the facts? “*

<http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/ct.sa.plain.html>

## Photo op

In short, photo op is politicians kissing babies in a charity event while the cameras are rolling.

*“A photo op (sometimes written as photo opp), short for photograph opportunity (photo opportunity), is an arranged opportunity to take a photograph of a politician, a celebrity, or a notable event. The term has acquired a negative connotation, referring to a carefully planned pseudo-event, often masqueraded as news. It is associated with politicians who perform tasks such as planting trees, picking up litter, and visiting senior citizens, often during election cycles, with the intent of photographers catching the events on film, generating positive publicity.”*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photo\\_op](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photo_op)

## Negatives

Making “their side” appear less appealing.

## Name-calling

*“The name-calling technique links a person, or idea, to a negative symbol. The propagandist who uses this technique hopes that the audience will reject the person or the idea on the basis of the negative symbol, instead of looking at the available evidence.*

*Ask these questions:*

- *What does the name mean?*
- *Does the idea in question have a legitimate connection with the real meaning of the name?*
- *Is an idea that serves my best interests being dismissed through giving it a name I don't like?*
- *Leaving the name out of consideration, what are the merits of the idea itself? “*

<http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/ct.wg.name.html>

See also “Virtue words”.

## Obtain disapproval

*“This technique is used to get the audience to disapprove an action or idea by suggesting the idea is popular with groups hated, feared, or held in contempt by the target audience. Thus, if a group which supports a policy is led to believe that undesirable, subversive, or contemptible people also support it, the members of the group might decide to change their position.”*

[http://www.constitution.org/col/propaganda\\_army.htm](http://www.constitution.org/col/propaganda_army.htm)

## Demonization



*““Every war must appear to be a war of defense against a menacing, murderous aggressor. There must be no ambiguity about who the public is to hate.” An atrocity story implies that war is only brutal when practiced by the enemy. “*

<http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/ww1.demons.html>

The atrocity story may also be fake. Hired actors may be interviewed as survivors or witnesses.

## Getting the “right characters” in the audience

To discredit your opponent, make sure that the local Village-Idiot is seen in their event, preferably doing something stupid and associating himself with “them”. Present the situation in your film and pictures as if the Village-Idiot was an esteemed or a typical member in your opponent’s circles.

If the enemy does not supply you with a suitable Village-Idiot to use, plant your own.

<http://isiseurope.wordpress.com/2014/04/02/information-war-part-1/>

## Creating an enemy

*“Creation of an image of the mystical ‘they’ or enemies. In this case the tendency of people to think in dualistic categories is exploited: we/they, good/bad, friend/enemy. The majority of people think of themselves and their friends as ‘the good guys’, thus those who talk, think or act differently naturally become ‘the bad guys’.”*

<http://m.en.delfi.lt/central-eastern-europe/article.php?id=65484686>

## **Credibility**

Borrow or steal credibility to “our” message from where you can!

## Transfer

Country, nation, democracy, religion, science, medicine etc...

“The scientists have said...”

*““Transfer is a device by which the propagandist carries over the authority, sanction, and prestige of something we respect and revere to something he would have us accept.”*

*Ask these questions:*

- *In the most simple and concrete terms, what is the proposal of the speaker?*
- *What is the meaning of the the thing from which the propagandist is seeking to transfer authority, sanction, and prestige?*
- *Is there any legitimate connection between the proposal of the propagandist and the revered thing, person or institution?*
- *Leaving the propagandistic trick out of the picture, what are the merits of the proposal viewed alone?””*

<http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/ct.fc.transfer.html>

## Testimony

Have someone famous and admired to speak for your cause.

*“Unfair testimonials are usually obvious, and most of us have probably seen through this rhetorical trick at some time or another. However, this probably happened when the testimonial was provided by a celebrity that we did not respect. When the testimony is provided by an admired celebrity, we are much less likely to be critical.”*

Ask these questions:

- *Who or what is quoted in the testimonial?*
- *Why should we regard this person (or organization or publication) as having expert knowledge or trustworthy information on the subject in question?*
- *What does the idea amount to on its own merits, without the benefit of the Testimonial?”*

<http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/ct.fc.testimonial.html>

## Use of false testimony

Get paid stooges (or others willing to tell lies) to tell the desired story to the camera. Add tears, faked anxiety and fear for effect. Or add smile and fake enthusiasm.

## Astroturf

Everyone loves to be on the bandwagon (see technique called Bandwagon). If you don't have a real grassroots-movement to back up for your cause, buy one or fake one with your buddies!

*“Astroturf refers to apparently grassroots-based citizen groups or coalitions that are primarily conceived, created and/or funded by corporations, industry trade associations, political interests or public relations firms.”*

<http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Astroturf>

## Bad Science

*““Bad Science” usually refers to information presented as a scientific finding that is not based on research using recognized scientific methods. In conversation, speeches or texts, “bad science” may refer to flawed science that does not necessarily reflect a particular bias. “Bad science” can refer to poor research, biased research or to faulty information that might not even be based in scientific research. Propagandists can exploit flawed science to suggest conclusions not supported by research. Propagandists sometimes filter the otherwise unimpeachable work of unbiased scientists, presenting only findings favorable to the propagandist's goals. Misrepresented by a propagandist, “good science” might become bad science.”*

[http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Bad\\_science](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Bad_science)

## Echo Chamber

Make it sound as if there are multiple, reliable sources confirming your uncritical, single-source story. More parrots repeating the better.

*“Echo chamber is a colloquial term used to describe a group of media outlets that tend to parrot each other's uncritical reports on the views of a single source, or that otherwise relies on unquestioning repetition of official sources.”*

[http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Propaganda\\_technique](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Propaganda_technique)

## Repetition

Even an obviously biased and dishonest message will start gaining traction when repeated over and over and over, from many different channels of communication. People will hear the “news” first from someone they know. Later they hear the same thing from a mass media. At that point they will easily think that “aah, I have heard this before” or “this is all around, people are talking about it everywhere” or eventually “everyone knows that...”.

Having heard the same thing from multiple sources adds credibility, even when it is unwarranted.

Pollute and saturate all possible channels of information with your own “truth”.

See also “Echo chamber”.

Be fast in getting your message out.

See “First Strike”.

<http://m.en.delfi.lt/central-eastern-europe/article.php?id=65484686>

## Bandwagon

*“The basic theme of the Band Wagon appeal is that "everyone else is doing it, and so should you." Since few of us want to be left behind, this technique can be quite successful. However, "there is never quite as much of a rush to climb onto the Band Wagon as the propagandist tries to make us think there is.”*

Ask these questions:

- *What is this propagandist's program?*
- *What is the evidence for and against the program?*
- *Regardless of the fact that others are supporting this program, should I support it?*
- *Does the program serve or undermine my individual and collective interests?”*

<http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/ct.sa.bandwagon.html>

## Distortion

Sometimes it is best not to lie. You can just misrepresent the situation to serve your best interest.

## One-sided selection of coverage

Practice cherry-picking when choosing what news to cover and what not to cover. Choose the ones that fit your agenda and discard the rest.

## Fear-appeal

Our country is in great threat! The only way for the nation to survive is to do what I say! Serve the audience a threat (fear appeal) and then offer the solution (the fear-reducing behavior).

*“All other things being equal, the more frightened a person is by a communication, the more likely he or she is going to take positive preventive action.” (Pratkanis and Aronson, 1991)*

*In summary, there are four elements to a successful fear appeal: 1) a threat, 2) a specific recommendation about how the audience should behave, 3) audience perception that the recommendation will be effective in addressing the threat, and 4) audience perception that they are capable of performing the recommended behavior.*

*Ask these questions:*

- *Is the speaker exaggerating the fear or threat in order to obtain my support?*
- *How legitimate is the fear that the speaker is provoking?*
- *Will performing the recommended action actually reduce the supposed threat?*
- *When viewed dispassionately, what are the merits of the speaker's proposal?”*

<http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/ct.sa.fear.html>

## Logical fallacies

Intentional misuse of logic in order to deceive.

*“1 = a number*

*2 = a number*

*Conclusion 1 = 2.”*

<http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/lf.bl.html>

## Unwarranted extrapolation

*“The tendency to make huge predictions about the future on the basis of a few small facts.*

*“If Congress passes legislation limiting the availability of automatic weapons, America will slide down a slippery slope which will ultimately result in the banning of all guns, the destruction of the Constitution, and a totalitarian police state.”*

*Ask the following questions:*

- *Is there enough data to support the speaker's predictions about the future?*
- *Can I think of other ways that things might turn out?*
- *If there are many different ways that things could turn out, why is the speaker painting such an extreme picture?”*

<http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/lf.extrapolation.html>

## Artificial dichotomy

*"This is when someone tries to claim there are only two sides to an issue and that both sides must have equal presentation in order to be evaluated. This technique is used to dupe us into believing there is only one way to look at an issue, when in fact there may be many alternative viewpoints or "sides". Like most propaganda techniques it simplifies reality and therefore distorts it, often to the advantage of the speaker.*

*"You are either with us, or against us". "*

<http://www.uvm.edu/~jleonard/AGRI183/propoaganda.html>

## Least-of-evils

*"Is used to justify an otherwise unpleasant or unpopular point of view. Example: "'War is hell but appeasement leads to worse disasters". "*

<http://www.uvm.edu/~jleonard/AGRI183/propoaganda.html>

## Cause and effect mismatch

*"This technique confuses the audience about what is really cause and effect. "*

<http://www.uvm.edu/~jleonard/AGRI183/propoaganda.html>

*"The faster windmills are observed to rotate, the more wind is observed to be.*

*Therefore wind is caused by the rotation of windmills. "*

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Correlation\\_does\\_not\\_imply\\_causation#Examples\\_of\\_illogically\\_inferring\\_causation\\_from\\_correlation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Correlation_does_not_imply_causation#Examples_of_illogically_inferring_causation_from_correlation)

## Weak inference

*"Weak inference is when a judgment is made with insufficient evidence, or that the conclusion does not necessarily follow from the evidence given. For example: Ducks and geese migrate south for the winter, therefore all waterfowl migrate south for the winter. Or, most rich folks vote republican, therefore most people who vote republican are rich."*

<http://www.uvm.edu/~jleonard/AGRI183/propoaganda.html>

## Faulty analogy

*"This is when a comparison is carried too far. Example: "The economy is following the same path as right before the great depression, therefore we will experience a stock market crash soon!" "*

<http://www.uvm.edu/~jleonard/AGRI183/propoaganda.html>

## Misuse of statistics and distortion of data

*“Raising the speed limit to 65 mph resulted in many fewer traffic fatalities”. Such statements need to be checked with how many people were driving before and after the change in speed limit. Fewer people may be driving after the speed limit change, even though the fatality rates (deaths per 100,000) may be higher, leading to the overall result of fewer fatalities.”*

<http://www.uvm.edu/~jleonard/AGRI183/propoaganda.html>

*“A percent or fraction is presented, but not the sample size as in “9 out of 10 dentists recommend...”.*

*Absolute and proportional quantities are mixed as in “3,400 more robberies occurred in our town last year, whereas other cities had an increase of less than one percent”.*

*Graphs are used that, by chopping off part of the scale or using unusual units or no scale, distort the appearance of the result.*

*Results are reported with misleading precision. For example, representing 13 out of 19 students as 68.42105 percent.”*

<http://www.uvm.edu/~jleonard/AGRI183/propoaganda.html>

## Oversimplification

*Favorable generalities are used to provide simple answers to complex social, political, economic, or military problems.*

[http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Propaganda\\_technique](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Propaganda_technique)

*“A slogan is a brief striking phrase that may include labeling and stereotyping. If ideas can be sloganized, they should be, as good slogans are self-perpetuating memes.”*

<http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Propaganda>

## Bait-and-switch

*“In lawmaking, “caption bills” that propose minor changes in law with simplistic titles (the bait) are introduced to the legislature with the ultimate objective of substantially changing the wording (the switch) at a later date in order to try to smooth the passage of a controversial or major amendment. While legal, the political objective is to get legislation or rules passed without expected negative community review.”*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bait-and-switch>

## Fake News

*“Video news releases or VNRs (also referred to as fake TV news) are segments designed to be indistinguishable from independently-produced news reports that are distributed and promoted to television newsrooms. TV stations incorporate VNRs into their newscasts, rarely alerting viewers to the source of the footage. While government-funded VNRs have been most controversial, most VNRs are paid for by corporations; non-governmental organizations also put out VNRs. “*

[http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Video\\_news\\_releases](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Video_news_releases)

## Quoting out of context

*“When quoting another source, it is important to quote enough of the passage or speech to convey the true meaning. Quoting out of context, conversely, is a technique that uses isolated statements pulled from their original context in order to distort and usually contradict the intended meaning.*

*This technique can be used in several different ways:*

- *to discredit the author of the quote*
- *to discredit the idea itself*
- *to gain credibility for an idea that is not supported by the full context”*

[http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Propaganda\\_technique](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Propaganda_technique)

## Straw Man

*“The straw man fallacy occurs when a statement misrepresents or invents an opponent's view (sometimes even the opponent is invented) in order to easily discredit it. A straw man is constructed expressly for the purpose of knocking it down.”*

[http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Straw\\_man](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Straw_man)

*“The straw man fallacy occurs in the following pattern of argument:*

1. *Person 1 asserts proposition X.*
2. *Person 2 argues against a false but superficially similar proposition Y, as if that were an argument against Person 1's position.*

*For example:*

- *Quoting an opponent's words out of context—i.e., choosing quotations that misrepresent the opponent's actual intentions.*
- *Presenting someone who defends a position poorly as the defender, then denying that person's arguments—thus giving the appearance that every upholder of that position (and thus the position itself) has been defeated.<sup>[2]</sup>*
- *Inventing a fictitious persona with actions or beliefs which are then criticized, implying that the person represents a group of whom the speaker is critical.*
- *Oversimplifying an opponent's argument, then attacking this oversimplified version.”*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Straw\\_man](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Straw_man)

## Use of unrelated or dishonestly chosen image or video material

Use of intimidating or sinister pictures or videos with a well-chosen narration to vilify the opponent. Slow-motion video footage combined with creepy music makes anyone appear like a murderer of a pedophile.

Use of calm and beautiful pictures on the background when trying to portray something as desirable.

Use of completely unrelated material; showing pictures of atrocity that are taken from a completely different conflict.

Telling the audience about something that has happened and showing a crowd celebrating (in some other place, some other time, unrelated to the news that is broadcasted).

Claiming that the people in the footage are someone else than who they really are. One could for example film a group of soldiers driving through a peaceful village and say that they are the opponent's troops, with evil intentions.

<http://m.en.delfi.lt/central-eastern-europe/article.php?id=65484686>  
<http://isiseurope.wordpress.com/2014/04/02/information-war-part-1/>

### “They left me no alternative “

When you have done a Shitty Thing, say that it was you but you had no other choice. It was the other guys who “forced” you to take this course of action. Say that “they left you no alternative”.

## **Disinformation**

Disinformation is deliberately distributed false or misleading information. Often it is mixed with some truth to make it appear more plausible.

### Factoids

Factoids are just like facts but they are not true. At very best they might be half true. When repeated often enough, they may become widely accepted as facts.

*“A factoid is a questionable or spurious (unverified, false, or fabricated) statement presented as a fact, but without supporting evidence.”*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Factoid>

### Big Lie

*“The expression was coined by Adolf Hitler, when he dictated his 1925 book Mein Kampf, about the use of a lie so “colossal” that no one would believe that someone “could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously.”* “

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big\\_lie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_lie)



## Rewrite history to shed a favourable light on your cause.

Claim that your opponent was the aggressor in a war that you started (Example: How the so called Winter War between Soviet Union and Finland was presented in the Soviet Union). Use this self-made history to make your side appear as the defender of peace and all good things in future situations.

## False news report

Yes, just make shit up. Any kind you need.

## Image manipulation

Get yourself the Photoshop. If you can't afford it, try Gimp; it is for free. Take or download a picture and insert anything into it: tanks, airplanes or dead people. Or perhaps make your rival politician's wife look like she has a black eye?

## **Camouflage of intentions**

Appear as if you were doing something else than what you really doing.

## Front Group

*"A front group is an organization that purports to represent one agenda while in reality it serves some other party or interest whose sponsorship is hidden or rarely mentioned. The front group is perhaps the most easily recognized use of the third party technique. For example, Rick Berman's Center for Consumer Freedom (CCF) claims that its mission is to defend the rights of consumers to choose to eat, drink and smoke as they please. In reality, CCF is a front group for the tobacco, restaurant and alcoholic beverage industries, which provide all or most of its funding."*

[http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Front\\_groups](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Front_groups)

## **Presentation and rhetoric**

It's not what you say, it's how you say. It is all about appearance.

## Speaking very loud

Prevent your opponent from getting their message through by constantly interrupting in face-to-face exchange or flooding the conversation online. When the opponent speaks, you yell. When the opponent raises his voice, you yell louder. Use strong rhetoric, bold assertions, ridicule and display open hostility.

This presentation style is often seen in the TV-programs hosted by Bill O'Reilly. Host gets easily hostile and does not allow the guest a chance to explain his view. At the end of the conversation the host declares himself as a winner.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsUY9g2kZD0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MouBNcCQaU4>

## Hot potato

*“This is an inflammatory (often untrue) statement or question used to throw an opponent off guard, or to embarrass them. Examples "Have you stopped beating your spouse", "When will you pay the taxes you owe?" The fact that it may be utterly untrue is irrelevant, because it still brings controversy to the opponent.”*

<http://www.uvm.edu/~jleonard/AGRI183/propoaganda.html>

## Evading the question

*“When asked about a tax increase possibility a senator replies: "I have always met the obligations I have to those I represent.”*

<http://www.uvm.edu/~jleonard/AGRI183/propoaganda.html>

## Vagueness

*“Vagueness is a frequent indicator of propaganda in news reporting. "Remember the following first rule of disinformation analysis: truth is specific, lie is vague," writes Gregory Sinaisky. "Always look for palpable details in reporting and if the picture is not in focus, there must be reasons for it.”*

[http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Propaganda\\_technique](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Propaganda_technique)

*“Generalities are deliberately vague so that the audience may supply its own interpretations. The intention is to move the audience by use of undefined phrases, without analyzing their validity or attempting to determine their reasonableness or application.”*

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propaganda\\_techniques](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propaganda_techniques)

## Doublespeak

*“Doublespeak is language deliberately constructed to disguise its actual meaning, such as euphemisms.”*

<http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Doublespeak>

## **Examples**

*“collateral damage: the killing of innocent bystanders, ecological destruction and environmental contamination.*

*capital punishment: death penalty, state execution.*

*dehousing: (WWII) allied bombing of German civilian homes*

*enhanced interrogation: torture*

*freedom fighter: A terrorist furthering “our” interests*

*nonlethal weapons: weapons that may or may not kill the person they are used on”*

<http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Doublespeak>

Purposeful confusion of meanings; calling one's own soldiers Peacekeepers or Peace Corps. The other guys's troops are called "Terrorists" or "Fascists".

<http://m.en.delfi.lt/central-eastern-europe/article.php?id=65484686>

### Provocative headlines

Someone has "blood on their hands". Someone has "lied" when they actually were just wrong about something. Use whatever implies maximal guilt.

### Use confusion, attack and profanity that cannot be refuted by counterarguments

Just watch the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrEs6clmJ-8>

<http://m.en.delfi.lt/central-eastern-europe/article.php?id=65484686>

### **Other**

Not in any particular class but always classy!

### Ad hominem

*"An ad hominem argument, or argumentum ad hominem (Latin, literally "argument against the man [or person]"), is a fallacy that involves replying to an argument or assertion by attempting to discredit the person offering the argument or assertion. Ad hominem rebuttals are one of the best-known of propagandist tactics. Simply, it is a refutation of a proposition, based solely upon some unrelated fact about the person presenting the proposition. Such refutation is said to be "against the person" (ad hominem) and not their proposition. "*

[http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Propaganda\\_technique](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Propaganda_technique)

### Emotional Appeals

*"The detailed suffering of a little girl and her kitten can motivate our hatred against the Germans, arouse our sympathy for Armenians, make us enthusiastic for the Red Cross, or lead us to give money for a home for cats."*

<http://www.firstworldwar.com/features/propaganda.htm>

### The War to End All Wars

Get them to believe that if they pay for this war, it will be the last one. Get them to believe that if they send their boys to die in this war, then the future generations will not have to send theirs.

*“In order to reach intellectuals and pacifists, the CPI claimed that military intervention would bring about a democratic League of Nations and end warfare forever.”*

<http://www.propagandacritic.com>

## First strike

Be the first one in the field with your message when something happens. Your future propaganda efforts will be more successful if the message has a sense of familiarity. Being fast makes it more likely that some people will form their opinions based on your message and distribute this information further. Thanks to confirmation bias, people are more likely accept information that confirms their current beliefs rather than information that counters them.

See also: “Repetition”.

See also: “Confirmation bias”

## Blame the other guys

This one is simple. Do a Shitty Thing and when you get caught (or not get), say it was the other guys who did the Shitty Thing.

## Control the mass media outlets

If you can, control the mass media. Fire, jail or kill any undesirable reporters and intimidate others to write your Truth.

## Use the Internet-Army

The Internet Trolls, the sock-puppets, the comment-vandals and the yellers who appear from nowhere, control the conversation and then disappear. Train your Minions to use maximal force, ridicule and repetitive yelling of Factoids to push your message through and to discourage any opposition or criticism.

They should produce quantity over quality. Their operations should be automated so that where ever the keyword is being uttered, there they appear immediately.

See also “Astroturfing”.

## Scapegoating

*“Scapegoating is a propaganda technique that has been used throughout history as a means for people to move blame and responsibility away from themselves by attributing it to others (or to an object or event). A scapegoat is the person or group made to bear the blame for or punished for those errors committed by others.”*

<http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Scapegoating>

*"This is often use with Guilt-by-association to deflect scrutiny away from the issues. It transfers blame to one person or group of people without investigating the complexities of the issue. Examples: "Bill Clinton got us into Bosnia", "President Reagan caused the national debt". "*

<http://www.uvm.edu/~jleonard/AGRI183/propoaganda.html>

## Whataboutism

*"Whataboutism is a nickname coined by the Western political observers for the tactic used by the Soviet Union in its dealings with the Western world during the Cold War. When criticisms were leveled at the Soviet Union, the response would be "What about..." followed by the naming of a criticizable event in the Western world."*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whataboutism>

## **Countering propaganda**

Some unsorted ideas on what to do about it all.

### **Truthfulness**

Since Propaganda most of the time distorts the truth and distributes lies, best counterpropaganda is just to tell the truth and stick to the facts. Also it is important to to be honest about things you don't know. If there is no information, just say "we do not have this information yet". If you speculate, let the audience know that you are speculating.

### **Clarity**

*"Using understandable words to clearly convey the counterpropaganda message is more likely to counter propaganda messages."*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterpropaganda>

### **Knowledge of the audience**

*"Effective counterpropaganda relies on communicating messages that "resonate with the target audiences" and that are based on cultural relevant narratives."*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterpropaganda>

### **Employed rapidly**

*"Counterpropaganda is a reactive method that must be employed rapidly to effectively contradict a propaganda message."*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterpropaganda>

## Research and analysis

*“Success in countering propaganda requires a "comprehensive propaganda monitoring and collection effort" that identifies and catalogues examples of all types of adversarial propaganda. This initial method of counterpropaganda benefits from experts in a range of disciplines to include intelligence psychological operations, social science, cultural anthropologists, etc. who are capable of analyzing the propaganda.”*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterpropaganda>

This analysis helps to determine what counter arguments can we deploy, to whom, and how.

## Reveal true origin of propaganda

*“Often the credibility of a propaganda message depends on masking the true origin of the message to ensure the audience accepts it as an unbiased communication. Often propagandists will create a persona that is "reliable, trustworthy and credible" to the target audience which increases the likelihood that the message is believed and influences the audience's actions and perspectives. When counterpropaganda reveals the propaganda's true origin the target audience quickly loses faith in the message as the propagandist was caught lying.”*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterpropaganda>

## Expose reasoning errors

*“When a counterpropaganda campaign exposes the target audience's errors in judgment and resolves them the propaganda message loses strength.”*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterpropaganda>

## Dissemination of exposed propaganda

*“When a counterpropaganda campaign shares propaganda intended for a specific audience with another audience the propagandists' true intentions are revealed. The sharing of propaganda messages between audiences also enables the second audience to reveal propaganda messages targeting them.”*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterpropaganda>

## Be specific

*“Truth is specific, lie is vague.”*

[http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle\\_East/ED03Ak02.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/ED03Ak02.html)

Tell exactly what happened, to whom and when and how much of it happened. Ask the opponent to clarify their claims and provide evidence that is specific and relevant.

## A Transparency International for Disinformation

*“The creation of an NGO that would create an internationally recognized ratings system for disinformation and provide analytical tools with which to define forms of communication. “*

[http://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael\\_Weiss\\_and\\_Peter\\_Pomerantsev\\_\\_The\\_Menace\\_of\\_Unreality.pdf](http://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael_Weiss_and_Peter_Pomerantsev__The_Menace_of_Unreality.pdf)

## **A “Disinformation Charter” for Media and Bloggers**

*“Rival media should get together to create a charter of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. “*

[http://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael\\_Weiss\\_and\\_Peter\\_Pomerantsev\\_\\_The\\_Menace\\_of\\_Unreality.pdf](http://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael_Weiss_and_Peter_Pomerantsev__The_Menace_of_Unreality.pdf)

## **Counter-Disinformation Editors**

*“Many newspapers now employ “public editors,” or ombudsmen, who question their outlet’s reporting or op-ed selections and address matters of public controversy that these might entail. “Counter-propaganda editors” would pick apart what might be called all the news unfit to print. “*

[http://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael\\_Weiss\\_and\\_Peter\\_Pomerantsev\\_\\_The\\_Menace\\_of\\_Unreality.pdf](http://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael_Weiss_and_Peter_Pomerantsev__The_Menace_of_Unreality.pdf)

## **Tracking Networks**

*“We must ensure that spokesmen, officials and intellectuals are held to account. Employees of think tanks, pundits or policy consultants with vested financial interests in the countries they cover need to disclose their affiliations in public statements. “*

[http://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael\\_Weiss\\_and\\_Peter\\_Pomerantsev\\_\\_The\\_Menace\\_of\\_Unreality.pdf](http://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael_Weiss_and_Peter_Pomerantsev__The_Menace_of_Unreality.pdf)

## **Public Information Campaigns**

*“Stopping all disinformation at all times is impossible. Public information campaigns are needed to show how disinformation works and shift the public’s behavior towards being more critical of messages that are being “buzzed” at them. “*

[http://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael\\_Weiss\\_and\\_Peter\\_Pomerantsev\\_\\_The\\_Menace\\_of\\_Unreality.pdf](http://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael_Weiss_and_Peter_Pomerantsev__The_Menace_of_Unreality.pdf)

## **Targeted Online Work**

*“Audiences exposed to systemic and intensive disinformation campaigns need to be worked with through targeted online campaigns that include the equivalent of person-to-person online social work. “*

[http://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael\\_Weiss\\_and\\_Peter\\_Pomerantsev\\_\\_The\\_Menace\\_of\\_Unreality.pdf](http://imrussia.org/media/pdf/Research/Michael_Weiss_and_Peter_Pomerantsev__The_Menace_of_Unreality.pdf)