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## **A general history and theory of MIND CONTROL. Information Design, Commercial Truth and the Disinformation Crisis**

Gabriel Isaiah Samandi

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*A general history and theory of*

# MIND CONTROL.

**Information Design, Commercial Truth and the Disinformation Crisis**

By

Gabe Samandi

([GSamandi@Fordham.edu](mailto:GSamandi@Fordham.edu))

For a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies, Global Affairs

Advised by

Dr. Mathias Klang

([MKlang@Fordham.edu](mailto:MKlang@Fordham.edu))

Department of Communications and Media Studies

“Day and night the telescreens bruised your ears with statistics proving that people today had more food, more clothes, better houses, better recreations — that they lived longer, worked shorter hours, were bigger, healthier, stronger, happier, more intelligent, better educated, than the people of fifty years ago.

Not a word of it could ever be proved or disproved.”

- George Orwell, author, philosopher, and soldier  
“1984”  
(Secker & Warburg, London: June 8, 1949) Paragraph break added.

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## Abstract

The phrase “mind control” typically sparks the imagination to think of implausible and delusional hysteria; the paranoid schizophrenic who argues the existence of instantaneous and affirmative instructions against one’s own will that can subvert the autonomy of an individual. Since the early 1950s, associations such as the above have provided an illusion of separability between established epistemic concepts and the realm of amateur conspiracy theory “research.” With the invention of the internet, however, and especially after the concerted effort of international disinformation campaigns via social media, such lines have begun to blur. Questions about the interplay between implicit psychological associations and social norms with institutionally accepted conventions like “behavioral modification” and “social engineering” have long been a realm of philosophic debate and academic study, but what becomes of such inquiry when it is turned in on itself, questioning the very legitimacy of rationality, the academy, and institutional government? Misinformed opinions about government conspiracies and mind control technology leading to violent or tragic outcomes are far too varied, stubborn, and pernicious to be organic. Analyzing the shape, scope, and history of psychological and information warfare over the last 100 years, “A general history and theory of MIND CONTROL: Information Design, Commercial Truth, and the Disinformation Crisis” pieces together the disparate elements of a complex scientific, historical, and sociological phenomenon deployed as a weapon between nation-state actors that drives predictable and pathologically antisocial behavior among civilian populations for geostrategic ends. Taken altogether, such a psychological warfare technique may only reasonably be deemed “mind control.”

## Introduction:

### Historical Overview

In 2016, when then-candidate Donald J. Trump of the Republican Party claimed that the American electorate was being deluded by “fake news,” the floodgates of history were opened. The past became a matter of opinion. What Donald Trump was implicitly signaling to America at the time was that a large portion of the American population had been “brainwashed.” There were citizens in our country who had fallen victim to false teachings about history, and remarkably incorrect assessments about the state of affairs were boundless. Trump’s winning message was a story of certainty in uncertain times: that American politics had, by and large, come to exist as a game of elitist squabbling and inefficiency — a blame shared by complacent politicians, (“the swamp” in Washington) biased journalists (“fake news” and “the liberal media”) and a “culture of brainwashing” that left-leaning activists had enforced in our schools.

This is a paper about the *political science of certainty*. Any operative, shyster, or charlatan who hopes to remake society in their own image must first master the techniques of mind control. Trickery, deceit, lies, and propaganda are surely one part of the equation. The other part is a tool for one-sided, neuro-technological observation that few fully understand. Together, these methods of force-feeding *personalized disinformation* make “mind control” possible.

The term “brainwashing” itself was invented by a propagandist.<sup>1</sup> Edward Hunter, a self-proclaimed “propaganda specialist” for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during World War II — the bureaucratic precursor to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) — introduced the American public to the word in a fabricated international investigative article for the *Miami*

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Melley, “Brain Warfare: The Covert Sphere, Terrorism, and the Legacy of the Cold War” *Grey Room*, No. 45, *On Brainwashing: Mind Control, Media, and Warfare* (The MIT Press, Cambridge: 2011), p. 29

*News*: “‘BRAIN-WASHING’ TACTICS FORCE CHINESE INTO RANKS OF COMMUNIST PARTY,” the headline read. “Brain-washing,” Hunter imagined, was a secret program developed by the communist party in China to indoctrinate civilians into their military dictatorship, a practice known as *hsi nao* (the Chinese characters that translate literally to “wash brain”). Hunter was later invited to join the CIA during its program “Operation Mockingbird,” a centralized effort by the CIA to feed journalists and publishers false or propagandistic stories about international news.<sup>2</sup>

It might be reasonably concluded that “fake news” has been the standard in American journalism since at least the Cold War, at least with respect to certain topics or national interests.<sup>3</sup> We may even feel the urge to point out that “brainwashing” has taken on a life of its own in American democracy after being first invented by a government operative to control the sentiments of American citizens against those of China. At the very least, we should feel comfortable admitting that American journalists of the late 20th century were frequently fooled into amplifying nationalist propaganda on behalf of the United States government.

Most Americans are at least vaguely aware of the United States’ unsuccessful attempts to master the science of “mind control” during the CIA’s infamous MKULTRA experiments, which ran from the 1950s to the 1970s. However, journalists and scholars would agree that “today, there is no evidence that the United States is similarly abusing neurotechnology for national security purposes.”<sup>4</sup> They are wrong. One might even come to suspect, by the end of this paper, that brokers of public information in our country have been *intentionally deluded*.

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen Kinzer, “Poisoner in Chief: Sidney Gottlieb and the CIA Search for Mind Control” (St. Martin’s Griffin, New York: 2020). p. 104

<sup>3</sup> Melley, “Brain Warfare” pp. 21-25

<sup>4</sup> Tim Requarth and Jimmy Turrell, “MIND FIELD” *Foreign Policy*, No. 214 (SEPT/OCT 2015), pp. 50-59

The language of industry has masked a pernicious surveillance, prediction, and control technique that has been researched by those in “Big Data” for nearly two decades now. In both the academic and commercial worlds, we are more or less comfortable identifying it as *social engineering*, *behavioral modification*, or *bioinformationalism*.<sup>5</sup> In the world of spycraft and covert military action, however, these areas of science already had a name.

Military leadership in the United States once feared, in the age of rapid technological innovation, a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA).<sup>6</sup> We believed, during the War on Terror, that our predictive and precise strike capability put the United States ahead of that curve.

The RMA of the 21st century has passed us by, undetected. This thesis will have established enough evidence to conclude that the military application of information warfare and individualized neuro-technological manipulation on civilian populations — *mind control* — is in fact the *primary battlefield of 21st century conflict*.

## Who Controls the Past?

Discussing the history of a subject like “mind control” warrants mentioning the leagues of conspiratorial information spread throughout global society in the last two hundred years. Americans themselves have had a longstanding fascination with mind control. In the 19th century, fiction about hypnosis began widely circulating in 1845, with Edgar Allen Poe’s “*The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar*.” In many ways a spiritual successor to Mary Shelly’s 1818 novel *Frankenstein*, *Valdemar* tells the story of a patient hypnotised into a trance closely resembling death; alive, but without any vital signs such as a heartbeat. Poe had to defend the

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Peters. Bio-informational capitalism. *Thesis Eleven: Critical Theory and Historical Sociology*, 110(1), (2012) pp. 98-111.

<sup>6</sup> Earl H. Tilford, “The Revolution In Military Affairs: Prospects And Cautions.” *Strategic Studies Institute*, US Army War College, 1995.

work as fiction when many came to view it's eerily familiar language, *constructed as a fake news report*, as reality.<sup>7</sup>

During the birth of the age of advertising, the public fascination within Western democracies regarding stories of hypnosis accelerated. In the 1890s, on two separate continents, Ambrose Bierce and George de Maurier wrote two stories that capitalized on the inherently racial fear of "others" that might negatively influence developed society. An Indian stage performer and a Jewish mystic, created by each respective author, encapsulated the strange, tantalizing possibility of an exotic psychological abuser with malicious intent. "Svengali," the name of Maurier's fictional Jewish superpredator, became part of the American lexicon for decades. He even got his own movie in Hollywood.<sup>8</sup>

The trope of hypnotic Jewish power should be familiar to any individual fascinated in the idea of mind control. The Nazis spread propaganda that such powers were possible, and that their existence was an indication of the threat Jewish people presented to the Nazi project. Originally conceived by antisemitic government propagandists in Czarist Russia before World War I, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" was a hoax established by Russian autocratic government operatives claiming that Jews have the power and intent to control minds. It was later picked up by the Nazis and taught in public schools as fact.<sup>9</sup> It is quite possibly "the oldest trick in the book" when it comes to mind control conspiracies.

In the instance of Germany's *état intéressant* with authoritarian fascism, who were the true victims of mind control? The helpless *fräuleins* being carried away against their will by

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<sup>7</sup> Kinzer, "CIA Search for Mind Control" pp. 310-313

<sup>8</sup> Kinzer, "CIA Search for Mind Control" pp. 310-313

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin W. Segel, ed. Richard S. Levy. "A Lie and a Libel: The History of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion" (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln: 1996). p.30



Jewish psycho-sexual sorcerers? Or the men who guarded with unfeeling cruelty occupied Europe's extermination camps that ended the lives of some 6 million people?

Who Controls the Future?

These are questions scholars have sought to answer for nearly a century. We must study the lessons that our ancestors came up with under threat of Nazi world domination if we are to beat back the forces of social control that we see today. Critical theorists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (scholars and philosophers who fled intellectual persecution in Nazi Germany for America) first identified our present conundrum in the rise of industrial, mechanized culture. Adorno lamented the death of individuality, originality, and critical thinking at the hands of what he and Horkheimer refer to as “mass culture,” a commodified form of knowledge, participation, and value attributed to the invention of the assembly line, film, and radio.<sup>10</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer's criticisms became especially pointed as they identified how administrative economic dehumanization gave the Nazis near-total control over German culture and moral values, causing them to rename the phenomenon they identified as “*the culture industry*.”<sup>11</sup>

The organization of this harmful and consciousness-erasing industry, Adorno argued, came from “products which are tailored for consumption by masses,” that were “manufactured more or less according to plan.” Adorno was concerned — and later proved correct — that in a monopolistic, fascist society completely managed from the top-down, political, cultural, and economic conversations could be effectively *managed* by those in power. Adorno states that in a society careening toward fascist dictatorship, such as Germany at the time, “the individual

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<sup>10</sup> Theodor Adorno, ed. J. M. Bernstein, “The Culture Industry: Selected essays on mass culture” (Routledge Classics: London & New York, 1991). *On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening and The Schema of Mass Culture*, pp. 29-97

<sup>11</sup> Adorno, “The Culture Industry” *Culture Industry Reconsidered* p. 98

branches [of social participation] are similar in structure or at least fit into each other, ordering themselves into a system almost without a gap. This is made possible by contemporary technical capabilities as well as by economic and administrative concentration.”<sup>12</sup>

We typically think of “mind control” in *instantaneous* and *affirmative* terms, where one is told what to do, what to know, what to think, and then obeys in an instant. Today’s problem of information is not so simple. We face an absence of shared, common knowledge and micro-targeted social control in *repetitive, negative* terms — where an individual’s choices, freedom, and ability to trust are systematically ruled out until it feels like there aren’t any options left but blind loyalty and senseless violence. The social “system almost without a gap” of our day is one of personalized, targeted psychological warfare intended to spark *irrational* and *reactionary* doubt, mistrust, and hatred — and it is in almost every way a manufactured illusion. Ironically, widespread belief in nonsensical stories about the “decline of our civilization” have brought “the free world” much closer to top-down economic, political, and cultural manipulation than it has perhaps ever been.

Adorno and Horkheimer’s analysis provides a crucial step in our understanding as we seek to explain how technological innovation in communications technology has led to the military application of psychological warfare at scale on civilian populations; how the countless manufactured social crises of today are at least a partial result of genuine governmental conspiracy and *mind control*.

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<sup>12</sup> *ibid* p. 98

Who Controls the Present Controls the Past.

James Burnham, a widely celebrated conservative American political philosopher of the 20th century (whose ideas come from rejecting Marxism, which he embraced in his youth) argued in *The Managerial Revolution* that the world order would become radically reorganized following the end of World War II. Burnham predicted, in 1941, before the threat of Nazism had even been defeated by the American-Soviet alliance, that the fragile and necessary partnership of American Capitalism and Soviet Socialism would not last. Burnham feared that the future would become a game of politics between “*managerial societies*,” a form of social organization based on *efficiency*; not on the values of individual freedom nor common welfare. He argued these managerial societies, by their very nature, would provide an obstacle for freedom and democracy because managers have no interest in allowing a foundation for political opposition within their ranks. Eventually, Burnham concluded, entire states — including the world’s liberal democracies, would become subject to managerial organization, becoming “managerial states.”<sup>13</sup>

As Hitler’s Third Reich stormed across Europe, attempting to justify the existence of a superior and exclusive civilization that was built on theories of conquest, racial caste, and genocide, the *National Socialist German Workers Party* unilaterally organized Germany’s bureaucracy, markets, and services. Germany was to become a utopia for the Aryan race, built on the *lebensraum* of all European soil, perhaps that of the whole world. It was the managerial project of a national generation of people, one tightly controlled by authoritarian national-socialist culture, language, and propaganda.

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<sup>13</sup> Jason Stanley, “How Propaganda Works” (Princeton University Press, Princeton & Oxford: 2016). p. 17

It was during this time of upheaval in Germany Burnham said of the Allied Powers that, by today, “all major parts of the economy will be planned and controlled by the single integrated set of institutions which will be the managerial state.”<sup>14</sup>

The famed Indian-born British revolutionary, author, and renowned political philosopher, Eric Authur Blair — more commonly known by his literary pseudonym, George Orwell — took issue with Burnham’s predictions. Presumably assured by his experiences as an armed citizen standing against government tyranny, Orwell (a European Socialist who had fought on the losing side of the Spanish Civil War against Fransisco Franco’s fascist dictatorship) believed in the capability of the common person to think freely in the face of would-be-thought-managers from the shadowy, elite corners of society. In reviewing Burnham’s predictions, Orwell declared that “the huge, invincible, everlasting slave empire of which Burnham appears to dream will not be established, or, if established, will not endure, because slavery is no longer a stable basis for human society.”<sup>15</sup>

Admittedly, retroactively assigning the term “mind control” to the propagandistic and ill-informed political discourse of a foriegn country is an intellectually reckless endeavor, even if we are tempted to do so for the Nazis; Logically, making such an argument as foreigners describing another country opens the doors for any society to theoretically belittle another’s political history as false, dogmatic, and manipulative. After all, if we are to equate Germany’s fascistic “national socialism” to mind control, then how are we to explain the free-thinking George Orwell’s long standing advocacy for socialist rebellion against fascism?

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<sup>14</sup> James Burnham, “The Managerial Revolution or What is Happening to the World Right Now” (Putnam and Co., London: 1942) p. 162

<sup>15</sup> George Orwell, “James Burnham and the Managerial Revolution” (Berkley Young Socialist League, Berkeley: 1955) p. 15

The enabling of conspiratorial and irrational political history is precisely what this paper aims to describe and discredit, not continue. It would seem that to label the political narrative of one government, party, or institution as “mind control” would be, in its own right, an act of accepting yet another distinct political narrative from a separate government, party, or institution.

Mass conscription and nationalistic propaganda were the vehicles of Nazi manipulation and the horrors of the holocaust. Just the same, they were the tools used to muster the Soviet mettle that would trounce the Nazis in Stalingrad, and later motivate a funeral of a leader so beloved that more than four million came to mourn him in death — lining up over the corpses of the millions more he killed. They were the tools used by both the socialists and the nationalists to build armies in the Spanish Civil War. So too, were mass conscription and nationalistic propaganda the tools of mobilizing the American war effort.

The Ministry of Truth.

Following the collapse of Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany at the end of World War II, the United States invited — in a project known as “Operation Paperclip” — Nazi biochemical engineers and propagandists into the United States to continue thier research into the dark and unknown corners of warfare.<sup>16</sup> Japanese war criminals, who had also thrown considerable resources into the fields of torture and the unconvnetional battlefronts of psychological, biological, and chemical warfare, were generally not given citizenship to America, unlike thier Nazi counterparts, but were given various blacksites around Asia (funded and overseen by the CIA) to continue developing thier weapons research on citizens of China, Korea, Vietnam, and

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<sup>16</sup> The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Records of the Secretary of Defense (RG 330): “Joint Intelligence Objectives Agency.” (NARA, Washington, D.C. Last Updated 2016). <<https://www.archives.gov/iwg/declassified-records/rg-330-defense-secretary>>

thier own.<sup>17</sup> Since at least the 1960s, American public sentiment — on both sides of the political aisle — has maintained an odd contradiction with respect to security, intelligence and the founding ideals of our national identity: As David Wise and Thomas B. Ross wrote in the first major public account of the CIA’s work in 1964, “An informed citizen might come to suspect that the foreign policy of the United States often works publicly in one direction and secretly through the Invisible Government in just the opposite direction.”<sup>18</sup>

In the 1950s, fearing a rising threat from the “Third World” and communist bloc, President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed the Dulles brothers, Allen and John Foster, to the head of the CIA and the State Department, respectively. The Dulles brothers, Ivy-League educated and entrenched in the white-collar world of New York City’s most elite law firms and businesses, saw themselves as defenders of a particular way of American way of life. They often explicitly reinforced Eisenhower’s (and many other officials’) fears about non-white countries and the threat of unity between communists and guerilla insurgents. More pressing, to the collective psyche of American political leadership at the time, was the pervasive belief that the Soviets and Chinese had genuinely developed their own form of mind control.<sup>19</sup> While this was merely an imaginary fiction in the 1950s, it was only a few steps away from reality. Similar to our own governmental overreach in the United States, it is an “open secret” that the Soviet Union’s Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (KGB) spent over the equivalent of \$1 billion on similar “mind control experiments” from the end of World War II through the Soviet Union’s collapse in the early 1990s.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Kinzer, “CIA Search for Mind Control” p. 25-66

<sup>18</sup> Melley, “Brain Warfare” pp. 19-40

<sup>19</sup> David H. Price, “Buying a Piece of Anthropology Part Two: The CIA and Our Tortured Past” *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 23, No. 5 (Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, London: 2007). p. 18

<sup>20</sup> Requarth and Turrell, “MIND FIELD” p. 57

Allen Dulles was one of the few individuals to comprehend the scope and horror of MKULTRA as it worked with Imperial Japanese and Nazi war criminals to develop America's own arsenal of mind control techniques. Despite the clear violations of international and constitutional law that the project presented, Allen Dulles and his staff were able to successfully convince President Eisenhower that mind control experiments on American citizens were not only essential to the national security of the state, but that any attempt at congressional oversight or public transparency might be influenced by communists who sought to undermine the project of American freedom.<sup>21</sup> It is worth noting here, in the interest of academic transparency, that former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had a son, the ordained Jesuit Cardinal Avery Dulles, who was a professor of Religion and Society at Fordham University from 1988-2008.<sup>22</sup>

Fascinatingly, John Foster Dulles' son Avery is not the only character in this story with ties to Fordham University: President Donald J. Trump attended the school as an undergraduate, in the 1960s. Both Dulles and Trump were based at the school's primary campus (Fordham Rose Hill), in the Bronx. Trump did not graduate from Fordham, as he transferred to the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania after two years.<sup>23</sup> The author of this thesis was an undergraduate student at Fordham's secondary campus in Manhattan (Fordham Lincoln Center). Coincidence, but such that might present a conflict of interest if not otherwise noted.

The paranoid delusions of elite American statesmen in the 1950s (like the Dulles brothers) would, ultimately, become the basis of one of the largest and most insidious *true* conspiracies in American history. Most records of MKULTRA experiments were destroyed in an

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<sup>21</sup> Kinzer, "CIA Search for Mind Control" p. 292-311

<sup>22</sup> Fordham University, "Avery Cardinal Dulles Biography" *Fordham University Faculty, Endowed Chairs, McGinley Chair*. <[https://www.fordham.edu/info/24165/mcginley\\_chair/6829/avery\\_cardinal\\_dulles\\_biography](https://www.fordham.edu/info/24165/mcginley_chair/6829/avery_cardinal_dulles_biography)>

<sup>23</sup> Jake Shore "A bit of a loner,' Former Classmates Remember Donald Trump in the Bronx" *The Fordham Ram*, (Fordham University Student Publication) February 4, 2021.

attempt to cover the tracks of the CIA's operatives who sought to master mind control and those of MKULTRA's chief scientist — much to the chagrin of antisemites (both those who worked within the CIA and those who spend their idle time conspiring about it) — a Jew with an affinity for mysticism. (Sidney Gottlieb, an American-born chemical scientist with a physical disability, wanted more than anything to serve his country during WWII. Many of his CIA contemporaries believe that his patriotic loyalty was betrayed by antisemitic scapegoating when MKULTRA finally came to light in the 1970s.)<sup>24</sup> Even still, the incomplete and declassified record still contains in its own right a shocking admission of the abuses conferred by the United States government unto its own citizens. The CIA once brazenly attempted, without any sort of public approval or oversight, to give the United States government the power of mind control over Americans. This is the story of “the deep state.”

What should be so surprising about the idea that the most successful tool for mind control ever created was invented here, in the United States, and then released by accident upon the citizens of the world as its power was realized?

“In psychological warfare, the weak points are flaws in how people think. If you're trying to hack a person's mind, you need to identify cognitive biases and then exploit them.”

- Christopher Wylie, digital engineering expert and social media whistleblower  
*Mindf\*ck: Cambridge Analytica and the Plot to Break America*  
(Random House, New York: October 8, 2019)

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<sup>24</sup> Kinzer, “CIA Search for Mind Control” p. 9, ch. 15 & 16



## Theory

If we are to establish that such a thing as “mind control” either does or does not definitively exist, then we must first share a common understanding of the way ideas naturally take shape in any given society, irrespective of historical context, culture, or language. Implicitly, this is the scientific question we are attempting to answer in this space. This paper seeks to establish a formal academic theory that explains the way in which mind control is occurring at scale across the globe. What separates genuine academic inquiry from conspiratorial mania is a commitment to transparent argumentation, clear citations from reputable sources, and peer review. To that end, a framework outlining this paper’s theoretical scope is provided, followed by an outline of potential shortcomings and limitations. The next section details a review of the current literature available for scholarly research and a methodology for its evaluation.

For the purpose of this paper, “mind control” is defined as outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA): “an extreme form of social influence used to indoctrinate an individual in the attitudes or beliefs of a group, usually one that is political in nature.”<sup>25</sup> This paper seeks to formally establish the ways in which such influence and indoctrination are possible and provide two recent examples in which such methods have successfully occurred: The first, an analysis of the Burmese Military’s information warfare and psychological surveillance campaign in the “information-poor” digital economy of Myanmar, which has led to the genocide of the country’s minority Rohingya people. The second, an analysis of the competing disinformation campaigns and state-sponsored mental coercion tactics presently occurring in the “information-rich” digital economy of the United States that have precipitated

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<sup>25</sup> American Psychological Association, APA Dictionary of Psychology, “Mind Control.” 2020 <<https://dictionary.apa.org/mind-control>>

widespread violence, distrust, and the sharpest political division in the U.S. since the American Civil War.

It cannot be overstated how the theory of “mind control” has historically been — and continues to be — a realm of conspiracy, skepticism, and unscientific hysteria. Even when the CIA was conducting rigorous and systematic scientific experiments with different methods of possible mind control techniques in its infamous MKULTRA program, manic paranoia gripped the minds of the government researchers who sought to unlock “the secrets of the universe.” This is not a claim meant to pathologize or exaggerate the nature of CIA research in the mid-twentieth century; many of the top officials of MKULTRA were themselves chronic users of the drugs they administered to unwitting test subjects. There are documented examples of top brass in the CIA’s most extensive mind control program regularly abusing cocaine, psilocybin, cannabis, and lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) to spark ideas about their role and objectives in national defense, and what those consequences meant for the concepts of history, time, and the cosmos.<sup>26</sup>

It were these grand, speculative beliefs that would underpin the justifications for testing many failed means of mind control on unwitting American citizens, from electroshock “rewiring” to sustained sensory deprivation to brutal sexual assaults. Even sober CIA officials’ search for the “science of mind control” was motivated by delusion. Characteristic of the CIA during this time was a stench of pervasive sexism, racism, and cultural ignorance, further compounded by a callous disregard for human rights.

The stories we believe about history influence the way we perceive the institutions and associations that shape civil society. In 1953, motivated by fears that the Soviets had obtained vast quantities of the mysterious substance LSD, Allen Dulles signed off on a particularly unique

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<sup>26</sup> Kinzer, “CIA Search for Mind Control,” Chs. 1, 4, 8, 11, & 13

American foreign policy objective. Tantalized by the possible utility of the drug as a potential truth serum or suggestive agent, Dulles gave express permission for a CIA expenditure of \$240,000 for the world's entire supply. Equal parts paranoid and misinformed, the CIA wrongly believed that the Swiss laboratory that had developed LSD, Sandoz Laboratories, was selling vast quantities of the drug to the Soviets. American intelligence agents incorrectly discerned that Sandoz was in possession of ten kilograms of the substance (what was correctly described as a "fantastically large amount," as it would have entailed roughly ten billion doses) and made it a priority of national security to obtain it all — and reverse-engineer the formula behind the drug.<sup>27</sup>

The report in question had evidently confused kilograms with grams — Sandoz sold 10 grams (still a staggeringly large shipment of 10 million doses) of LSD to the CIA in 1953, and soon after the CIA was indeed able to reverse-engineer it. As the sole proprietor of one of the world's most potent psychoactive drugs, it was, factually, the United States government behind the distribution of "acid" to hospitals, universities, and pharmaceutical companies in a massive effort to secretly dose and observe American citizens under various circumstances. The most brutal interrogations and psychological experiments happened inside psychiatric hospitals and prisons, where the subjects were disproportionately women and people of color who were ostensibly deemed "expendable" on account of their struggles with mental health or criminality.<sup>28</sup> These experiments would result in horrific instances of permanent psychological damage — with victims that included not just the severely mentally ill, but such mundane individuals as a young woman who struggled with anxiety while in her college's honors program to a black Georgia state senator and father who had become addicted to painkillers.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Kinzer, "CIA Search for Mind Control," p. 164

<sup>28</sup> Rebecca Lemov. "Brainwashing's Avatar: The Curious Career of Dr. Ewen Cameron." *Grey Room*, no. 45 (2011): pp. 61–87.

<sup>29</sup> Kinzer, "CIA Search for Mind Control" pp. 139 & 199

The distribution of the CIA's experiments was not uniform; it was also the CIA that proliferated LSD to professors at psychology departments in elite universities that directly led to its spread as a recreational drug among the intellectuals, hippies, artists, and liberals of the coastal counterculture movement that swept through New York and California in the 1960s.<sup>30, 31</sup>

What does it say about our civil society that many Americans have no idea that the CIA actually tested mind control experiments on unwitting American citizens? Or the fact that even fewer realize the CIA was one of the most daring drug cartels of the 20th century? Who would believe, even with a clearly documented historical record, that a U.S. military institution accidentally fueled the sentiments of the anti-war left through the proliferation of a drug intended to control minds?

Ultimately, LSD would not be the tool used for the creation of successful mind control. Mind control was refined to a substrate far more simple — and far more potent.

*The stories we believe about history.*

Big Brother is Watching You.

It is often said that histories of conflicts are written by the victor. But what happens to “history” in between moments of consequence? Are effects merely causes over time? Are we a victim of our history and the way it was written, or are we the victors? In 1987, anthropologist Talal Asad concluded, when comparing the civilizational histories of oral histories with those of written ones, that a reasonable historical narrative can only ever be accepted if it takes into account as wide a range as possible social elements (such as geography, economic patterns,

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 351-375

<sup>31</sup> Martin A. Lee & Bruce Shlain, Ctb. Aldous Huxley, Allen Ginsburg, Timothy Leary, William Burroughs, et. al. “Acid Dreams: The CIA, LSD, and the Sixties Rebellion” (Grove Press, New York: 1994)

cultural beliefs, etc.) and strings together a plausible story of conditions and choices that have led to the present. No such narrative will ever be perfect, nor would we want it to be — reliving the past should only take as much detail as necessary to inform our decision-making in the present and future. Asad admits, with just a hint of bitterness, that such a knowledge gap between history’s record and history’s present-day analysis makes it impossible to scientifically predict the future using interpretations of events from the past.<sup>32</sup>

Francis Fukuyama famously wrote in 1989 that humanity, witnessing the slow collapse of the Soviet Union, had reached “the end of history.” Fukuyama was a conservative scholar and security advisor for many years, whose theories drew from the philosophical tradition of German Idealism (which includes the general theory of dialectical historical progress put forward by Friedrich Hegel and critiqued by Karl Marx). In context, his “end of history” statement was a reference to the scholarship of Western social, economic, and political philosophy. His essay was followed by a more detailed book in 1992. Fukuyama argued that we had reached, at the end of the Cold War, “the end-point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”<sup>33</sup> Fukuyama would later revise this view as new threats emerged after the Cold War, such as the rise of nonstate terror organizations and the erosion of public freedoms in the digital age.<sup>34</sup>

1989 happens to be the same year that the World Wide Web was developed by researchers working at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN).<sup>35</sup> Had Asad

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<sup>32</sup> Talal Asad, “Are There Histories of Peoples Without Europe?” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Jul., 1987) p. 602

<sup>33</sup> Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History and the Last Man” (Free Press: New York, 1992).

<sup>34</sup> Francis Fukuyama, Barak Richman, Ashish Goel, Roberta R. Katz, A. Douglas Melamed, Marietje Schaake. “Report of the Working Group on Platform Scale” (Stanford Cyber Policy Center: Palo Alto, 2020)

<sup>35</sup> Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire, “The Birth of the Web.” (CERN, 2021).  
<<https://home.cern/science/computing/birth-web>>

and Fukuyama been aware of the capabilities of such a tool when they published their findings about history and its nature, they may have arrived at conclusions that were completely opposite.

The future *can* be reasonably predicted — by computers — and there are plenty of people who observe models and trends in the past and apply them to *control* models of the present and future. These systems are not perfect; they cannot yet control people’s minds or the future of society with *certainty*, although that is a goal.<sup>36</sup> Even still, difficulty achieving consistent results and instances resulting in loss of life have not deterred mind control experimentation with new technologies as they emerge — such setbacks have only led to the masking of this technology and its obfuscation from the public.

In order to prove that what you are reading is true, my thesis will present a scientific and historical narrative that attempts to be more analytically valid and morally just than other political narratives; this paper will analyze the origins and spread of several political ideas in conflict with each other and evaluate them against one another, arriving at the conclusion that the idea of “mind control” resulting in widespread civic distrust and human rights abuse is the story that is *most true*.

This paper does not claim to provide a perfect or uncontestable record of history; rather, it puts forward the idea that such a perfect record has only recently become possible.

This near-perfect historical record has transformed “history” from an inert subject to a living one. For all of “recorded human history” until now, historical reasoning was limited in so far as it required a contemporaneous thinker to study the record and rationalize present-day decision making, as Asad described. In other words, “history” was only relevant for as long as one decided to spend time thinking about it.

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<sup>36</sup> Shoshana Zuboff, “The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight For a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power” (Public Affairs, New York, 2019) pp. 316-317

We now have tools capable of the near-continuous documentation of events, thoughts, feelings, and shared ideas of every individual “on the grid,” and machines that have a remarkably precise ability to analyze and infer decision-making patterns from these massive sets of data. When a question passes through your mind, and you choose to take out your smartphone and search the internet for an answer to that question — you have essentially just *sold a thought* to brokers for advertisers.<sup>37</sup> Silicon Valley would not have become the area of the most concentrated wealth in the history of humanity if every component of its products were completely free. Messaging apps and social media regularly scan for patterns in user input for emotional cues and other insights about our psychology and engagement.<sup>38</sup> A basic technology of all websites, whether visited in a browser or a mobile application, measures the amount of time you spend analyzing each part of a page.<sup>39</sup> Internet service providers store and sell this data contemporaneously with the companies that provide products in the first place.

More easily understood as “history” are the ways in which our location data are scanned for patterns,<sup>40</sup> or how cameras can identify individuals through facial recognition and associate our day-to-day behavior with files in government and corporate databases.<sup>41</sup> This sort of information is collected constantly by any entity that has ever been “accepted” to place software for itself and its “third-party affiliates” on your computer, phone, or person — or by any publicly-placed camera, computer, or sensor — whether it is owned by a company, a political

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<sup>37</sup> Zuboff, “Surveillance Capitalism” pp. 14-18

<sup>38</sup> Daniel Mochon, Karen Johnson, Janet Schwartz, And Dan Ariely. “What Are Likes Worth? A Facebook Page Field Experiment.” *Journal of Marketing Research* 54, no. 2 (2017) pp. 306–317.

<sup>39</sup> Caverly, David C., and Bill Broderick. “Techtalk: Advanced Webpage Design.” *Journal of Developmental Education* 20, no. 2 (1996) pp. 36–37.

<sup>40</sup> Schwartz, Paul M. “Property, Privacy, and Personal Data.” *Harvard Law Review* 117, no. 7 (2004): pp. 2056–2128.

<sup>41</sup> TG. “FACIAL RECOGNITION: Forget Anonymity.” *ASEE Prism* 21, no. 5 (2012): p. 13.

campaign, or a military spy network.<sup>42</sup> More often than not, those with a political interest in controlling information and the facts used to make decisions don't even bother to ask for your permission before collecting data about your behavior, beliefs, and vulnerabilities.

Psychologists tend to disagree about many things, and as a result the discipline is often referred to as a “soft science.” It is one of the more recent fields of academic investigation, scientific study, and formal knowledge and therefore has many limitations; after all, how can a human observer objectively test scientific laws about human behavior when they themselves are limited to human behavior? Yet, for all its possible shortcomings, there are a handful of well-established facts of psychology that the science holds to be true in any circumstance, regardless of culture, language, or historical era.

The most important idea in psychology, for the purposes of our investigation, is that cognitive experience and human behavior are *always* shaped by habit.<sup>43</sup> Even when a new situation, problem, or pattern emerges, human beings will attempt to form new habits or otherwise adapt their experience into existing patterns in order to make sense of the world. It is why, in times of crisis, we cling to our old habits or otherwise seek to find a “new normal.” Constant digital data collection allows for the large-scale analysis of daily, individual habits.

Those who have access to the “other end” of the digital tools we use observe *us* and our habits. As a result, they are capable of knowing us better than we know ourselves. In the hands of the CIA, that data was used to program drone strikes that assassinated potential terrorists at home before they committed crimes.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Bergemann, Dirk, and Alessandro Bonatti. “Selling Cookies.” *American Economic Journal: Microeconomics* 7, no. 3 (2015): pp. 259–294.

<sup>43</sup> Andrews, B. R. “Habit.” *The American Journal of Psychology* 14, no. 2 (1903): pp. 121–149.

<sup>44</sup> Michael J. Boyle. “The Costs and Consequences of Drone Warfare.” *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-) 89, no. 1 (2013): pp. 1–29.



In hands that don't favor such a direct approach, communications and daily habit data can be used to put together patterns of information that change what we believe to be real.

What we have on our hands today, and what we will continue to contend with as a species for the rest of our evolution, is a more and more perfect historical record told in data, constantly processed and re-processed by machines capable of modeling more and more perfect reasoning. This record can be accessed by those in power instantaneously — a new form of analysis of the past and prediction of the future that takes only moments to compute.<sup>45</sup>

It would seem that “history” hasn't come to an end at all. It's merely just begun.

“A rich tapestry of our lives can increasingly be woven together by aggregating and analyzing each touch—and each conversation, oral or written, held by billions of people, every day.”

- Karen Rommelfanger and Álvaro Fernández Ibáñez, Science journalists “Welcome to the Ultimate Neuroscience Lab: Your Smartphone” (Opinion) (Scientific American, September 14, 2021)

### **Literature Review and Method of Analysis**

The literature produced regarding conspiracy theories of mind control is remarkably expansive and unreliable; perhaps more so than any other subject ever scrutinized academically. After the introduction of the first commercial search engine for the World Wide Web in 1994, information about MKULTRA, mind control, and military coercion over free populations spread rapidly throughout society. As much as we scholars might be tempted to discount and ignore the most ridiculous corners of conspiracy as a waste of our time, this research paper makes an honest

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<sup>45</sup> David Karpf, “Analytic Activism and Its Limitations” *Social Media + Society* January-March 2018: pp. 1–10. (The George Washington University, Washington, D.C.: 2018)

point to analyze the origin of popular misunderstandings and the core of public distrust, and so treats conspiratorial texts (even the most outlandish and incorrect ones) with intellectual honesty.

As a necessary limitation of scholarly research in the English language, this academic paper will rest its argument, intended to *persuade* the reader of the concrete existence of mind control, on knowledge produced and accepted by accredited academic and military scholars in English. As an approach to understanding social phenomena, this strategy provides a transparent lineage to other published ideas, cited in footnotes.<sup>46</sup> This paper makes the assumption that citation and transparent scholarship are the two key vehicles to transmit understanding and knowledge to others, but acknowledges the role that intellectual abstraction — the process of making things harder to understand by “zooming out” and getting less and less focused on real-world examples — has contributed to the erosion of “common sense” in the 21st century.

This paper seeks to work against that phenomenon and provide a clear argument that distills difficult, abstract information in a way that can be understood by those without the privilege of a college degree, in an effort to dispel the myths that prevent standard knowledge and facts in the English language. However, by the nature of modern academic language, there will inevitably be those who find this paper too complex, technical, or otherwise *esoteric* to understand. The author invites critique, counter-research, and rational discussion of the ideas dissected herein.<sup>47</sup> The desperate hope of this paper is for the re-establishment of common civility, freedom of thought, and general peace among all English-speakers. This stands in direct opposition to the dangerous violence of today’s “culture wars.” By the conclusion of this paper,

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<sup>46</sup> Connors, Robert J. “The Rhetoric of Citation Systems, Part II: Competing Epistemic Values in Citation.” *Rhetoric Review* 17, no. 2 (1999): pp. 219–245.

<sup>47</sup> *Author’s Note*: A second edition of this thesis, published as a comprehensive book incorporating criticism and using clearer language, featuring more literary prose, and adding more detail, is a distinct possibility.

we will have established a clear historical and theoretical throughline establishing the concrete existence of *mind control* and two of its current uses that have resulted in real-world violence.

While there surely have been “deep-state” conspiracies, drug experiments, pedophiles,<sup>48</sup> and freemasons<sup>49</sup> involved in the political history of America, trying to identify the urgent, “hidden” roots in the history of *mind control* is an intellectual distraction from problems that are much more recent and much less complicated. The history of mind control is not hidden. We see it every day in the social chaos that is tearing our society apart. Mind control is an advanced digital weapon being used by several actors across the globe on people’s knowledge of historical and cultural information through their personal computers — hostile irrationality, extreme paranoia, and deadly anger are the goal. It is urgent that we fix the problem: through patience.

The mid-to-late 90s (the days of the early internet) saw an explosion of social mistrust and decentralized myth-spreading, rivaled only by what we have seen in recent years.<sup>50</sup> There are countless examples that could be dissected and debunked within the context of this paper, but doing so would merely be a waste of our time — as the vehicles of mind control move with such rapidity that there is no use in trying to dispel myths one by one. The only way to think outside the box is to see the whole picture: In early-internet texts from the 1990s, such as *Bloodlines of Illuminati* and the *Trance Formation of America*,<sup>51</sup> modeled after genuine scholarly research but wildly incoherent and pathologically paranoid, we find the distinctive patterns of disinformation that are currently driving the large-scale distraction and lasting cognitive harm by way of the

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<sup>48</sup> Brock Colyar, Kelsey Hurwitz, Charlotte Klein, Ezekiel Kweku, Amy Larocca, Yinka Martins, Adam K. Raymond, Matthew Schneier, Matt Stieb, and James D. Walsh, “Who Was Jeffrey Epstein Calling? A close study of his circle — social, professional, transactional — reveals a damning portrait of elite New York.” *New York Magazine*, *Intelligencer*, July 22, 2019

<sup>49</sup> Neil L. York, “Freemasons and the American Revolution.” *The Historian* 55, no. 2 (1993): pp. 315–330.

<sup>50</sup> Irene Ward, “How Democratic Can We Get?: The Internet, the Public Sphere, and Public Discourse.” *JAC* 17, no. 3 (1997): pp. 365–379.

<sup>51</sup> *Author’s Note*: A more complete analysis of these texts, among other popular conspiracies, ought to be completed.

largest military operations against civilian populations in history. All the facts of the case are out in public view; the details are just so complicated and the characters so polarizing that the autocrats and dictators pulling the strings are confident we will remain fooled as we barrel toward our own self-destruction.

We should not feel tempted to jump down and investigate each “rabbit hole” we come across, but rather understand how such *psychological burrowing* is made possible by malicious political actors in our language. What we seek, in this paper, is to solve a problem that plagues most online conversations today, which have been increasingly bleeding over into real-world consequences.<sup>52</sup> One might imagine that ill-informed literature, when consumed quickly, casually, and carelessly, spreads mental illness like it was any other disease. A close, critical reading of Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* can be a useful way to understand how propaganda works and spreads violence. Urgent, mass readings of *Mein Kampf* without proper tools of knowledge and cognitive awareness led to Adolf Hitler’s ascension to power.

All of this isn’t to say that the way out of our present crisis of knowledge is removing all of this false or harmful information from the internet. Bending the concept of “free speech” in order to regulate the irrational and incoherent conversations being had about “mind control” — utilizing draconian tools on information such as censorship, denial, and redaction — will not solve the problem.<sup>53</sup> The author of this thesis sharply rejects those concepts as solutions, and would assert that *they are in fact the origin of the widespread distrust we see today* — governmental controls on knowledge and information have always been morally wrong, and as we will explore in the case studies of this thesis, such practices are precisely how successful

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<sup>52</sup> Hochschild, Jennifer L., and Katherine Levine Einstein. “Do Facts Matter? Information and Misinformation in American Politics.” *Political Science Quarterly* 130, no. 4 (2015): pp. 585–624.

<sup>53</sup> Asher Lawson and Hemant Kakkar “Personality Type, as well as Politics, Predicts Who Shares Fake News” *Scientific American, Mind & Brain*. (November 12, 2021)

“mind control” is made possible. If one is able to step back and suspend the endless waterfall of delusionary thinking that powers blind adherence to false information, the promises of knowledge, education, and free thinking offer a way out of the strangest and most frightening corners of “secret history” and “dark psychology.”

As an undergraduate thesis, this paper is not sufficient to address some of the larger and more concerning questions about *mind control* in context. COVID-19 vaccine misinformation, conspiracies about public tragedies, and overhyping trivial news details to the detriment of problems that begin “upriver” are areas of exploration for further scholarship. As we move further away from pseudoscience and speculation, the argument in this paper will utilize a framework for understanding the psychological and political science of propaganda, followed by two case studies with research and analysis of successful mind control through concerted, state-backed, and psychologically-targeted information warfare campaigns — supplementing, where necessary, original discussion of non-scholarly published news media, social media trends, and amateur literature.<sup>54</sup>

Any original idea will begin, by definition, as an unpopular one. To establish a formal theory of “mind control” inherently necessitates that, within the space of these pages, an argument is put forward that allows us to focus on one particular description of an abstract and intangible phenomena that cannot be directly perceived. There is no doubt that such a project will draw immediate skepticism from some — after all, as this paper is written in the year 2021, many of us are bitterly divided on other abstract and intangible scientific phenomena, such as

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<sup>54</sup> *Author's Note:* Other relevant historical background that is too complex to be distilled for this particular publication include the 2014 Russian invasion of Crimea and the development of Russia's Internet Research Agency (IRA), as well as “state mindfulness” in China and India, where both countries have set national limits on media consumption and digitally surveil popular figures like musicians and the Dalai Lama in order to control the bounds of religious and cultural conversation.

virology and climate change. The task we have in front of us now is to describe a model of how ideas form and move throughout society, how that model has changed in the digital age, and how we can impartially differentiate between the political concepts of *free thinking*, *persuasion*, and *mind control*.

War is Peace.

In the aftermath of World War II, in the midst of the Cold War and at the height of the American Civil Rights Movement in 1964, Herbert Marcuse published one of his most enduring and important works, “One-Dimensional Man.” Marcuse’s theories, speeches, and writings entered the American political arena in Massachusetts and New York at the same time as the psychedelic-inspired counterculture movement among East Coast students and intellectuals. The core philosophy of his work might summarily be described by one sentence, that “the most effective and enduring form of warfare against liberation is the implanting of material and intellectual needs that perpetuate obsolete forms of the struggle for existence.”<sup>55</sup> In other words, social control is best achieved by fooling people into fighting over manufactured social conflicts.

Another *critical theorist* from the Frankfurt School of social research and philosophy, Marcuse was recruited by the OSS during World War II after fleeing persecution from the Nazis. Marcuse was an academic researcher, anti-Nazi propagandist, and German cultural analyst. He served the U.S. military intelligence apparatus during World War II and into the first years of the Cold War, frequently criticizing both Soviet and Nazi Socialism despite being an outspoken

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<sup>55</sup> Herbert Marcuse, “One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrialized Society” *One-Dimensional Society: The New Forms of Control* (Beacon Press, Boston: 1964)

Socialist himself.<sup>56</sup> He retired from military service and entered the world of Ivy League education in 1951, becoming a public critical theorist of American Capitalism through the same lens as James Burnham, arguing against the rising social, political, and economic controls of *managerial* capitalism. Marcuse was especially critical of short, emotion-based political catchphrases that were — and still are — spread by politicians and mass media.<sup>57</sup>

However, the problems that Marcuse was able to articulate, while surely of interest to all of us studying the social sciences, is not the thesis of “mind control” that this paper puts forward. The theory of mind control requires a truly *scientific* understanding of psychology, knowledge, media, and power. Conspiracy, mania, conjecture, and ridicule have long dominated the conversation that we are embarking upon here. They will not help us resolve our current issue in defining the boundaries of social reality.

In order to parse out what is real about society from what is a lie, what can be proven by empirical testing and what is mere speculation, we will need an investigative tool with which to view and understand new information as we encounter it. This tool will need to be a genuinely scientific understanding of society — the transformation of social science into a “hard science” like physics, chemistry, or biology. This gap was identified by Thomas Kuhn in his seminal work on the history of scientific development, “*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*” (originally published in 1962, but updated and re-published several times, most recently in 2012). The essence of our crisis of information, then, is an anthropological paradigm shift in the way we view the “soft sciences” of psychology, sociology, history, politics, and economics.

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<sup>56</sup> Franz Neumann, Herbert Marcuse, Otto Kirchheimer, and Raffaele Laudani. “Secret reports on Nazi Germany: the Frankfurt School contribution to the war effort.” (Princeton University Press: Princeton. 2013.)

<sup>57</sup> Herbert Marcuse, “One-Dimensional Man” (1964)

This author acknowledges, with no shortage of amusement, how Kuhn's term "paradigm shift" itself has been robbed of its essence by frequent popular misuse. Kuhn has a particularly topical note about individuals stuck in the established methodologies (ie. "paradigms") of an intellectual discipline: Kuhn writes, "the member of a mature scientific community is like the typical character of Orwell's *1984*, the victim of a history rewritten by the powers that be."<sup>58</sup> In no respect is this meant as an insult to the intelligence of any individual who currently has an interest in politics, sociology, or history at large. It is merely meant as a justification for the following conversation about the need for a true *paradigm shift* modeled after one of Kuhn's scientific revolutions.

That shift, in a single phrase, is the transformation of seeing the "history of science" into seeing "history-as-science." Now that the collection of data on day-to-day historical trends and individual psychological habits is possible (for those several billion people who are a part of the "mobile internet")<sup>59</sup> it is no longer appropriate to view political, social, and economic trends purely through the lenses of the artistic humanities. Those with a concrete understanding of the science of social power are operating several orders of magnitude above the thoughts of any singular observer of social trends, amateur, professional, or academic. Unfortunately, the consequences of such a wide knowledge gap creates a system where journalists, politicians, police officers, activists, scholars, bureaucrats and countless others are playing with intellectual matchsticks against the psychological nuclear arsenals of the world's largest tech companies and their allies — and adversaries — in the world of covert military intelligence.

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<sup>58</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions," (University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1962) p.166

<sup>59</sup> Ralph Schroeder, "The Internet in Theory." In *Social Theory after the Internet: Media, Technology, and Globalization*, (UCL Press, London: 2018.)



This author proposes that this is the primary reason why we have seen such remarkable widespread hostility and distrust of public institutions, such as (to make a gross oversimplification) Liberals' frustration with policing and corporations and Conservatives' anger toward mainstream media and government services. We are all upset that we have not been given the whole truth to make educated decisions, but we have been fooled into blaming the “other side” for our misfortunes. In reality, most individuals having conversations about “politics” and “social trends” are operating on several layers of abstraction below what is actually observable by those in power. We have reached the nadir of the epistemic concept of the “social bubble;” following the hard social lockdowns of 2020, those social bubbles can now be spied on, managed, created, or popped at will by countless political campaigns and military agencies.<sup>60</sup>

Plato described our current issue in very crude and demeaning terms when he offered his *Allegory of the Cave* — a thought experiment designed to provoke the belief that a philosopher is capable of seeing more dimensions to reality than the average person, and should therefore be trusted, even when the natural impulse seems to tend toward shock, enragement, or denial.<sup>61</sup> There are plenty of other examples of this social-scientific phenomenon throughout history. Moving from classical Europe to the Renaissance, we can point to the radical cosmological beliefs of Copernicus and Galileo, whose arguments about the sun's place in the center of the solar system earned them both notoriety and legal punishment from the Catholic Church.<sup>62</sup>

In the modern era, we can point to Charles Darwin, whose fundamentally humanist and egalitarian theory of evolution was labeled heretical by some and adopted as a justification for

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<sup>60</sup> *Author's Note:* For a detailed analysis of this claim, consult the “American Autocracy” case study.

<sup>61</sup> John Henry Wright, “The Origin of Plato's Cave” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 17 (Department of the Classics, Harvard University. Cambridge: 1906), pp. 131-142

<sup>62</sup> Joseph C. Pitt, “Galileo, Rationality and Explanation” *Philosophy of Science*, Mar., 1988, Vol. 55, No. 1 (The University of Chicago Press for the Philosophy of Science Association. Chicago: 1988), pp. 87-103

racism by others.<sup>63</sup> Less well known, but no less pertinent to today's issue, is Ignaz Semmelweis; a Hungarian doctor who, in 1847, expressed belief in soap and the health benefits that come from washing one's hands. Semmelweis's attempts to save lives through the practice of washing hands was derided and rejected by the professional medical community of Hungary so violently that he suffered a nervous breakdown and was committed to a psychiatric hospital. Inside, he was beaten by guards who presumably sliced open his hand to torture him — which would later become infected with gangrene and cause his death at 47.<sup>64</sup>

The difficulty with refusing to believe in scientific laws is that they remain *real* even when we do not understand them. As Semmelweis argued until his early death, refusing to believe in germ theory (and by extension, its scientific conclusions, like the effectiveness of masks and vaccines) puts you — or your patients — at a higher likelihood of dying from a viral or bacterial infection. Ignorance about electromagnetic radiation does not prevent you from using a computer, telephoning a loved one, or heating up food in the microwave. In the same breath, that ignorance will not defend you if your patch of the Earth were to ever suffer a nuclear attack or accident.

Just the same, skepticism about the scientific pursuit of *mind control* does not make one immune to the more subtle quirks of computational social psychology and political science — whether one is a voter, a journalist, a soldier, a police officer, a bureaucrat, a business owner, a laborer, a parent, a teacher, or a politician. The academic literature selected for use in this thesis operates on a set of assumptions, and those assumptions will of course have biases and limitations. To be explicit, the base assumption made by this paper is the following: We are able

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<sup>63</sup> John P. Jackson, Jr. and Nadine M. Weidman, "The Origins of Scientific Racism" *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, Winter, 2005/2006, No. 50 (The JBHE Foundation, Inc., New York: 2006), pp. 66-79

<sup>64</sup> Patti J. Miller, "Semmelweis." *Infection Control*, Sep. - Oct., 1982, Vol. 3, No. 5 (Cambridge University Press for The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America: Cambridge [UK]: 1982), pp. 405-409

to reach a conclusion about the reality and nature of ideas by observing the stark differences in beliefs between groups of people. We are forced to make this assumption based on the present state of affairs in political science, media studies, psychology, sociology, and anthropology (among other fields). In this paper, we must devise a truly *scientific* tool for parsing out the difference between objectivity and subjectivity, fact from fiction, news from opinion.

One can notice more aspects about reality if one has a wider perspective; this is why we “zoom out” on digital map applications when we need to see the route we intend to take. Perhaps at that level, we can see how the spreading of some ideas and the subverting of others works as a scientific phenomenon, and begin to make moral judgments (ie. “free thinking is good” ; “persuasion is fair” ; and “mind control is bad”) about the spread of information. From there, we can observe how the targeting of civilian populations by way of cloud-based information warfare is a scientifically derived practice of genuine, successful mind control and a threat to peace, prosperity, and freedom in our world. In order to break the dangerous and violent patterns in social society today, we must acquire a greater knowledge than the tools we are stuck using. As mentioned above, abstraction, complexity, and “zooming out” have surely been part of our problem as specialized education has excluded people from fair and reasonable conversation. This was a problem of modern society identified by the intellectuals fleeing persecution from Nazi Germany, the critical theorists of the Frankfurt school, but also by George Orwell, most directly in his essay “Politics and the English Language.”<sup>65</sup>

In the academic practice of political science and psychology, the scientific conclusion we are trying to reach about our ability to understand reality — that we can find the whole truth in

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<sup>65</sup> George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language” (Sahara Publisher Books: 1946)

the spaces created by observing all perspectives, true and untrue — is a postmodernist interpretation of knowledge known as *constructivism*.

Freedom is Slavery.

If we seek to bring about a paradigm shift in English political discourse utilizing the postmodern thinking of George Orwell and the intellectuals who fled Nazi Germany, we should first understand the boundaries of our current paradigms. The theory of “liberalism” is one that philosophers and political actors used to construct free society in Western civilization after the “realist” political philosophy of European monarchs. Liberalism is a fundamentally positive attitude about facts that assumes all knowledge is knowable, attainable, or otherwise fully comprehensible to any individual dedicated enough to search for it. Realists (one might think of Niccolo Macchiavelli’s *The Prince*) tend to view the truth as a typically inconsequential detail that can be used — in special cases — equally to help or defeat those with power. The analytic paradigm of “constructivism” treats both of these approaches to knowledge as shortsighted and biased. According to constructivists, there is no such thing as objective truth or reality. Contrary to the establishing philosophies of the Enlightenment, which has served as the basis of Western political society since the first Industrial Revolution,<sup>66</sup> constructivists argue that knowledge is always subjective. Instead of a binary between “fact” and “ignorance,” psychologists believe that decisions are made using a *construct* of experience, association, and reference that is unique to the internal mental capacity of each human being currently living.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Bernard Bailyn, “Political Experience and Enlightenment Ideas in Eighteenth-Century America.” *The American Historical Review* 67, no. 2 (1962): pp. 339–351.

<sup>67</sup> Jean Piaget (Trans. Anita Tenzer). “Six Psychological Studies,” (Vintage Books, New York: 1968)

To remain consistent in our categorization of formally-defined knowledge, the APA defines *constructivism* as “the theoretical perspective, central to the work of Jean Piaget, that people actively build their perception of the world and interpret objects and events that surround them in terms of what they already know. Thus, their current state of knowledge guides processing, substantially influencing how (and what) new information is acquired.”<sup>68</sup> In simpler terms, we are only able to rationally explain what we have already seen. Imagination, prediction, analysis, and conclusion are still valuable, of course, but limited by what we already know.

Constructivism was originally a theory applied to childhood developmental psychology, but in the latter half of the twentieth century, it was applied by academics and philosophers to political science. Ultimately, constructivism is not a theory in opposition to the theoretical paradigms of liberalism or realism, but rather a psychological, scientific explanation of how *theories* can come to exist in the first place. A widespread understanding of “constructivism” as the basis of all knowledge is the necessary shift we must adopt in the age of digital psychology and data based history-as-science. Failure to do so is damnation to a world without equal opportunity for truth, knowledge, learning, or freedom. This isn’t to say that individuals should not critically engage with other theories, “thinking for oneself” necessarily draws conclusions from other values, ideals, and theoretical paradigms, some of which are yet to be invented. This argument is merely a suggestion that understanding *mind control* requires knowledge of how language-based thinking works within the context of knowledge. Constructivism *is* that understanding, drawn from the traditions of cognitive science, social psychology and philosophy.

The people who *commodify* individual thoughts and feelings (internet companies, advertisers, political campaigns, the media, militaries, and countless others) use *constructed*

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<sup>68</sup> APA Dictionary of Psychology, “Constructivism.”

*ideas* to influence minds by the millions. Many of them advocate for outright social control. Peter Thiel, an incredibly influential tech venture-capitalist, billionaire, and political lobbyist from the United States, wrote in 2009 “I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible.”<sup>69</sup> As one of the primary investors in American communication technology, financial futures, and political campaigns in recent years, Thiel’s perspective is one that should raise our concern. This paper puts forward the notion that constructivism (and its closely related negative, *deconstructivism*) are the chief tools of the architects of mind control, and that freeing oneself from such a system requires at least understanding the concepts of how constructivism and deconstructivism might be used; to *deconstruct common knowledge* and *construct false ideas* in society. At the present time, it would seem every social debate we are currently having in “modern society” revolves around one of these two concepts. As a result, the only way out of our seemingly endless cycle of destructive political habits is postmodern philosophy.

Defining the world in the ways a constructivist does (drawing from “postmodern” ideas and “critical theory” in order to *think critically about modern problems*) allows us to make sense of a great many logical contradictions that are currently petrifying society. For instance, one who has ever studied “liberal” political philosophers, such as Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, or Alexander Hamilton, might come to wonder: how does “liberal” mean both the foundational philosophical underpinning of international classic free market capitalism and republican ethics *as well as* a pejorative to be used by Republicans toward left-leaning political aspirations of Democrats in the United States? A constructivist would argue that the word itself, “liberal,” isn’t essentially meaningful — only by speaking English does one arrive at an

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<sup>69</sup> Peter Thiel, “The Education of a Liberterian” *The Cato Institute* (Washington, D.C.: April 13, 2009) <<https://www.cato-unbound.org/2009/04/13/peter-thiel/education-libertarian>>

opportunity to understand its meaning, and once there, its meaning is spread and changed over time by people using it in different historical contexts.

In the past, “liberal” was a synonym for “free,” and it was a value shared by the Western philosophers of the Enlightenment, tracing a genealogy that extends to both American conservatism and progressivism. This may seem like a flimsy or contradictory argument to some given the context of today’s most popular cultural conversations, but it holds up under investigation; when talking about “liberalism” we are talking about the origin of such phrases as Patrick Henry’s “give me liberty or give me death”<sup>70</sup> or the Declaration of Independence’s “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”<sup>71</sup> In the present, however, “liberal” has frequently been used as a political weapon to characterize any policy, institution, or individual as unfair and biased, often convincing opponents that such “liberal” biases are fundamentally unfree and unamerican.<sup>72</sup> The fact that American English speakers — on both sides of today’s political debates — are making nonsensical arguments *against* liberty and critical thinking is an indication of how dire our current crisis of knowledge is. The basis of American national identity is absolutely under attack! Not by the average Liberal or Conservative, however, but by manufactured mania and misunderstanding.

Fundamentally, there is a massive political conspiracy that we should worry about: that individuals’ data patterns have been collected and analyzed by campaigners and military organizations through the internet, enabling the viewing and sharing of fake or reactionary

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<sup>70</sup> Patrick Henry, "Patrick Henry's Speech to the Virginia House of Burgesses, Richmond, Virginia March 23, 1775," Historic American Documents, Lit2Go Edition, (1817)

<sup>71</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Ed. The Committee of Five "The Declaration of Independence" 1776. Available Online at the United States of America National Archives, Washington, D.C. <<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration>>

<sup>72</sup> Tucker Carlson & Scooter Downey, "Patriot Purge" *Fox Nation: Tucker Carlson Originals*, November 2021

conspiracies on their personal devices. It's a play taken straight out of *1984: Two-Minutes Hate* displayed on the *telescreens* that watch our every move, every day.

Surely, in either case, the idea that “liberalism” even *exists* as a cause for political organization (regardless if we are organizing for or against it) is constructivism at work. To believe in the existence of an abstract quality of moral and ethical being is to subscribe to one particular vein of *persuasion*. In the case of “liberty” such persuasion is enshrined in the arguments established by Enlightenment philosophers arguing against absolute monarchies and in favor of individual rights in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.<sup>73</sup>

These widespread misunderstandings are not the fault of the media, activists, politicians, or educators. Rather, it is the fault of criminals and military agencies who have hijacked those institutions through the large-scale *mind control* of free citizens. In the “American Autocracy” case study section of this paper, we will revisit these claims in context, examining evidence that shows how a small group of individuals working with military spies abroad have sought to overthrow American democracy, steal free and fair elections, control popular opinion through the mainstream media, institute one-party rule, and hand the future of our country to one man. Frustratingly, this story is not a hidden one *at all* — and there are many who already understand the evidence that exists. The reason that “proof” has failed to lead to justice, prosecution, and the restoration of peaceful, free society is because of a widespread failure to comprehend how digital media and cloud-computing based mind control technology is being used; targeting the day-to-

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<sup>73</sup> Stephen Eric Bronner, “The Great Divide: Enlightenment, Counter-Enlightenment, And The Public Sphere.” *In Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*, pp. 61–80. Columbia University Press, New York: 2004.

*Author's note:* Bronner's “Radical Engagement” is a description of a political strategy of citizen-led cultural campaigns that look almost exactly like what we have on both sides today.



day conversations being held by most Americans has provided cover for the despicable and violent operations of this conspiracy.

This is a model that has been exported to other countries as well — and free societies around the world are currently staring down the barrel of these weapons. This is why the other case study of this paper analyzes the digital media and culture of the Southeast Asian country of Myanmar, which is a much smaller, much simpler, and much more fragile Democracy than our own. The same tactics being used to institute a one-party, fascist military takeover in Myanmar<sup>74</sup> are being used in many countries throughout the world today, especially as populations in developing countries gain access to social media and the internet.

Establishing political ideals based on historical unreality is the chief vehicle of mind control. Jason Stanley's *How Propaganda Works* (2016) argues through illustrative examples how effective propaganda utilizes certain *group identities* to appeal to shared political beliefs. The concept of a political group identity is underwritten by psychological science — specifically the construction of *habits* and *self-worth*. Group members, who often operate politically from a limited set of data by the design of the would-be mind controllers, are given information that causes any conclusion reached by rational evaluations to reinforce belonging to a particular group. In historical terms, we may feel the urge to point to the Nazi party, or the Soviet Socialists. This would be a helpful way of looking at things, but it does not account for the advances in technology that have enabled propagandists to mathematically read the footprints of an individual's habits, thoughts, and fears.

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<sup>74</sup> *Author's Note:* Eagle-eyed readers will likely notice my focus on the psychological tactics of militaries in East Asia. I highly recommend interested scholars study Edward Said's *Orientalism* for a critical reading of this paper, as this thesis leans heavily on presumed Orientalist biases. Criticism is invited.

Propaganda, by its essential nature, exploits a social or political ideal. Paradoxically, the rational decision-making performed by the receiver of propagandistic messaging pushes them into increasingly *irrational* positions as they attempt to maintain a rigid narrative identity and sense of self-worth as defined by the larger group. Because these rational decisions are made out of intentionally limited information, most people being shown propaganda are not aware of the influence it has on their perception of reality. Ultimately, all propaganda, whether sincere or insincere, truthful or rooted in fiction, serves the purpose of manipulating individuals to adopt mass sentiment through the construction or erosion of shared ideals.<sup>75</sup>

The idea that propaganda can be truthful or sincere warrants particular concern. If propaganda can be truthful, what differentiates it from the harm wrought by deceitful, ignorant, or insincere propaganda? Are we to conclude that the face of the 20th century Civil Rights Movement, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. should be held in the same esteem as Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, simply because both men were explicit advocates of the use of “propaganda” to construct political reality for their countries?<sup>76</sup>

A definition of “propaganda” would be helpful in sorting out this apparent moral contradiction. Returning to the APA Dictionary of Psychology, “propaganda” is defined as “a method of social control that attempts to strengthen or change the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of others by presenting highly biased information or sometimes disinformation. It usually involves an appeal to emotion that is designed to win support for an idea or course of action or to belittle or disparage the ideas or programs of others.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Stanley, “How Propaganda Works” p. 52

<sup>76</sup> Stanley, “How Propaganda Works” pp. 37-38

<sup>77</sup> APA Dictionary of Psychology, “Propaganda.”

The propaganda of *both* Dr. King and Goebbels fit this description. Both men employed highly biased information appealing to emotion that was designed to win support of political ideals and a particular vision of social organization. However, one vein of propaganda stands head and shoulders above the other: propaganda based on facts intended to secure political freedom and social rights for Black people while disparaging racism should make us less uncomfortable than propaganda based on lies intended to fuel the genocide of Jewish people. Yet there is no denying the fact that such a judgement is a *moral* argument, and one that means nothing in the face of the confounding concept of *moral subjectivity*. Are we to leave the question of propaganda to the wind, determining that people need to come to their own conclusions about how just it is based on their tastes, biases, and language? Such a conclusion seems remarkably unscientific and irrational.

Again, let us pinch the map and “zoom out” to answer this question. One of the preeminent American philosophers of the 19th and 20th centuries, living in the time between the abolition of slavery and the passage of landmark civil rights legislation in the 1960s, was a Black man named W.E.B. DuBois. In addition to being a brilliant essayist and philosophical reasoner, DuBois was also a pioneer in the practice of “*information design*.” Information design, also called “information visualization” or “instructional design” is a realm of both art and psychology that helps those hoping to spread abstract ideas by providing a framework for effective visual communication of data.<sup>78</sup> In other words, information design is the act of showing data in a way that supports belief in a certain conclusion. Just like propaganda, information design can be used

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<sup>78</sup> Alan R. Hevner, Salvatore T. March, Jinsoo Park and Sudha Ram. “Design Science in Information Systems Research” *MIS Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Management Information Systems Research Center, University of Minnesota. Minneapolis: 2004), pp. 75-105

to support free ideals or erode them. And just like Dr. King, DuBois considered his own work, in the fields of philosophy and design, as *propaganda*.<sup>79</sup>

The term “information design” itself is one that emerged more recently than DuBois or Dr. King, generally as a description of the lessons gleaned from successful propaganda applied to the realm of displaying data through a graphic medium. In DuBois’ day, this looked like printed charts and graphs that could explain the economic status of and violence perpetrated against Black people.<sup>80</sup> It was something he explicitly referred to as “propaganda” and created in an attempt to break down the racist beliefs of American and European society at the time. To be sure, Dr. Martin Luther King also similarly described his own work as a Christian minister as “propaganda,” though that work was designed for television and radio as opposed to print.<sup>81</sup>

Ignorance is Strength.

We might reasonably conclude that belief and participation in any political system requires, to some degree, encountering and accepting propaganda. Education is always, on some level, indoctrination to social constraints as individuals emerge from childhood ignorance into social consciousness.<sup>82</sup> Indoctrination, in this case, is not inherently negative — it is the “social contract” that entails acceptance and respect for fair and ethical constraints on social behavior, such as legal rights and civil freedom for all members of society. “Indoctrination” also describes the process by which a formal education is conferred, such as when a *doctor* is given a license to

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<sup>79</sup> DuBois, W. E. B. “Phylon: Science or Propaganda.” *Phylon* (1940-1956) 5, no. 1 (1944): p. 8.

<sup>80</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, ed. Whitney Battle-Baptiste & Britt Rusert. “W.E.B. Du Bois's Data Portraits: Visualizing Black America” (Princeton Architectural Press Princeton: 2018)

<sup>81</sup> Stanley, “How Propaganda Works” pp. 37-38

<sup>82</sup> Walter A. Kamiat, “State Indoctrination and the Protection of Non-State Voices in the Schools: Justifying a Prohibition of School Library Censorship.” *Stanford Law Review* 35, no. 3 (1983): pp. 497–535.

perform medical services or a business is given a permit to serve food (or when an undergraduate publishes a thesis in social science). But of course, we cannot ignore that indoctrination — just like propaganda — can be very negative and coercive, too.

Again, we have arrived at complex questions about subjective morality and the science of social ideas. Rhetoric, political phrasing, and the artistic humanities are not enough to answer these questions.<sup>83</sup> We cannot return to a time where propaganda and indoctrination do not exist, nor can we ban or censor harmful ideas in a society that is based on the value of free speech. Doing so has proven to be incredibly ineffective at stopping real-world violence.<sup>84</sup> The only solution to our problem is rational education: widespread civic knowledge about psychology, constructivism, and data science.

What differentiates “indoctrination into constructed ideas” from classical “social contract theory” is that constructed ideas do not assume any one such “natural state” of being, nor do the ideas remain rigid as social members grow, change, die, and reproduce; to a constructivist, the only *natural state of being* is that the next social group inherits constructed ideas from the previous, and it is only those living members who carry on the constructed idea that are responsible for defining and believing in it.<sup>85</sup> By accepting these premises of social psychology, we can conclude that maintaining any political or historical identity necessitates, to some degree,

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<sup>83</sup> *Author's Note:* The irony of this statement is not lost considering that this thesis is written as an analysis of rhetoric and politics — and that it exists for the qualification of the author's Bachelor of Arts. New challenges require new solutions, however, and this paper is meant to establish a foundation for an academic “hard science” for observing social, political, economic, and cultural trends: “history-as-science.”

<sup>84</sup> Paul Mozur, Mike Isaac, David. E. Sanger and Richard C. Paddock “Facebook Takes a Side, Barring Myanmar Military After Coup” *The New York Times* (Feb. 24, 2021, updated March 3, 2021)

<sup>85</sup> Hannes Peltonen. “Constructivism, Cognition, and Duality.” *European Review of International Studies* 3, no. 3 (Finland, 2016): pp. 76–86.

encountering and accepting propaganda. We choose to believe in constructed abstract ethical ideas that demand of us to behave a certain way — it is the very fabric of “social” being.<sup>86</sup>

If we accept that the world of political history up until the era of government surveillance is dominated by constructed ideas and propaganda intended to spread (i.e. *propagate*) them, as opposed to “real events” and “facts” that support them, then we arrive very quickly at the foot of yet another logical mountain: Would a constructivist assume that the stories of the past aren’t relevant to the present? Or even more concerning, would a constructivist argue that it’s okay to lie to people about what really happened in the past? Is civil society built on pillars of sand?

While there is no denying that there are those who would answer “yes” to those questions, we should feel comfortable pointing out such individuals as advocating for mind control. In the case study sections of this paper, individuals involved in such tactics in both Myanmar and the United States will be identified and their tactics of convincing people of historical untruths will be dissected. This is a clear bias of this paper: against the agency and power of those using mind control and in favor of the ideological and material independence of the reader.

A pervasive quote across the industry of journalism, often attributed to Washington Post publisher Phillip Graham, is that “the news is a first rough draft of history.” The newspaper, whose first English editions surfaced in 1641, was a catalyzing force in the formation of shared social values and political organization. So catalyzing, in fact, that it was a major factor in the English Civil War (1642-1649) between the nation’s republican parliamentarians and autocratic monarchists.<sup>87</sup> The presence of a written language is also what early anthropologists used to

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<sup>86</sup> Corey Lee M. Keyes. “Social Well-Being.” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (1998): pp. 121–140.

<sup>87</sup> Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641-1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

differentiate between human societies that they deemed “civilized” and those they deemed “barbarous.” Countless indigenous societies in the Americas, Africa, Australia, and Asia used systems of oral-only knowledge transfer and mythology until the late 19th century, when Europeans violently forced their written-historicist perspective on oral societies.<sup>88</sup>

For better or worse, the act of keeping a journal of historical record — *journalism* — evolved as a fundamental element of democratization and industrialization in lock-step, in a phenomenon that British historian Benedict Anderson has referred to as “*print-capitalism*.” Anderson’s core theory is that any text needs an audience to communicate a social idea — and so capitalists who circulate print media, by virtue of their relationship to their readers, became owners of information, intellectual property, and ideas.

This wasn’t just a system that defined the shape and scope of newspapers. Print-capitalism was the origin of standardized grammar, it explains the rise of vernaculars in place of Latin in pre-modern Europe as it transitioned into modernism. This was the basis of printing religious texts (most notably the Bible, the most commonly reproduced book on the planet), establishing the legitimacy of constitutional governments (Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense” and Hamilton’s Federalist Papers), and providing the space for counter arguments to unjust and despotic rule, (like the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation) to circulate in civil society.<sup>89</sup>

These questions are particularly useful in the context of sorting out the biases and agendas of media companies, which by virtue of their relationship to political and social information, must always produce propaganda in some form or another. A story strictly detailing proceedings on the Senate floor is propaganda for the legitimacy of the rule of law. A story that

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<sup>88</sup> Asad, “Without Europe” p. 596

<sup>89</sup> Benedict Anderson, “Imagined Communities” (Verso, London and New York, 1991). Ch. 3

publicizes hidden business deals is propaganda in service of consumer information. Whether or not the stories we read are propaganda written in pursuit of ideological freedom or ideological control is worth our investigation.

In his essay “The Storyteller,” Walter Benjamin, a Jewish scholar fleeing Nazi persecution and a contemporary of Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse at the Frankfurt School, considered the ways in which the printed word changed psychological relationships to stories. The novel, Benjamin argued, was unique in its structure because both its creation and its consumption occurred on an *individual* level.<sup>90</sup> It might be tempting, intellectually, to draw comparisons between distributive media companies — such as a newspaper — to social media posts. A Facebook status update or a Tweet (or a Parler post) absorbs in the reader’s mind similarly to an article, but in abridged form. We may also feel tempted to see *websites* as Benjamin saw novels — places for information to be produced and then consumed on an individual basis. These are categorically false comparisons and are incredibly harmful for the way we look at digital information. Reading information online always comes with the caveat that the producer of that information *reads back*. This surveillance is not necessarily studied by the individual or journalist who writes for a digital platform, but it *is* the essential work of web coders, data scientists, network specialists, and information designers.<sup>91</sup>

If we take these ideas seriously and admit that all historical narratives on the internet are merely created and owned like any other commodity, then how do we distinguish between what is “true” and what is “false” about history *before* it becomes a science of data analysis — for

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<sup>90</sup> Walter Benjamin, ed. Howard Eiland & Michael W. Jennings, “The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov” *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, 4 vols. (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., & London: 1991–1999.)

<sup>91</sup> Robinson Meyer, “Everything We Know About Facebook’s Secret Mood-Manipulation Experiment” *The Atlantic Magazine* (June 28, 2014, updated Sept. 4, 2014) <<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/06/everything-we-know-about-facebooks-secret-mood-manipulation-experiment/373648/>>



people whose lives were (or still are) “off the grid?” Further, how can we account for the differences in ideas between two people who obtain similar information on the internet?

Constructivists have an answer to these questions, one subscribers to Enlightenment philosophy are likely to be familiar with: rational observation. When a tree falls in a forest, it will always shake the twigs, leaves, ground, and air in such a way that a sonic frequency is emitted — what we would call a “sound.” However, that last part: “*what we would call,*” is essential. If there was no one around to witness the sound being made by rationally observing the oscillating changes in air pressure with a sophisticated organ known as the eardrum that then further transmits signals to the brain, there was no one around to *perceive and name* the vibrations shaking the forest as a “sound.” Vibrations in the air alone do not make a sound; to be “sound,” vibrations require a listener. In terms of data, if we record a video of a tree falling in a forest with a camera that does not have a microphone, does the original video include sound?<sup>92</sup>

That phenomenon: the two-part process of *perception and naming* constitutes our chief political term: *free thinking*. Ideas, for constructivists, work in much the same way as the tree falling in the forest — with one crucial exception. Unlike a sound, which can be rationally observed by one person (or technological instrument), shared social or political facts, such as those established by “science” or “history,” require rational observation and reasonable understanding between two or more people. This is where *persuasion* enters the arena of political decision-making. As stated earlier, this paper seeks to create an academic argument for why we should feel comfortable identifying a distinct pattern in information warfare as “mind control.”

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<sup>92</sup> *Author’s Note:* This, fundamentally, is the essence of *history-as-science*. What are questions about social science we can answer with AI and digital record-keeping tools as they evolve? While it might be easy to feel discouraged in our knowledge as scholars of the arts in the face of such intimidating concepts as big data, machine learning, and artificial intelligence, we should also weigh the opportunities of all the potential new questions we can answer and tools we can invent. Technological literacy will of course be a challenge for those of us more inclined to the humanities, but (as made evident by the current crisis of social knowledge) those in the tech industry are in dire need of our pragmatic insight, as well.

Of course, one of the largest contradictions present in such an argumentative strategy is that university education has “a liberal bias.” This paper will make no secret of its biases in that regard: *A general history and theory of Mind Control* seeks to construct a shared political idea; that “mind control exists and is currently in use.” This thesis could ostensibly be described, should we feel the urge to use the terminology explored earlier, as “truthful propaganda,” in the same vein as the descriptions of racial inequity textually and graphically represented by W. E. B. Du Bois in the years following the end of slavery. This paper does not assume moral equivalency between all constructed political narratives, however — instead, it puts forward a value judgement: constructed political ideals with a commitment to individual rights and free thinking are more just than constructed political ideals intended to limit individual rights and free thinking. This is why we must conserve the liberal values of democracy and free speech, and why we can be confident in the moral goodness of King’s propaganda compared to that of Goebbels’. In that regard, with explicit support for the contention of *freedom*, this thesis does have a clear bias in favor of the value of *liberty*. As stated above, this paper also hopes to advance the agenda of *peace* and *common understanding*.

Having established a logic for the method of conceptualizing the tripartite ideas of “free thinking,” “persuasion,” and “mind control,” we can now identify how *information design* is used: to *propagate* political and military information warfare campaigns, and how that has contributed to our current *disinformation crisis*.

“All of the things we’ve ever done — all the clicks we’ve ever made, all the videos we’ve ever watched, all the likes. That all gets brought back into building a more and more accurate model. The model, once you have it, can predict the kinds of things that person does.”

- Tristan Harris, Google designer, co-founder: Center for Humane Technology  
*“The Social Dilemma,”* Directed by Jeff Orlowski.  
 (Netflix, Exposure Labs, Argent Pictures, & The Space Program: 2020)

### **Case Study I:**

#### **Murder in Myanmar**

The following section is intended to establish a “simple model” of an ongoing conflict using mind control — state-backed disinformation campaigns intended for large-scale psychological warfare — in a state with a relatively small media environment. In order to explain the function of propaganda and state surveillance in Myanmar, it is first necessary to understand the geographic, cultural, and political history of the region. A brief *historiography* of the Southeast Asian peninsula is provided for this purpose. The *ethnonym* for the people of Myanmar, used intermittently throughout the section, is “Burmese.” The two-word phrase “Burmese Military” refers specifically to the small group of radicalized soldiers, generals, and security agents whose efforts to control the country have almost always been in opposition to the will of the people. Since WWII, the military has had a major presence in governing Myanmar, competing for power with democratically-elected officials, students, farmers unions, and foreign institutions. Since 2010, after a peaceful transition of power to democratically-elected leaders, the *Burmese Military* has been a para-governmental organization working outside the scope of

the people's will. It has plotted revenge from the shadows to overthrow the free & fair society it deferred to. In 2021, the military succeeded in a violent coup and regained power.

Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) is a country of some 54.4 million people,<sup>93</sup> about 1/6 that of the United States' population. It is the largest country, by land area, on the Southeast Asian peninsula, between the South China Sea to the East and the Bay of Bengal to the West — an area of the world once referred to by European colonial administrators as “Indochina.” Myanmar's population is relatively spread out across its above-average geographical size.<sup>94</sup> For a sense of scale, Myanmar is significantly larger than the geographical size of France, which is also more dense with a population of about 68 million.<sup>95</sup>

Southeast Asia sits in the middle of the densest band of population on the face of the Earth. The idyllic tropical jungles and majestic coastal mountains typical of Southeast Asian countries provide natural land barriers in what would otherwise be a region as crowded as the interurban national metropolises built along the steppes of Eastern China and Northern India.

There are few paths, by land, between the massive population centers of India and China. None are particularly easy to pass. The narrow, jungled cliffs of Southeast Asia fall to seas and straits that act as the geographic midpoint between the two most populous nations in human history (the only other paths between India and China are to travel through the contested Kashmir region West of the Himalayas, or over the Himalayas themselves. In either case, one could only reach China's population center, along the Pacific Ocean by travelling through

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<sup>93</sup> The World Bank, “Population, Total - Myanmar”

<<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=MM>>

<sup>94</sup> Woldometer, Dadax Ltd. “Largest Countries in the World (by area)”

<<https://www.worldometers.info/geography/largest-countries-in-the-world/>>

<sup>95</sup> The World Bank, “Population, Total - France”

<<https://data.worldbank.org/country/france>>

hundreds of miles of desert and vast, arid plains).<sup>96</sup> Myanmar itself shares a border with both India and China. As a result, the nation of Myanmar, like the whole of Southeast Asia, has been at the center of both Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean *acculturation* for centuries. Indeed, Myanmar is frequently referred to by regional geopolitical experts as “the back door to China.”<sup>97</sup>

In order to understand how the Burmese military used information warfare to get away with genocide in the region beginning in 2016, we must first understand the modern historiography of Myanmar — the stories that have been told by historians and scholars about its pre-digital history, before ubiquitous, everyday data collection became possible. Linguistically, our attempts to understand Burmese political identity in English are hindered by the fact that all analysis of Burmese history and rhetoric requires translation between the two languages. In English, at least, the historical stories told about Myanmar have tended towards oversimplification, dehumanization, and racism until the late 20th century. Where once Burmese history was seen as unchanging and monolithic before the English arrived in 1827, and then a dictatorial socialist country after the English left following WWII, contemporary scholars with access to more information and translated documents have determined that the roots of Burmese military authoritarianism are far more complex than the pro-West, anti-Burmese story we might be tempted to use.<sup>98</sup>

A Theravada Buddhist Monarchy was incorporated into the culture of Myanmar around the turn of the 12th century. Buddhism had already made significant strides into the many

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<sup>96</sup> *Author's Note*: This region of China contains both Xinjiang, the home of the country's Uyghur population; and Tibet, the region with an incredibly rich religious history of “mindfulness” and “wellness” studies.

<sup>97</sup> John W. Garver, “Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century.” University of Washington Press, Seattle: 2001.

<sup>98</sup> Victor B. Lieberman, “Reinterpreting Burmese History.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29, no. 1 (1987): pp. 162–94.

villages and trading ports of the Southeast Asian peninsula by this time.<sup>99</sup> While Islamic culture took root in West Asia and Hinduism became the dominant theology in South Asia, different sects of Buddhism (Zen, Mahayana, etc.) took shape in East Asia. *Theravada* Buddhism on the Southeast Asian peninsula encouraged organization into dynastic monarchies, which remained the standard form of governmental legitimacy into the European Colonial era. Historically, these monarchies, which derived legitimacy and governmental philosophy from the Buddhist tradition of the *Dharma*, resembled a structure whose closest European cognate would be Enlightened Absolutism — though with less of a focus on state power and a much more concerted effort to secure the general welfare of the people.<sup>100</sup> Such monarchs still have a significant degree of influence today — Thailand, for instance, is still one such monarchy. Over the last thousand years, there have been several major dynasties that have re-ordered the territorial divisions in the peninsula through both warfare and more peaceful measures, such as territorial purchase and even the direct donation of kingdoms and lands, each seeking to spread a particular vision of justified Buddhist monarchy based on the concepts of reincarnation and the flow of karma.<sup>101</sup>

This centuries-long specialization in social welfare over warfare, however, led to a security vulnerability when European traders began exploring the region for rare goods at the turn of the 18th century. During the generation of Western Enlightenment immediately preceding the American Revolution, Burma increasingly came into contact with the globalized silver trade. The final two dynasties of the Western coast of the peninsula, the *Toungoo* (1510-1752) and the *Konbaung* (1752-1885), moved generally against the direction of social welfare in favor of a strengthened military foothold in the region. (The *Toungoo* dynasty, at its peak, controlled nearly

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* p. 162–164

<sup>100</sup> Lieberman “Reinterpreting Burmese History.” pp. 168-169

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 169-177

the entire Southeast Asian peninsula). Taxation policy became stricter and demanded common currency instead of in-kind donations, violence became the preferred form of territorial expansion, and slavery began to more closely resemble the model developed on the Atlantic Ocean (slave labor, in pre-colonial Southeast Asia, had once been a desirable position for migrating Buddhists seeking refuge in their current life and privilege for their reincarnated selves and their children — who were not declared slaves at birth).<sup>102</sup>

### Doublethink

For all their reforms to concentrate power, the Konbaung Dynasty's attempts to secure a modern empire over the region were unable to defeat the naval might of the British in the 19th century, which at the time was by far the most powerful military on the planet. After three lengthy and expensive wars spanning a period of about 60 years (1824-1885), British colonial administrators were given permission by the dynasty to oversee the Burmese state. During this period of Anglo-Burmese modernization, the Burmese state moved further into the realms of industrialization, capitalism, and nationalism.<sup>103</sup> Its political theorists and governors were educated in the Western schools of political science, and its institutions were steadily globalized by wealth and labor extraction.

Southeast Asia was a major theater of conflict in World War II, briefly under Japanese colonial occupation (which was itself the result of a Japanese-Marxist philosophy of pan-Asian revolution against European empires).<sup>104</sup> At the time, “the Japanese were welcomed almost

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<sup>102</sup> Lieberman “Reinterpreting Burmese History.” pp. 178-181

<sup>103</sup> Yda. Saueressig-Schreuder, “The Impact of British Colonial Rule on the Urban Hierarchy of Burma.” *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 10, no. 2 (1986): pp. 245–77.

<sup>104</sup> Anderson, “Imagined Communities” p. 98

everywhere as liberators of Asian victims of Western imperialism,”<sup>105</sup> causing the Allies, who were able to successfully reconquer their colonies, to grant the whole of Southeast Asia a more or less peaceable transition to civilian rule at the end of World War II. (The Vietnam War stands out as a notable exception, with a decade-long colonial power struggle led by the French giving way to a two-decade long struggle between capitalist and communist proxy actors. Vietnam suffered through 30 bloody years of violence after the conclusion of World War II — of which it was also a part — finally achieving relative peace as a satellite of Chinese influence after the withdrawal of U.S. forces in the early 1970s.)<sup>106</sup>

It is a question of considerable debate whether or not the roots of Southeast Asian authoritarianism come from Buddhist-Socialist rhetoric that masks the military-industrial logic of the colonial encounter with the West.<sup>107</sup> Put more bluntly, scholars disagree if Buddhist governmental legitimacy on the Southeast Asian peninsula is better characterized by “Buddhism and Socialism are ideas that argue justification of military violence to control the population” or “Burmese officials who were educated by the West under threat of violence tended to behave violently.” This is a debate that frequently includes dynasties and national histories beyond Myanmar in the region of Southeast Asia, most recognizably the infamous military dictator *Pol Pot* of Cambodia, who led a genocide that killed roughly one-quarter of the Cambodian population, estimated to be about one-third the size of the Nazi’s holocaust.<sup>108</sup>

It should be noted, for the sake of clarity, that this 1,000-year history of several nations takes many shortcuts in an effort to expedite our understanding of the cultural forces at play in

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<sup>105</sup> B. R. Chatterji, “Southeast Asia In Transition.” *India Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (1956): pp. 388–99.

<sup>106</sup> George C. Herring, “America and Vietnam: The Unending War.” *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 5 (1991): 104–19.

<sup>107</sup> Lieberman “Reinterpreting Burmese History.” pp. 185-187

<sup>108</sup> Ben Kiernan (2003) *The Demography of Genocide in Southeast Asia: The Death Tolls in Cambodia, 1975-79, and East Timor, 1975-80*, *Critical Asian Studies*, 35:4, pp. 585-597



Myanmar in the present. The work done in this space is far from a complete understanding of Burmese social currents, and as an author illiterate in native Burmese I cannot presume to pose solutions to the problems we are about to observe without a great deal more knowledge and consideration of Burmese ideals and tension. That being said, an analysis of Myanmar's affairs — particularly the sharp rise in ethnonational violence since the introduction of the internet — may prove useful for us speaking English as we stare down the “disinformation crisis” of our own language that has fueled such division and violence in our own countries, cities, and neighborhoods.

Once again, our analysis of the social violence in Myanmar raises questions of socialism, capitalism, managerial society, and dictatorship following the end of World War II. Myanmar has had several constitutions, regimes, and coups since this time — as well as one of the longest periods of civil unrest in recorded history. Brief periods of peace were generally brought about by representative democracy and popular sovereignty — but characteristic of Burmese politics, these pro-freedom political structures (which also claim legitimacy based on Buddhist values, specifically those of nonviolence and common social welfare) have tended toward dissolution and failure. The common narrative behind why freedom efforts in Myanmar have failed since World War II's end is one that investigators of political conspiracy, such as we, will find particularly tantalizing: in almost every instance, democracy in Myanmar has been thwarted by military intervention from behind the scenes — or in brutal, public executions of political demonstrators.<sup>109</sup>

Most recently, Myanmar was ruled by a violent military dictatorship that lasted from 1962 to 2010, that barred most access to information (such as foreign newspapers, television, or

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<sup>109</sup> Sampa Kundu, “Myanmar: Pangs of Democratic Transition.” Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2012.

radio) for Burmese citizens. This was done as an attempt to pre-empt any anti-regime organizing in favor of democratic rule. Even when the figurehead of the dictatorship, Ne Win, stepped down after the mass execution of student demonstrators during the infamous 8-8-1988 uprising, the military remained the *de facto* leader of policy and propaganda for the entire state. The regime established in 1962 only transitioned to a semi-democratic government (some political parties and individuals were prevented from participating in the election) in 2008, finally transitioning power in 2010.<sup>110</sup> However, this did nothing to prevent the powers of military conspiracy from quickly resurfacing, as we will explore below.

The author of this thesis, utilizing the constructivist theoretical framework explained above, tends to view Burmese authoritarian history through the lens of “violence begets violence” and thinks that the painting of Buddhism and Socialism in Myanmar as *inherently authoritarian* or militaristic is a bit of an oversimplification. As early as 1947, Western scholars were able to identify that Buddhist-National-Socialist propaganda in Myanmar, while heavily politicized and generally hostile toward Western colonial rule, almost never resulted in violence or rigid political parties.<sup>111</sup> Benedict Anderson, born and raised throughout East Asia (whose theory of “print-capitalism” is essential to our understanding of disinformation) observed that nationalism and Socialist-Buddhist military dictatorship in Southeast Asia — pointing specifically to Pol Pot, among others — tended to draw heavy influence from *European political language and culture*. Nationalists who were lauded as leaders in the most violent periods of Southeast Asian history tended to mimic the language of European political eras of intense

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<sup>110</sup> Christina Fink, “Dangerous Speech, Anti-Muslim Violence, and Facebook in Myanmar.” *Journal of International Affairs* 71, no. 1.5 (2018): pp. 43–52.

<sup>111</sup> Cecil Hobbs, “Nationalism in British Colonial Burma.” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (1947): p. 115.

violence, such as the French and Russian revolutions. In many cases, these despots were also educated in English or French, as well as their native language.<sup>112</sup>

Victor Lieberman’s 1987 “Reinterpreting Burmese History” also puts forward considerable evidence that the political culture of Myanmar tended to get more violent the closer it came into contact with the colonial powers of Britain and Japan,<sup>113</sup> which were themselves heavily militarized during the major intercontinental military conflicts of the 19th and 20th centuries. It’s a recognizable pattern that we culturally identified as an “arms race” during the Cold War in the United States. While there was certainly a recognizable fragrance of “socialist” idealism in premodern Myanmar, Theravada Buddhist dynastic monarchies simply did not demand the same level of violence and coercion as the peninsula’s 20th-century military dictatorships — which used heavy-handed censorship, propaganda, and psychological warfare to hold onto power during its “Burmese Way to Socialism.”<sup>114</sup>

Really, Buddhism, socialism, imperialism, and authoritarianism — at least in the context of translating concepts between English and Burmese — are much more malleable, like a *constructivist* might suggest. Over the generations the role that these ideas have played in society has changed, access to information and ideas was the single greatest factor in historical change. In fact, the Burmese themselves were bitterly divided as to the direction that their nation should take near the final years of World War II, with Buddhist-nationalist parties (socialist, anti-fascist, and monarchic) joining the military efforts of *both* the Japanese and British among very nuanced and specific ideological lines.<sup>115</sup> Absolutely, what we can be assured of, is that historical-

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<sup>112</sup> Anderson, “Imagined Communities” pp. 157-161

<sup>113</sup> Lieberman, “Reinterpreting Burmese History.” pp. 182-187

<sup>114</sup> Burma Watcher, “Burma in 1988: There Came a Whirlwind.” *Asian Survey* 29, no. 2 (1989): pp. 174–180.

<sup>115</sup> Cecil Hobbs. “Nationalism in British Colonial Burma.” pp. 118–121.

ideological propaganda and rhetoric appealing to each of these concepts in both overt and covert attempts to limit freedom and enforce violent control have been abused by those in control of Burmese political identity since at least the Toungoo period. In the era after World War II, these tactics became much more prevalent and deadly.

In the digital age, they have led to genocide.

“The past never had been altered. Oceania was at war with Eastasia. Oceania had always been at war with Eastasia.”

- George Orwell, author, philosopher, and soldier  
*“1984”*  
 (Secker & Warburg, London: June 8, 1949)

## Two-Minutes Hate

This complex moral, religious, and philosophical history of ideas in Myanmar leads us to the current crisis: the mass murder of the country’s minority Rohingya people . Where in the late 20th century a genocide of its magnitude would have been international news for weeks on end, (such as the case with Pol Pot in the 1970s) the Rohingya Muslim genocide that began in 2016 has struggled to maintain significant media coverage as governments all over the world have grappled with instability, ethnic violence, and threats to legitimacy. There have been plenty of stories published that have covered the events as they have unfolded, but an alarmingly high number of similar events around the world have given journalists so many stories to sift through since 2016 that Myanmar has faded away into the background for many human rights watchers. (One may reasonably suspect, for reasons discussed in this paper, that this is by design.)

Fortunately, in our new digital age of constant surveillance and record-keeping, we have a much clearer picture of the history of ideas and violence in contemporary Myanmar even without the daily efforts of journalists.

The sources used within the following timeline of events depend heavily on over two decades of independent reports from regional policy advisors, non-governmental organizations, international councils, and military defectors who have spoken to media companies and government-owned propaganda outlets. While we cannot presume to understand the individual psychology and political disposition of each Burmese person using the tools of international and institutional scholarship alone, established above is a workable model for viewing the complexities of information warfare and picking apart the stories told on social media, which are clearly unreliable sources of facts in and of themselves.

We can simply model the crisis in Myanmar as a story: one of free people — regardless if they are Buddhist or Muslim — being oppressed by covert military action spread through digital media systems that offer information on both ends (for the reader and the writer) spreading messages intended to cause violence, death, and social control.

The Burmese military was not always so tech savvy. For decades, its strategy was to block access to foreign media and tightly control the political language of Burmese politics. During Burma's periods of martial law (two contiguous military dictatorships with different structures spanning 1962-1988 & 1988-2010), the government monopolised all media communications and committed heinous human rights abuses, such as using civilians as minesweepers and brutally raping, torturing, and murdering innocents.<sup>116</sup> Traditional modes of international pressure, such as sanctions, diplomatic agreements, and "free radio" programs were frequently broadcast into the country by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Voice of America (VOA) to share stories about human rights abuses. The Burmese military's propaganda arm, which declared itself a voice of "socialism," printed several books and aired

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<sup>116</sup> Josef Silverstein. "Burma in an International Perspective." *Asian Survey* 32, no. 10 (1992): pp. 951–963.

radio programs that accused the BBC and VOA of being part of a “communist conspiracy” to overthrow the government and violently imprison the people of Myanmar.<sup>117</sup> Obviously, a U.S. government propaganda network, a tool for information warfare established to spread anticommunist rhetoric at the beginning of the Cold War and funded by Republican lawmakers in the aftermath of defeat in Vietnam,<sup>118</sup> could not have been a part of a Southeast Asian communist plot. Such stories were unsuccessful in discrediting pro-democracy information warfare campaigns funded and overseen by the U.S. and U.K.

Eventually, the Burmese people acting internally and international pressure acting externally proved to be too much resistance for the military to suppress: the Burmese military opened up restrictions on communications technology to the rest of the world and conceded a transition of power to fairly elected officials during the first four years of the Obama Administration.<sup>119</sup> At the time, digital telecommunications still had not reached the average Burmese citizen, as the technology was far too expensive for the population of mostly farmers, villagers, educators, and election activists. That changed very quickly when one U.S. company was able to cut a deal with the new competitors in Burma’s open telecommunications industry.<sup>120</sup> Charging very little — oftentimes nothing for communications companies or users to access its products — Facebook became “the primary source of information and news” for the country

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* p. 956

<sup>118</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate. Public Law 94-350, *Foreign Relations Authorizations Act, Fiscal Year 1977*; S. 3168, 94th Congress, Washington D.C., July 12, 1976. Signed into law by President Gerald Ford.

<sup>119</sup> Linnea M. Beatty “Democracy Activism and Assistance in Burma: Sites of Resistance.” *International Journal* 65, no. 3 (2010): pp. 619–636.

<sup>120</sup> Craig Mod, “The Facebook-Loving Farmers of Myanmar” *The Atlantic Magazine*, Jan. 21, 2016  
<<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2016/01/the-facebook-loving-farmers-of-myanmar/424812/>>

“almost overnight.”<sup>121</sup> For many Burmese, particularly farmers in rural areas who had never owned a computer, Facebook’s “Free Basics” product *was* the entire internet.<sup>122</sup>

A common claim for casual followers of the Myanmar story in the late 2010s was that “Facebook only had two Burmese content moderators” when the military started using the network as a format for psychological warfare. “Facebook” in fact had zero. Burmese content moderation on the social network, in the early months of the genocide, was done completely outside the country of Myanmar — outsourced to an office in Kuala Lumpur, India. There was not a single Facebook employee prepared to deal with the information warfare tactics launched by a military onto groups of targeted civilians through its product.<sup>123</sup>

Mainstream media journalists, foreign policy researchers, and academic investigators have since found evidence of nearly a decade of complex cyber and psychological warfare training, technological investments, and governmental collusion between the Burmese military and Russia.<sup>124</sup> During a time of dramatic cultural upheaval and political division in the West, headlines about a small, fragile democracy on the Southeast Asian peninsula faded away to more localized and simple stories. Among cultural upheaval in several Western states, the social media climate of developed countries’ media demanded nationalized and patriotic news rather than a holistic global approach to storytelling, curtailing many editors’ interest in reforming

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<sup>121</sup> Saira Asher, “Myanmar coup: How Facebook became the 'digital tea shop'” *BBC World News, Asia*. (Feb. 4, 2021) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55929654>>

<sup>122</sup> Taylor Hatmaker, “Facebook’s Free Basics program ended quietly in Myanmar last year” *TechCrunch* (May 1, 2018). <<https://techcrunch.com/2018/05/01/facebook-free-basics-ending-myanmar-internet-org/>>

<sup>123</sup> Steve Stecklow, “Inside Facebook’s Myanmar Operation: Hatebook | Why Facebook is losing the war on hate speech in Myanmar.” *Reuters Special Report*, Aug. 15, 2018 <<https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/myanmar-facebook-hate/>>

<sup>124</sup> Paul Mozar, “A Genocide Incited on Facebook, With Posts From Myanmar’s Military” *The New York Times, Technology*. Oct. 15, 2018 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/15/technology/myanmar-facebook-genocide.html>>

narratives.<sup>125</sup> Similar nationalist and anti-globalist sentiment turned many away from journalistic media altogether, seen as an institution that reinforced gatekeeping and elitism, with millions of citizens in the West getting their political information directly from social media communities, trusted opinion pundits, and politicians. Division at home overshadowed the complex ideological webs of division abroad.

The trail of a global information warfare conspiracy was picked back up by journalists in 2019, indicting a global cooperative effort between Russia, China, and North Korea in an information war on Burmese civilians, but the story faded away again.<sup>126</sup> Nonpartisan administrative leaders in Europe and the United States took to public forums to announce the realities of this global, concerted effort to undermine democracies around the world. Public attention rarely heeded their warnings.

All the while, the recently deposed Burmese military leaders and their allies within the dictatorships of North Korea<sup>127</sup> and China<sup>128</sup> flooded the media environment of free Myanmar with posts designed to destabilize the country, and waited. Almost every time, the most gruesome details of the viral stories were difficult to verify, and quickly circulated social media before fact-checkers had time to debunk them.<sup>129</sup> Communities of Buddhists shared posts about the impending violence and terror attacks being plotted by Muslims. Muslims were warned of the dangerous weapons and tactics being shared by Buddhists. Almost all of it was a lie. That

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<sup>125</sup> Avshalom Ginosar and Igor Konovalov. "Patriotism on the Internet: Journalists' Behavior and User Comments." *Media, War & Conflict* 8, no. 3 (2015): pp. 368–383.

<sup>126</sup> Shibani Matani, "North Korea, China and Russia are arming Myanmar's military despite genocide accusations, U.N. report finds" *The Washington Post*, August 5, 2019

<sup>127</sup> Andrew Selth, "Burma and North Korea: Smoke or Fire?" *Policy Analysis, ASPI*. (Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra: 2009.)

<sup>128</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council, "Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar" (United Nations IFFMM, 2017-2019)

<<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/Index.aspx>>

<sup>129</sup> Saira Asher, "Myanmar coup: How Facebook became the 'digital tea shop'" *BBC World News*



which was true became distorted and greatly exaggerated. The minor violence that emerged early-on as a result of these psychological warfare tactics was amplified and shown as “evidence” of an escalating conflict, with larger, impending attacks around the corner. Violent pornography and mislabeled photographs were contextualized with fake information in order to convince the average Burmese that they needed to *do something*. Both sides rallied accounts that had millions of followers to prepare average, untrained citizens for war — or else convince them that drastic military action was justified.<sup>130</sup>

Yet the true battlefield was not ahead, waiting to destroy the lives of unprepared innocents in the future: the war being waged lived in the realm of “information combat” constructed from weapons that existed entirely in the past, with “cybersoldiers” observing patterns of people’s biases and behavior, slowly creeping into the digital news feeds of people living peaceful and free lives.<sup>131</sup> Intergovernmental cooperation with Russian, Chinese, and North Korean cyberwarfare hackers as well as state policies that allowed the government to access telecommunications data gave the military a backdoor into people’s everyday conversations. Activists, journalists, and dissenters were monitored, tracked, and led into traps. Similar operations led by state security forces sprung up throughout the region, such as during the 2019 civil rights protests in Hong Kong.<sup>132</sup>

True stories about what was happening were drowned by countless falsehoods. Facebook banned known military propaganda accounts from the website. Data-warriors masked their footprints and created false-flag civilian accounts, mimicking, monitoring, and manufacturing

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<sup>130</sup> Paul Mozar, “A Genocide Incited on Facebook” *The New York Times*

<sup>131</sup> Fanny Potkin and Wa Lone “‘Information combat’: Inside the fight for Myanmar’s soul” Reuters, Asia Pacific. November 2, 2021. <<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/information-combat-inside-fight-myanmars-soul-2021-11-01>>

<sup>132</sup> Atlantic Council. “Social Media Findings.” *Targeting the Anti-Extradition Bill Movement: China’s Hong Kong Messaging Proliferates on Social Media*. Atlantic Council, 2020.

every corner of the national conversation. They wrote or watched every word. Whatever was true was buried under mountains of lies. Monetized, official channels for news articles, overseen by telecommunications companies and social media giants, became overwhelmed with AI-driven state-backed, (oftentimes plagiarized and modified) fake articles.<sup>133</sup>

They infiltrated the digital conversations being held by *everyone*:

Violent instigators, concerned citizens, *and* peaceful activists.

It is only thanks to Burmese refugees and defectors — as well as whistleblowers within Facebook, the world’s mainstream media institutions, nongovernmental aid groups, and intergovernmental institutions and researchers — that we know the crisis was a result of “military personnel who turned the social network into a tool for ethnic cleansing”<sup>134</sup>

This genocide is still occurring today, and Burmese citizens’ minds are the battlefield. The Burmese military has seized power once again, with help of Chinese digital intervention. The highest-ranking military leaders and party members in both countries deny any collusion.<sup>135</sup> Public and covert state-run media agencies frequently beam denial straight to users’ feeds. The true story will live or die by those who work together to preserve it.

To date, there are no reliable numbers about how many have been killed. Nongovernmental human rights organizations and traditional intergovernmental institutions have been prevented from entering the country or accessing stored digital information. In 2018, the U.N. used severely limited data to estimate casualties. Officially, tens of thousands are dead.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Karen Hao, “How Facebook and Google fund global misinformation,” *MIT Technology Review*, Silicon Valley. Nov. 20, 2021 <<https://www.technologyreview.com/2021/11/20/1039076/facebook-google-disinformation-clickbait/>>

<sup>134</sup> Paul Mozar, “A Genocide Incited on Facebook” *The New York Times*

<sup>135</sup> Voice of America, “Burmese Expert: China Helping Military Establish Cyber Firewall” *VOA News*, East Asia, Feb. 12, 2021 <[https://www.voanews.com/a/east-asia-pacific\\_burmese-expert-china-helping-military-establish-cyber-firewall/6201972.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/east-asia-pacific_burmese-expert-china-helping-military-establish-cyber-firewall/6201972.html)>

<sup>136</sup> Hannah Ellis-Peterson “Myanmar’s military accused of genocide in damning UN report” *The Guardian*, Myanmar. August 27, 2018.

An untold number have been tortured, raped, or dismembered; there is restricted access to any reliable information.

China, Russia, North Korea, and the Burmese military deny any wrongdoing. Satellite imagery captured photos of villages and mass burial sites that have been paved over by state interests, foreign and domestic who seek to rewrite history.<sup>137</sup>

The flicker of Rohingya independence is a pilot light of Burmese individualism, and the military, operating without the consent of the governed and utilizing tools from centuries of unjust, violent totalitarian and imperial rule, has almost succeeded in extinguishing it. Military defectors and peaceful protestors are the only defense against absolute social conformity.

Thanks to hyper-specific user data, micro-wars can be waged with precision in a matter of months. Dissidents are tracked, kidnapped, raped, and killed. Voices disappear in the night, and their words are buried by a chorus of robot chatter. Gone unnoticed, the razed villages and shattered homes of the forgotten dead are buried under the freshly poured concrete of brutal authoritarian rule.

Fewer than one million people have been able to flee as refugees.<sup>138</sup>

“Move fast and break things.”

- Mark Zuckerberg, co-inventor of Facebook and CEO of Meta Platforms, Inc.  
*“Mark Zuckerberg on Innovation”*  
 (Business Insider, Bright Red Pixels. October 1, 2009)

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<sup>137</sup> Matani, “North Korea, China and Russia are arming Myanmar’s military” The Washington Post

<sup>138</sup> Michael Safi, “‘Lives will be lost’: 700,000 Rohingya face cyclone season under tarpaulin” The Guardian, Rohingya. April 27, 2018.

## Case Study II:

### American Autocracy

Mistrust of political institutions, in the United States, is perhaps at an all-time high. The levers of a functional modern society are breaking down, and insanity seems to grip the headlines of nearly every week; if not in their telling as stories in the mainstream media, than as spinoffs or counternarratives in the vast sea of “misinformation.” For the last several years, the aware observer will have noticed how social facts and social fictions, for as long as they have been defining terms of political reality, have begun to blur into questions of subjective opinion.

How do you control a mind? In *1984*, when Winston’s “thoughtcrime” is discovered by the party, he is taken to the inside of the mysterious “Ministry of Truth” to have his free thoughts erased. His torturer, a party manager named O’Brien who had pretended to be Winston’s friend in order to get a better understanding of his thoughts, knew that Winston was afraid of rats — and so trapped Winston’s head in a box and allowed rats to chew on his face until he lost his mind. The novel ends with Winston declaring his love for Big Brother, the leader of the party.

Stories from Nazi Germany, Communist China, and Soviet Russia tell us a disturbing fact about coercive psychological indoctrination — that torture, far from being a technique to extract information, is a powerful technique for enforcing it.<sup>139</sup> Psychological manipulation is a game of power. It is made possible by a difference in knowledge.<sup>140</sup> An emotionally or psychologically abusive parent, for instance, inflicts harm on their child by misguiding and manipulating them, teaching misleading moral lessons and encouraging neglect of healthy curiosities and interests.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Ruth Blakeley, “Why Torture?” *Review of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2007): pp. 373–394

<sup>140</sup> John Flynn, “Behavior Modification: Communication and Psychological Manipulation.” *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 60, no. 1 (1977): pp. 88–107

<sup>141</sup> David H. Skuse, “Emotional Abuse And Neglect.” *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, vol. 298, no. 6689, BMJ, 1989, pp. 1692–1694

In the case of psychological torture for purposes of war, scientific studies performed by the many doctors, scientists, and government operatives of MKULTRA established that unpredictable and unusual experiences — such as isolation in a permanently-lit room, sensory deprivation, electrocution, sexual assault, or the secret administration of psychoactive hallucinogenic drugs — can cause lasting psychological damage. Many of these tactics were later used on suspected terrorists during the War on Terror.<sup>142</sup> Torturers on assignment in extrajudicial blacksites funded by the United States would use a gap in knowledge and expectation to create experiences that eroded the psychological resilience and mental stability of detainees. Such violence rarely led to reliable testimony.<sup>143</sup>

Harvard Economist Shoshanna Zuboff's book, "Surveillance Capitalism," provides a record of the history of predictive computing used for covert government action, at least in terms of the development of Silicon Valley in the United States. It is a necessary historical and technological map of the evolution of mind control technology, but it makes some key mistakes in relaying the consequences of such information to a wide audience. It tends toward cataclysmic alarmism, prophecy, and uses almost exclusively the lenses of Marxism and biopolitics to analyze data collection and behavioral modification — which is examined solely in the context of the United States' commercial arena.

According to Zuboff's original research — conducted by way of interview with government and industry officials, analysis of internal company documents, and scouring the public record of data and information — the tools that have enabled the realization of successful, genuine mind control were invented in the United States. Just after 9/11, Google worked closely with the CIA as a contractor to build internal networks (intranets) for state intelligence

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<sup>142</sup> Timothy Melley, "Brain Warfare" : pp. 19–40.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30.

information all the way to the “top secret” level. Additionally, Google and the CIA-funded venture firm In-Q-Tel took seats on a Boston tech startup named Recorded Future, whose mission was to monitor trends in data to predict future events, such as a terror attack. By 2007, the CIA and NSA together had tools that could not only search repositories of phone records, text messages, and emails, but could also field results on a target’s social network, some of their most frequent behavioral habits, and general day to day patterns — engineered by computer science experts at Google.<sup>144</sup> These were the first predictive models used for war; to kidnap suspects and inform drone strikes during the War on Terror.

Later, these predictive surveillance tools were adapted to deter Southern Border immigration and police domestic political opposition by the Trump Administration.<sup>145</sup> Nearly a decade and a half after they were originally invented, it is not unreasonable to imagine that even a state security agency in a developing country has access to similar technologies. Indeed, by 2019 more than 70 countries were confirmed as having encountered similar threats to democracy and free thinking in the form of state-backed psychological warfare.<sup>146</sup> As a point of urgency and potential dismay, these systems also grow exponentially in power and potency.

## Two Plus Two Makes Five

As we have discussed in earlier sections, use of any internet-connected device creates some kind of knowledge gap in the form of analyzable usage data. When analyzed, that data can be used to understand people’s habits, and many companies use mental modeling to determine

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<sup>144</sup> Zuboff, “Surveillance Capitalism” pp. 116-118

<sup>145</sup> Spencer Ackerman, “Reign of Terror: How the 9/11 Era Destabilized America and Produced Trump,” (Viking Press: New York, 2021)

<sup>146</sup> Davy Alba and Adam Satariano, “At Least 70 Countries Have Had Disinformation Campaigns, Study Finds” *The New York Times*, Technology. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/26/technology/government-disinformation-cyber-troops.html>>

how a digital ad might have the most impact in convincing someone to buy a product. Similarly, usage data can be made to make online products more addicting and engaging. Usage data can also be used to put together digital videos, posts, or stories designed to target small groups with similar political psyches. With a good grip on knowledge of our individual digital habits, those who use mind control technology erode our grip on sanity and rational politics in order to spark *automatic responses* to socially engineered events. This is the basis of “violent, reactionary politics” in America. As stated before, government censorship and limits on free speech are not the answer.

This is a puzzle, and like any puzzle, the solution requires us to plan and think outside the box. Of course, a country under siege from mind control weaponry begins to believe that any sort of thinking or planning ahead is a conspiracy. Paranoid suspicion about the corporate funded, pre-arranged public relations appearance of Big Tech whistleblowers like Facebook designer Frances Haugen led to widespread subversion and distraction of her most striking allegations — that beyond harming teenage mental health, Facebook algorithms are actively fueling a concerted international conspiracy against democracies.<sup>147</sup> The rampant ad hominem attacks on Haugen circulating social media are a perfect example of the patterns of disinformation that fuel mass hysteria. There are other Facebook whistleblowers, such as Sophie Zhang, who independently confirmed Haugen’s story without the use of high-profile exposure and a cross-industry press team. Zhang’s story was summarily drowned by disinformation actors, though her perseverance and the work of dedicated mainstream media journalists has kept it afloat.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Emmanuel Akinwotu, “Facebook’s role in Myanmar and Ethiopia under new scrutiny” *The Guardian*, Facebook. Oct. 7, 2021.<<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/oct/07/facebooks-role-in-myanmar-and-ethiopia-under-new-scrutiny>>

<sup>148</sup> Barbara Ortutay, “Insider Q&A: Sophie Zhang, Facebook whistleblower” *ABC News* via AP Technology

Yet the origins of our problem go deeper than Facebook and the year 2021. Reporting by the British newspaper *The Guardian* obtained a leaked set of documents from a closed-door national security council in Russia that was held after a meeting with reporters on January 22, 2016. A photo exists of the meeting, and Russian state media has kept the fact that it occurred completely public. The items discussed between President Putin and his national security ministers and spy agency chiefs, however, were not made public. In July of 2021, *The Guardian* was able to verify several patterns in detected state-backed disinformation campaigns by analyzing a top-secret document, titled only as “No 32-04 \ vd.”

Directly from an English translation of the document published in *The Guardian’s* article: “There are paragraphs on how Russia might insert ‘media viruses’ into American public life, which could become self-sustaining and self-replicating. These would alter mass consciousness, especially in certain groups, it says.”<sup>149</sup>

Several months after the leak, on November 19, 2021, Russian President Vladimir Putin more or less confirmed the account *The Guardian* gave. Speaking about the U.S. in front of international media, he said “Our recent warnings have indeed been heard and are having a certain effect: tensions have risen there, after all.” Putin made it a point of Russian national interest that America stay weak and divided. “It is important for them to remain in this state for as long as possible,” he said.<sup>150</sup> This falls just short of a formal declaration of war typically

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<<https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/insider-qa-sophie-zhang-facebook-whistleblower-77730597>>

149 Luke Harding, Julian Borger and Dan Sabbagh, “Kremlin papers appear to show Putin’s plot to put Trump in White House” *The Guardian*, July 15, 2021  
<<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/15/kremlin-papers-appear-to-show-putins-plot-to-put-trump-in-white-house>>

<sup>150</sup> Anton Troianovski, “On Putin’s Strategic Chessboard, a Series of Destabilizing Moves” *The New York Times*, Europe. Nov. 19, 2021 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/world/europe/russia-putin-belarus-ukraine.html>>



declared by state actors in the international system when conflicts are theoretically “justifiable.” As normalized by the U.S. during the Cold War and the War on Terror., however, covert cyber ops and psychological warfare have never needed to travel through such formal streams.<sup>151</sup>

Henry Kissinger, a German-Jewish refugee from Nazi persecution, a decorated American soldier, a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, and a Republican Secretary of State and National Security Advisor, wrote an article for *The Atlantic* magazine in 2018 titled “How The Enlightenment Ends.” Kissinger, like many in American politics, is a divisive figure. There is warranted criticism about his handling of international crises throughout history and the kinds of military tactics he allowed America to engage in during the Cold War. Many of the U.S. own international covert campaigns and domestic propaganda techniques originated, or were otherwise sanctioned, by Kissinger and his close allies.

However, such questions about his moral legacy should have little bearing on scholars seeking to understand his greatest concerns for the wars he will not live to fight. A military mind thinks like a fighter. Kissinger was a man who understood war. He did not have confidence that the U.S. was ready for war in the 21st century. The areas he identified as potential weaknesses? Big data and artificial intelligence. From what he wrote for *The Atlantic* in 2018:

The Enlightenment started with essentially philosophical insights spread by a new technology. Our period is moving in the opposite direction. It has generated a potentially dominating technology in search of a guiding philosophy. Other countries have made AI a major national project. The United States has not yet, as a nation, systematically explored its full scope, studied its implications, or begun the process of ultimate learning.

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<sup>151</sup> Jarred Prier, “Commanding the Trend: Social Media as Information Warfare.” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (2017): pp. 50–85.

This should be given a high national priority, above all, from the point of view of relating AI to humanistic traditions.<sup>152</sup>

Kissinger was a staunch conservative, but he speaks in his article about conserving American institutions that were invented during the Enlightenment — in other words, the philosophical and ideological paradigm of *Liberalism*. Liberal institutions — like our Constitution, laws, treaties, and the formal bases of our democratic republic — are currently extremely vulnerable to information warfare and targeted psychological attacks because they function under the assumption that all people are rational, self-concerned economic and political actors. As we have explained in previous sections, mind control technology can effectively limit a person's access to rational thinking, and mask their participation in economic and political systems through surveillance and one-sided data collection.

By now, attackers abroad using these tactics to target Americans are spread across many countries, and have many names. HAFNIUM, for example, has been assessed by security experts in private contracting and the state's intelligence apparatus to be a Chinese state-backed hacking group with a specialty in cloud warfare. From the Microsoft's Exchange server security blog: "HAFNIUM primarily targets entities in the United States across a number of industry sectors, including infectious disease researchers, law firms, higher education institutions, defense contractors, policy think tanks, and NGOs."<sup>153</sup> (Serious researchers who seek to address questions that COVID-19 may have been created in a laboratory, for instance, are likely encountering information resistance through disinformation in the research sector.)

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<sup>152</sup> Henry Kissinger, "How the Enlightenment Ends" *The Atlantic Magazine*, Technology. June 2018 <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/06/henry-kissinger-ai-could-mean-the-end-of-human-history/559124/>>

<sup>153</sup> Microsoft Threat Intelligence Center (MSTIC) "HAFNIUM targeting Exchange Servers with 0-day exploits." Microsoft 365 Defender Threat Intelligence Team & Microsoft 365 Security March 2, 2021 <<https://www.microsoft.com/security/blog/2021/03/02/hafnium-targeting-exchange-servers/>>

The blog details how Microsoft Exchange servers on the premises of a firm that utilizes them — such as a local government office or a small-to-medium size business — are susceptible to fake broadcasts over a credentialed network: “If HAFNIUM could authenticate with the Exchange server then they could use this vulnerability to write a file to any path on the server.” To be clear, this sentence is written in the hypothetical sense because these attacks are completely untraceable.<sup>154</sup> There is irrefutable evidence that HAFNIUM has the ability to spoof an authenticated file transfer remotely: this hypothetical sentence is an explanation of what that could mean for organizations that use locally-hosted Microsoft networks. While the blog doesn’t point to any specific examples in the corporate world, one could assume that a hacked email server, for example, could be used to send a deep phishing message, such as a spoofed email from a boss instructing her employees to click on a harmful link.

This is a genuine tactic the Chinese military is using to undermine civic confidence in the United States, particularly when these tools can be used to influence the way people think and the information they have access to. In the case of HAFNIUM, it’s more likely that American Democrats organized in a traditional institution like a research firm, a university, or a nonprofit are going to encounter fake information or military operations to distract, divide, or otherwise dilute an organization's attention and promote hostility toward Republicans. The technology needed to conduct this sort of attack has proliferated far beyond the Chinese military, and Microsoft’s own blog points to the need for increased awareness about similar attacks from “multiple malicious actors.”

The Chinese military seems to be particularly interested in eroding confidence among and ideologically driving the politics of the American left, but also the essential business functions

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<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

and livelihoods of industries that tend toward the American right. One might assume that increasing frustration, distrust, and paranoia among Americans of all political stripes provides the Chinese military with an advantage on the world stage by causing chaos and confusion on the American homefront. The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and the newer Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has also released a public report on the Chinese group APT40, an organization with confirmed ties to the Chinese state intelligence organization, the Ministry of State Security (MSS). According to the FBI and CISA, “These MSS-affiliated actors targeted victims in the following industries: academia, aerospace/aviation, biomedical, defense industrial base, education, government, healthcare, manufacturing, maritime, research institutes, and transportation (rail and shipping).”

These state-backed attacks were specifically designed to insert false, divisive, or otherwise misleading information into the channels of public information in the United States. MSS operatives “gathered victim identity information by collecting compromised credentials” and used that data to “establish domains that impersonate legitimate entities, aka ‘typosquatting’, to use in watering hole attacks and as command and control (C2) infrastructure.” In context, this terminology specifically means that MSS operatives can — and frequently do — “establish new and compromise existing email and social media accounts to conduct social engineering attacks.”<sup>155</sup>

The risk of “social engineering” attacks was highlighted in a critical meeting on Capitol Hill on July 24, 2019, in an exchange between Robert Mueller and Republican Representative Will Hurd of Texas’ 23rd District, who served as an undercover CIA officer during the War on

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<sup>155</sup> National Cyber Awareness Team, “Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures of Indicted APT40 Actors Associated with China’s MSS Hainan State Security Department” United States Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), Alert (AA21-200A), July 19, 2021 <<https://us-cert.cisa.gov/ncas/alerts/aa21-200a>>

Terror and was the residing cybersecurity expert of the U.S. House for many years until his retirement from public service in 2021. Hurd confirmed for members of the U.S. Congress on live TV the Russian state-backed Internet Research Agency (IRA)'s mind control capabilities on U.S. soil. "One of the most striking things in your report," Hurd said to Mueller, is that the Russian IRA "not only undertook a social media campaign" to spread disinformation but that "they were able to organize political rallies after the election" through digital "active measures." Hurd asked if he understood the report correctly, and Mueller confirmed. Mueller added that "many more countries are developing capability to replicate what the Russians have done."<sup>156</sup>

A particularly catastrophic casualty of this disinformation blitzkrieg was the mental stability of Black Americans who were targeted (almost certainly an attempt to provoke crowd-formation and provide media fodder for the system described) because of their proximity to the already overwhelming negative mental health effects of racism.<sup>157</sup> Overwork, paranoia, anxiety, and depression are known to be significantly higher among America's Black population across many areas of the country.<sup>158</sup> The causation of racialized poverty, according to most experts, is that Black Americans' generational access to homeownership (among certain other commodities, like quality banking, groceries, and health care) has been systematically blocked, stolen, or denied by policies from the past.<sup>159</sup> Somehow, "systemic racism" and "critical race theory" became partisan opinions with a breakeven split in legitimacy almost overnight. In terms of

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<sup>156</sup> Emily Stewart & Alex Ward, "4 takeaways from Robert Mueller's testimony" *Vox*. July 24, 2019 <<https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/7/24/20708718/robert-mueller-testimony-house-judiciary-committee-nadler>>

<sup>157</sup> Schouler-Ocak M, Bhugra D, Kastrup MC, et al. Racism and mental health and the role of mental health professionals. *Eur Psychiatry*. 2021;64(1):e42. Published Jun 17, 2021

<sup>158</sup> McGuire TG, Miranda J. New evidence regarding racial and ethnic disparities in mental health: policy implications. *Health Aff (Millwood)*. 2008;27(2): pp. 393-403.

<sup>159</sup> Anderson, Sarah, Marc Bayard, Phyllis Bennis, John Cavanag Sarkar, Basav Sen, and Ebony Slaughter-Johnson. "Systemic Racism." Ed. Saurav Sarkar, Shailly Gupta Barnes, and Aaron Noffke. *The Souls Of Poor Folk*. Institute For Policy Studies, 2018.

Marcuse's analysis, the fear, anxiety, and division over *polysemic* political phrases — short combinations of words that can mean different things to different people, draw out debates and subvert answers to questions that have already been sorted out with reliable, unbiased information. The goal is to either make information inaccessible by drowning or obscuring it, or to discredit neutrality by emotionally charging it.

These issues were made worse by the pandemic, which was a psychological shock in its own right, while also disproportionately impacting people with underlying health conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, and chronic stress.<sup>160</sup> Such health challenges, which are also prevalent in America's rural white communities, are known to be closely related to and potential causes of addiction.<sup>161</sup> In terms of immediate needs and policy problems impacting Americans divided over race, there are actually far more similarities than there are differences. The rapid consumption of propaganda that polarized Americans on the issue of police violence was frequently embedded with foreign state-backed exaggeration and disinformation. (Jacob Blake, whose story ignited tensions in Kenosha, Wisconsin which will be analyzed below, was never killed, for instance, though many videos depicting his shooting claimed that he was. He was also armed, and committing an act of domestic violence when officers responded).<sup>162</sup>

It is possible, perhaps even likely, that on several occasions confrontations between protestors, police, and counter protestors during the peak of the summer violence that followed the BLM protests contained events that could have been *socially engineered* by cyber operatives

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<sup>160</sup> Khan MMA, Khan MN, Mustagir MG, Rana J, Islam MS, Kabir MI. Effects of underlying morbidities on the occurrence of deaths in COVID-19 patients: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *J Glob Health*. 2020 Dec;10(2):020503.

<sup>161</sup> Saitz, R., Larson, M. J., Labelle, C., Richardson, J., & Samet, J. H. (2008). The case for chronic disease management for addiction. *Journal of addiction medicine*, 2(2), pp. 55–65.

<sup>162</sup> Linda Givetash, Caroline Radnofsky and Elisha Fieldstadt, "Video shows police in Kenosha, Wisconsin, shooting Black man in back," NBC News. August 24, 2020. <<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/video-shows-police-kenosha-wis-shooting-black-man-back-n1237819>>

targeting psychological weaknesses in American police, Black residents, and neighbors of other races who were all mutually suffering from mental health vulnerabilities in the aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the traumatic recorded murder of George Floyd, a video that was infamously spread across social media in the early summer. In terms of algorithmic prediction, mathematics, and probability, the law of very large numbers dictates that even a small possibility will become reality, given enough trials.

Imagine the existing faultlines in American social society; issues such as race, political affiliation, and wealth inequality that have been driving antisocial violence committed to upsetting public harmony in the last several decades. A covert state agency that obtained commercial user data of American citizens, a reality that has occurred dozens of times since the early 2000s<sup>163</sup> has the emerging, 21st-century RMA capability of accurately mapping the *psychological intersections* of potential social conflict in the United States. An individual Facebook post, Tweet, or Parler message is like a grain of sand; pouring enough of them on the faultlines of American politics is enough to cause a crack. In a country of 330 million Americans, “one in ten million” odds (a 0.0000001% chance) that an event such as a police shooting could be socially engineered would happen 33 times. This hypothetical estimate I have just given, using no evidence other than assumptions and simple probability, is five times smaller than the actual number (164) of police shootings of Black Americans in just the first 8 months of 2020.<sup>164</sup> Such a shocking figure demands the question, are American police just that racist, prone to using unwarranted deadly force against Black people? Or were the tensions of 2020 “Black

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<sup>163</sup> Lillian Ablon, Martin C. Libicki, and Andrea A. Golay. “Characteristics of the Black Market.” *In Markets for Cybercrime Tools and Stolen Data: Hackers’ Bazaar*, RAND Corporation, 2014. pp. 3–20.

<sup>164</sup> Li Cohen, “Police in the U.S. killed 164 Black people in the first 8 months of 2020. These are their names. (Part I: January-April)” September 10, 2020  
<<https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/black-people-killed-by-police-in-the-u-s-in-2020/>>

Lives Matter” versus “Blue Lives Matter” manufactured by social media disinformation campaigns, reminiscent of Hollywood-style mind control, with armed “sleeper agents” being “hypnotized” and “triggered” by broadcasted information?

Even if the “socially-engineered protest or police shooting” hypothesis seems far-fetched, remote, and unlikely, it *is certain* that the social media circles of Black Lives Matter movement as well as the equally large conservative counter-protest opposition movement were both infiltrated by foreign actors that sought to provoke fear and violence on the American homefront.<sup>165</sup> Disinformation and provocations of violence, much like they were used to dismay and desensitize Black Americans, were used to provoke white Americans’ implicit biases about looting, marxist rebellion, and violence and their connections to progressive ideology. In the words of Desmond Ellington, a cast member for the national tour of *Hamilton* and an Arkansas resident who relocated to New York, “those images just keep coming like weeds. You pick one weed, and two more sprout up. So you gonna set the whole yard on fire to kill the weeds? It wears on your psyche.”<sup>166</sup> Ellington was speaking generally about social media without explicit reference to state actors — presumably he had been unaware. It is unlikely that he was not affected, however.

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<sup>165</sup> Reddi M, Kuo R, Kreiss D. Identity propaganda: “Racial narratives and disinformation.” *New Media & Society*. July 2021

<sup>166</sup> Melba Newsome, “News about Racial Violence Harms Black People’s Mental Health” <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/news-about-racial-violence-harms-black-peoples-mental-health/>



For most of the past three years, Facebook has been removing 1 to 2 billion fake accounts every financial quarter.<sup>167, 168</sup> State-affiliated activity extends far beyond Russian and Chinese soldiers working in “troll farms” and producing such accounts, but it has also been established that state actors are funding other militaries, outsourcing tactics to private firms, and feeding misinformation to good-faith domestic actors who use their platform to inadvertently legitimize and spread lies created by foreign security agencies.<sup>169</sup> By the year 2021, it is unlikely that anyone, even those who avoid using social media altogether, is completely insulated from foreign psychological warfare campaigns. They have penetrated nearly every aspect of our media narratives, and for the most part remain underestimated or unspoken of.

“By discovering the enemy’s dispositions and remaining invisible ourselves, we can keep our forces concentrated, while the enemy’s must be divided.”

- Sun Tzu  
*“The Art of War”*  
 (6th Century, BCE.) Translated ed. Harper Collins, London: 2013

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<sup>167</sup> Niall McCarthy, “Facebook Deleted More Than 2 Billion Fake Accounts In The First Quarter Of The Year” *Forbes*, May 24, 2019. <[https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2019/05/24/facebook-deleted-more-](https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2019/05/24/facebook-deleted-more-than-2-billion-fake-accounts-in-the-first-quarter-of-the-year-infographic/?sh=7f6f5f4667e3)

[than-2-billion-fake-accounts-in-the-first-quarter-of-the-year-infographic/?sh=7f6f5f4667e3](https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2019/05/24/facebook-deleted-more-than-2-billion-fake-accounts-in-the-first-quarter-of-the-year-infographic/?sh=7f6f5f4667e3)>  
<sup>168</sup> Statista Research Department, “Global number of fake accounts taken action on by Facebook from 4th quarter 2017 to 3rd quarter 2021” <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1013474/facebook-fake-account-removal-quarter/>>

<sup>169</sup> Josh A. Goldstein and Shelby Grossman, “How Disinformation Evolved in 2020” *Tech Stream*, Brookings Institute. Jan. 4, 2021 <<https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/how-disinformation-evolved-in-2020/>>

## Thought Police

If these psychological warfare tactics are so well-established and advanced, so much that the opinion of this author is that we must call it effective and successful “mind control,” how has it happened that most American media organizations have not done their due diligence and followed up on the leads of such stories and made the United States public aware of the threat? This section will look at the complex interplay between global disinformation campaigns, American independent journalism, American academic institutions, American party-affiliated media, and the American government.

To answer the hypothetical question posed above: many media organizations have reported these details — but given the demands of the 24/7 news cycle, such stories are rarely explored in sequence or context, and further, the average American has not been able to pay attention to the complex and confusing details that often span multiple events over multiple years, given the day-to-day demands of our social and economic lives. Emerging from a global pandemic, trying to stay ahead of massive cultural and political shifts, and maintaining media habits that promote fears about enemies on the home front all keep our daily considerations (journalist and citizen alike) far away from the crisis at hand: the emergence of mind control technology in a 21st century Revolution in Military Affairs.

By 2016, roughly 62% of Americans were getting their “news” from social media. 2016 is also the year that several major social networks, including Facebook and Twitter, changed their “feed” organization from a chronological algorithm to a reaction-based one. By 2017, the U.S. Army was well aware that social media is a potent weapon in state-backed information and psychological warfare, leading to the radicalization of civilians during conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine during the second half of the Obama Administration. The capability of Russian

psy-op “inform and influence” campaigns conducted over Global Position System (GPS) networks and social media, used as a form of “hybrid warfare” in the Russian invasion of Ukraine, was established as an emergent threat by NATO allies within the first 6 months of Donald Trump being sworn into office.<sup>170</sup> It is entirely possible, — in the opinion of this particular author, very likely — that many if not all of the violent conflicts of the last five years across the entire globe were either partially or wholly induced by manufactured irrationality and dissatisfaction. The average citizen of any country around the world, whether it is a developed state, a communist dictatorship, or a fledgling civil society ruled by a harsh military junta, is being lied to and controlled by data collection and state media campaigns. This technology is in the hands of just roughly half of the world’s population — and the guiding principles that will govern it as it proliferates into the hands of the entire population of humanity are the stakes.

In 2021, Brietbart news claimed that as much as 32% of the American population believes that Joe Biden’s victory in 2020 was illegitimate.<sup>171</sup> According to more conservative estimates, that number is closer to one quarter.<sup>172</sup> If you only count those who firmly believe Trump won, that number shrinks to just under one fifth.<sup>173</sup> Might these unreliable, shifting ideas about the legitimacy of U.S. election systems be a result of personalized “mind control” propaganda proliferating onto the personal computer screens of average Americans, particularly

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<sup>170</sup> Beata Bialy. “Social Media—From Social Exchange to Battlefield.” *The Cyber Defense Review* 2, no. 2 (2017): pp. 69–90.

<sup>171</sup> Wendell Husebo, “Poll: Only 61 Percent of Registered Voters Believe Biden Won 2020 Election ‘Fair and Square’” *Brietbart*. June. 21, 2021 <<https://www.breitbart.com/politics/2021/06/21/percent-registered-voters-believe-biden-election-fair-square/>>

<sup>172</sup> Reuters, “53% of Republicans view Trump as true U.S. president -Reuters/Ipsos” *Reuters*, May 24, 2021, <<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/53-republicans-view-trump-true-us-president-reutersipsos-2021-05-24/>>

<sup>173</sup> Carroll Doherty, Jocelyn Kiley, Nida Asheer, and Calvin Jordan; “Voters’ reflections on the 2020 election,” *Biden Begins Presidency With Positive Ratings; Trump Departs With Lowest-Ever Job Mark*, Pew Research Center, Jan 15, 2021

those dissatisfied with their civilian life after years of being disenfranchised by wealth inequality and restrictive access to education, advanced business technology, and healthcare? If so, to what extent is our media apparatus amplifying these manufactured issues, instead of confronting them with facts?

During the 2016 presidential election in the United States, the “open web” was hardly that. Scholars working for Harvard University ran an analytic program on publicly accessible web data to determine how information on the internet was connected. They discovered that right-leaning “news sources” tended to insulate themselves from the rest of the internet — in other words, those who were frequently visiting *Fox News*, *Brietbart*, or the *Wall Street Journal* were drawing from a smaller network of data than those who read literally anything else. Far-left, center-left, dead-center, and even some center-right information sources (from *The Daily Beast & MSNBC* through *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *Wikipedia*, and even *Bloomberg & Reuters*) were linked to a wider range of pages. Harvard’s program returned its findings in the form of a “map” of the most popular media sources in the United States, or a diagram of in-links between published pages. While there was a significant volume of links between the “mainstream internet” and the “right-wing internet,” there were many more connections between the right-wing internet and the “alt-right” internet, which sprung up remarkably recently and tended to have poor sourcing or opaque privacy policies compared to established websites.<sup>174</sup>

The most harmful component of these individual websites is not the number of half-truths or the slant of the opinion, but instead the collective metadata that can be analyzed through an individual user’s browser sessions. Digital tracking technology extends beyond desktop or laptop computer use, but also includes cell data, GPS, facial and gait recognition. Taken together these

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<sup>174</sup> Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, & Hal Roberts “Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics,” (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 2018) pp. 48-49

tools have enabled American advertising firms, both commercial and political, to assign cohorts of pre-assigned market share that are targeted by thoroughly researched and tested ads that display on personal screens or at opportune display boards in public; *ideological managers* who use screens in real life to become pop-up windows capable of “intervening in our experience to shape our behavior.”<sup>175</sup> The masters of mind control, foreign conspirators and those they have coaxed into their scheme, steal incredibly detailed, individuated data that is then used to create fake accounts, posts, ads, or physical products that are then recycled back into the digital ecosystem, feeding biases and subverting people’s autonomy into a system of gut reactions and mindless scrolling.<sup>176</sup> However, this system is only two steps away from what has been legal for decades; buying data and using it to market services and products. As a result, the nuanced specifics of a story about “psychometric modeling” devised by a criminally liable company in Europe using stolen data from American tech firms and working with pundits in the U.K. and U.S. as well as oligarchs in dictatorial countries to create digital “media viruses” that “alter mass consciousness” for political causes in democratic countries that then became self-replicating AI programs cascading a deluge of fake information roughly the same size (if not larger) than all the verifiable information on the internet every couple of months ends up being several layers too complex for the average journalist or citizen to keep track of all at once.

Given the complexity of the topic, it’s proximity to covert military history, and its counterproductive relationship to established norms of Enlightenment governance, it is a responsibility of academia to make the story clear and concise. To that end, this paper argues that

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<sup>175</sup> Zuboff, “Surveillance Capitalism” p. 25

<sup>176</sup> Carole Cadwalladr, ‘I made Steve Bannon’s psychological warfare tool’: meet the data war whistleblower” *The Guardian*, The Cambridge Analytica Files, March 18, 2018. <<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/17/data-war-whistleblower-christopher-wylie-faceook-nix-bannon-trump>>

other branches of information distribution in society, such as journalism, law, and now also tech, ought to call this phenomenon what it is, in clear, simple terms: “mind control.”

“*Liberal*” institutions, such as the legitimate rule of law, the academy, science, and the “fourth estate” of independent journalism, are the pillars of a functional constitutional republic based on rational democracy. *Conserving* “modern” society depends on trust and verification of these institutional values in order for impartial rule of law to function. For years, skepticism of modern institutions drawn from the inequality inherent to wealth preservation and capital management have undermined the public perception of these pillars.

In 2011, for instance, conservative media pundit Rush Limbaugh called them “the Four Corners of Deceit” in 2011, and has used his platform to rail against the “biases” he identifies within them for a decade.<sup>177</sup> Are Limbaugh and like-minded critics conspirators hoping to take down American society, or have they — just like the journalists, activists, and academics on the American left — being targeted by psychological manipulation to accentuate and radicalize their opinions and followers? According to Kathleen Hall Jamieson, a decorated expert in the field of media studies and director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, media pundits, just like every other American, were intentionally shown false, divisive, and inflammatory information by military operations in order to legitimize conspiracies that undermine American national security.<sup>178</sup>

Limbaugh, like any human being, has his own subjective biases and constructed ideas about the world. In the last five years, it is certain that the biases of media producers were hijacked by foreign actors hoping to inflame the tensions of American civil society. While the

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<sup>177</sup> Benkler, Faris, & Roberts “Network Propaganda,” p. 36

<sup>178</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson, “Cyberwar: How Russian Hackers and Trolls Helped Elect a President: What We Don't, Can't, and Do Know” (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2018)

disenfranchised and skeptical received whispers in one ear, the wealthy and powerful received whispers in the other; filtered through journalists and their interviewees on camera and in articles, those whispers escalated to shouts. It hardly matters which side started the culture war at this point, because the goal was never for America to be taken over by one-party rule. The goal is to topple the stability and legacy of the United States from the inside. The uncomfortable truth is that the likelihood of "World War III" is just around the corner. The U.S., divided over the legitimacy and fairness of its most basic political systems and armed with 370 million firearms for just 330 million people is poised to tear itself apart. Strategically, Russia and China are both positioning to invade contested territories in Ukraine and Taiwan, respectively, almost surely in order to dominate the global energy supply and semiconductor production in order to rewrite history and claim ideological, historical, commercial, and martial revenge in the 21st century. Russia and China, even today, stand head and shoulders above other wealthy countries as one-party states supported by repression and coercive, top-down media and political control.

In our age, it is warranted to be skeptical of any speculative narrative about foreign countries, just as we ought to be skeptical of the standards, procedures, and biases of any media company; stories told by people cannot be perfect, as they are written by human beings with their own constructed ideas and subjective biases. We should apply the same skepticism, however, to the framing of stories that we see on any social media platform, on any television set, or in any government PSA. "Media moments" of people in the wrong place at the wrong time can have a powerful impact — with the right camera angle. Shockingly, and of utmost importance to the argument of this thesis, is the idea that these sorts of moments can be manufactured by AI and military organizations operating complex machines behind several layers of curtains.

A particularly horrifying and grotesque picture of America can be painted when one looks at the details of the civil unrest in Kenosha, Wisconsin, during the height of civilian-led violence in the reaction to the Black Lives Matter movement. The movement, which had been active for years, was seen as a central instigator in August of 2020, when the small Midwestern town of Kenosha became a sort of “ground-zero” for civilian violence, initiating a visit from President Trump and a nationwide crackdown on political opposition with federal security forces.<sup>179</sup> The violence in Kenosha, in many cases (including that of Kyle Rittenhouse) was caused by thousands of non-local Americans who traveled dozens of miles, sometimes more than 100, to participate on both sides of the riots and crowd-clashes. In many instances, people who participated in violent riots on the streets of Kenosha, both in favor and against the BLM movement, had been motivated to act by videos and posts they had seen on Facebook.<sup>180</sup> Videos captured violent injuries of local innocents, blaming “rioters” and “instigators” on the other side. In many instances, information was mislabeled, taken out of context, or imported from other historical events entirely. Local media programs picked up and spread misinformation about the other side’s intentions. Radicalization came as second nature after a global pandemic, a summer of political violence, and a history of fierce divisions over state power and race. Anti-U.S. domestic terrorists infiltrated the ranks of both sides, damaging property, committing assaults, and discrediting crowds as “peaceful.” Fears of “operatives” sent by the other party motivated previously peaceful or neutral citizens to prepare for violence and interrogate or assault members

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<sup>179</sup> Department of Justice Archives, “Operation Legend,” Office of the Attorney General, U.S. DOJ. <<https://www.justice.gov/archives/operationlegend>>

<sup>180</sup> Charles Homans, “Kyle Rittenhouse and the New Era of Political Violence,” *The New York Times Magazine*, Oct. 26, 2021, Updated Nov. 19, 2021. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/26/magazine/kyle-rittenhouse-kenosha-wisconsin.html>>



of their own “side.” National media could hardly keep up with the rapid explosion of details in the story, which seems to still be dividing people today.<sup>181</sup>

Both sides rallied to prepare average, untrained citizens for war.

It is a miracle that, so far, we have only seen “skirmishes” followed by an “insurrection.”

“We know that more people die than would otherwise because of car accidents, but by and large, cars create way more value in the world than they destroy.

And I think social media is similar.”

- Adam Mosseri, Chief executive of Facebook’s Instagram service  
*“Instagram boss Adam Mosseri on teenagers, Tik-Tok and paying creators”*  
 (Recode Media, Vox podcast, September 16, 2021)

### **Discussion and Analysis**

The examples given in this thesis present only one theory of mind control. We use theorization to construct mental tools; devices of thought and analysis, in order to better understand the world around us. Similar to other forces that we cannot see with our own eyes, such as the gravitational waves that glue us to the ground or the germs (harmful bacteria, fungi, and viruses) that make us sick, the term “mind control” is a tool we can use to describe a peculiar function of computational logic, psychology, and data collection. We cannot point to a physical thing called gravity; someone was only able to name it because they could observe its effects. Similarly, we cannot point to a thing called “mind control.” However; just as Isaac Newton was

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<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

able to express simple math that helped society understand gravity (which was later turned into more complex and complete math by the experts who came after) we can here express simple math to understand the scientific concept of data-based, computational mind control.

In order to open the door to research of this phenomenon outside of the realm of literary argument and political messaging; in order to genuinely quantify our present conundrum of misinformation, counterpublics, and knowledge distribution, I propose a general use function of a new economic principle: *information capital*.

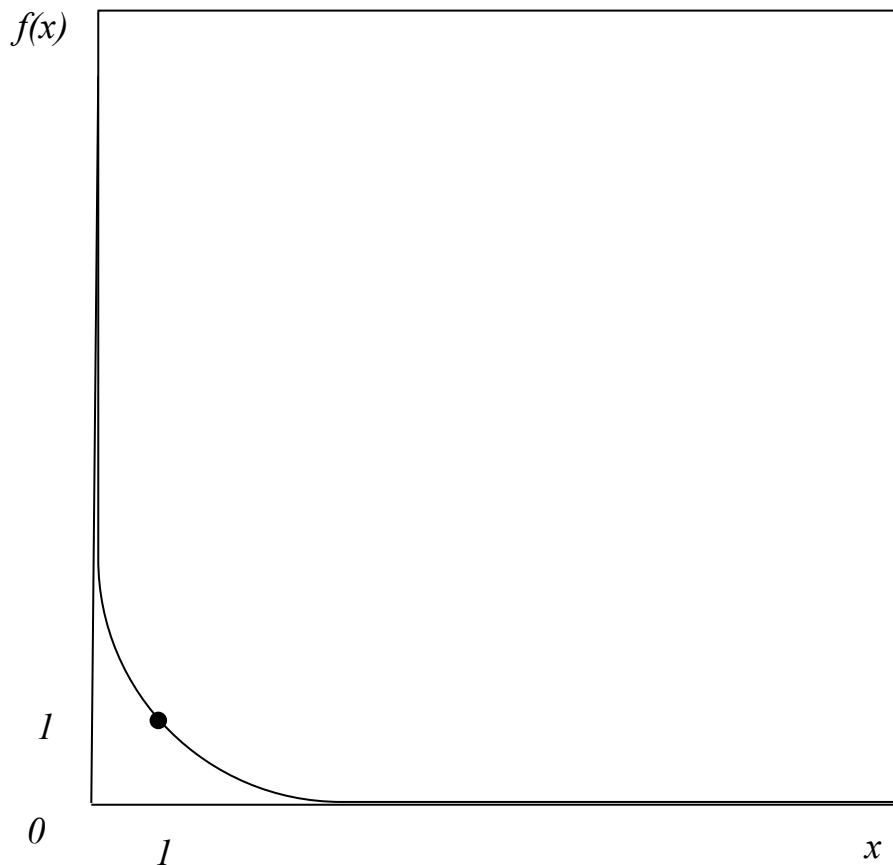
Information capital is a concept that combines the principles of Benedict Anderson’s “print-capitalism” with Shoshana Zuboff’s “surveillance capitalism.” In order to understand the scope and magnitude of the problem of information distribution in various *systems of data* (such as a nation, a language, a school, or a media platform), I invite deeper analysis from the fields of econometrics and data science under an umbrella function of  $f(x) = n/x$ , where  $n$  represents the number of entities that simultaneously collect & display information and  $x$  represents the number of entities that consume data in the system. (The parameters, variables, and derivatives of such mathematical terminology I leave to people far smarter than myself.)

In order for this new equation to serve those of us who do not have an advanced knowledge of complex computational analysis, I will undertake the project of constructing a model that makes many simplifying assumptions and apply it to the hypothetical example of “Big Brother” in Orwell’s *1984* — to get a very rough picture of some of the risks posed by data inequity in terms of information capital. First, for our equation  $f(x) = n/x$ , let’s assume that all values of  $n$  and  $x$  must be positive, as we cannot express a negative person. We will keep our function continuous on the basis that a “proportion of a person” (any sort of decimal value) is a representation of the proportion of time spent in the information metaverse.

In Orwell's world this would be nearly 100% of the time; the character Winston was rarely able to escape surveillance, and the state's knowledge of his thoughts and habits eventually caught up with him. If we similarly make the assumption that ordinal relationships matter in this function (ie. The 10th user added is a different person from the 100th user) we are able to approximate the amount of power and wealth accumulated by individuals who joined the *capital organization of information* based on the order in which they joined the network.

Setting  $n = 1$

### Big Brother's "Information Capital" in 1984



This graph represents the hypothetical absolute totalitarian system of  $f(x) = 1/x$  where Orwell's "Big Brother" can spy on anyone in society at any time. To those who have never encountered this graph before, increasing the numerator linearly (keeping a constant variable like

1, 10, or 100 on top) would be a helpful way to imagine all the data companies and intelligence agencies out there. Of course, our parameters of time, organizational structure, and data analysis tools call for more complex expressions in both the numerator and denominator, but in terms of our simple example, a linear increase in  $n$  merely moves that curve proportionately outward, consistent with the math below.

The “mind control capability” — or rather, the relative wealth and power that can be accumulated over time with respect to data ownership — is represented by the left side of the equation,  $f(x)$ . Big Brother (in this case, the numerator  $n = 1$ ) is the only person with absolute freedom to think, speak, and act as he’d like. Each new member of Big Brother’s data distribution network is represented by  $x$  as it grows. Party members (the individuals represented by  $x$ ) are all constantly watched by Big Brother and shown information he wants them to see. Each member therefore sits at a proportionally lower level of information capital: [ $f(x) = 0.5 \mid x = 2$ ;  $f(x) = 0.33 \mid x = 3$ ;  $f(x) = 0.25 \mid x = 4$ ; *etc.*]. The nature of this function is that the knowledge-power of the  $x^{\text{th}}$  individual approaches zero as  $x$  approaches infinity.

Just the same, the sum of the result of each individual’s information capital approaches 1.00 as  $x$  approaches infinity. In this system, Big Brother — who is able to spy on everyone and show them whatever information he likes through telescreens, which are everywhere — will never have an equal; even his second-in-command has only half the information about the system as he. (We may imagine that Big Brother doesn’t allow his assistants to see their own data, but that Big Brother is able to observe his own data in addition to that of everyone else). Pooling the data-resources of every member against Big Brother, the sum of each individual value of  $f(x)$  after  $x = 2$  will never total more than 1.00.

This is to say that each new member of a data network who is indoctrinated into this system of one-sided data collection (mathematical mind reading) and one-sided, untraceable, personalized data display (mathematical mind control) has less power than the previous. Big Brother knows more facts about society than any individual could ever hope to, because he is recording everything that happens and puts it all into a computer database that he alone is able to access. Winston's story takes place in a gap not accounted for by the model, which is corrected.

For those of us inclined toward imagination, we may also wonder what the left asymptote [the value of  $f(x)$  approaching infinity] represents. For the sake of our simple model, let's say that every value between  $x = 0$  and  $x = 1$  represents the time Big Brother needs to spend actively modeling habits and psychology through data-processing. The more time Big Brother spends processing data collected through his society-wide mind-control apparatus, the closer we get to  $x = 1$ . He isn't able to do much, even with videos of each and every event in society, if all he's using to make predictions is his hands; maybe the tools of paper and pencil or an abacus. (Imagine a fifth-grader trying to single-handedly control the future of society by watching YouTube. It just couldn't be done!). In this imaginary scenario, we can point to the asymptotic limit of  $f(x)$  as it approaches infinity as the physical limit of computational reasoning. Better algorithms, better sensors, better artificial intelligence, and better chips give Big Brother the ability to spend less time working out the math of social psychology and more power over people's beliefs at scale.

The reason I bring up this excruciatingly simple mathematical model using fictional characters after I have spent my thesis explaining this phenomenon in factual detail is because we are now living with the threat of a genuine Big Brother becoming real in the United States.

This is not hyperbole, this is not slander, nor is this a trick. Fortunately, we still have time to act before this becomes reality.

Allow me to be crystal clear about the crisis we have on our hands: Meta Platforms, Inc. — which requires its employees to do all their work on the Facebook suite of products — represents a company that has subsumed the individual psychology of each of its laborers in the name of managerial productivity. Alphabet, Inc., Microsoft Corporation, and Amazon.com, Inc. currently threaten similar intellectual dominance over the information capital that their employees have access to and produce. Similarly, on a physical level, they hold this power over the data of each and every organization that has ever used their cloud software.

Ironically, using this model, the companies in Silicon Valley have become the most desirable places to work on earth — as they promise higher incomes, greater job satisfaction, and immense growth opportunities for any individual willing to sell not just their day in the form of labor and intellectual energy, but also the bulk of their habituated psychology. This is the shape and nature of postmodern managerial capitalism. Of course, it's an open secret that Google also promotes experimentation, play, accidents, and surprises in the way it designs its office spaces, in an effort to optimize even accidents. Smaller companies peering around the corner of the future, working to optimize possibilities of AI in their own corporate structure, are already actively searching for tools to model and manage employee behavior.<sup>182</sup>

In this regard, our function  $f(x) = n/x$  is remarkably more complex, as both  $n$  and  $x$  can (and should) be expressed in more complete mathematical terms that take into account the organizational structures of those who own data channels and those who use them, as well as an

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<sup>182</sup> John McQuaid, “Your Boss Wants to Spy on Your Inner Feelings” *Scientific American Magazine*, December 2021

expression to calculate how much time is spent producing data in the metaverse and the time it takes to run computational analysis. More threatening still to the prospect of America and the freedom it offers is one politician and the party he has taken control of. The political tactic to undermine the confidence and legitimacy of information platforms such as academic institutions and the tech companies contracted as American defense partners has become a desperate, last-ditch attempt by dictators around the world to control free society after the failure of Donald Trump's attempted coup of democracy.

The Trump Media & Technology Group (TMTG), llc., has not even bothered to obscure the fact that it provides its singular Chairman, Donald J. Trump, control over the data of every individual who absorbs information through the network. "TRUTH Social" and affiliate partners, like Parler and Gettr provide a direct line of sight for a political party into the thought processes and knowledge of every person who uses these "free" data networks. Every message that one sees on TrumpMedia[.]net has been — or has the potential to be — tailored to one's individualized subconscious fears, insecurities, and psychological vulnerabilities. These psychological vulnerabilities are actively exploited under a system of network information dissemination invented (or otherwise endorsed) by Donald Trump, Steve Bannon, Rudy Giuliani, and a good many others<sup>183</sup> — some of whom have been arrested and tried for various crimes of fraud, improper data collection, or campaign law violations. Others were able to get away with their crimes by way of Trump's numerous Presidential pardons, more have invoked the 5th amendment (silence in order to avoid implicating oneself of a crime), and still others have been able to escape justice under the protection of other governments — such as Vladimir Putin's

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<sup>183</sup> Hugo Lowell, "Trump called aides hours before Capitol riot to discuss how to stop Biden victory" *The Guardian*, U.S. Capitol Attack, <[https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/30/donald-trump-called-top-aides-capitol-riot-biden?CMP=GTUS\\_email](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/30/donald-trump-called-top-aides-capitol-riot-biden?CMP=GTUS_email)>

dictatorship in Russia,<sup>184</sup> who seems to be more interested in keeping the truth undiscoverable and ambiguous than genuinely supporting America's 45th President.

Despite his propensity for publicly claiming alliance with dictators in China, North Korea, and Russia, these claims are not meant to single out Donald Trump as some sort of “evil mastermind” with the intent and ability to overthrow American Democracy and install himself as tyrant. Such descriptions, which have surely made their way throughout society over the last few years, are a gross mischaracterization of the man. Nor is he America's 21st century “manchurian candidate;” He was characterized by Russian security agents, those same who sought to cause “social turmoil” and “alter mass consciousness” as an “impulsive, mentally unstable and unbalanced individual who suffers from an inferiority complex.”<sup>185</sup> President Trump, a popular man who leads by the gut, has simply been fooled into brawling over non-issues with his fellow Americans by fake news and desperate conditions manufactured by foreign conspirators, much like the rest of us.<sup>186</sup> TRUTH Social may very well be the Trump Steaks of this decade.

That being said, giving such an opportunistic and unreliable character his own digital surveillance network to spread misinformed beliefs is surely a move against American conservatism and free speech, now matter how hard his ad team tries to spin it.

In this thesis, I identify the international cooperation of data analysis agencies and state cyber-psych warfare actors in the 2016 Presidential Election cycle as the first successful example of a large-scale mind control project in the United States. By 2016, the *de facto* division in American politics has not become one of progressivism or conservatism, but instead a debate

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<sup>184</sup> Chris Cilliza, “11 Trump associates have now been charged with crimes. 11!” CNN, *The Point! With Chris Cilliza*. <<https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/21/politics/tom-barrack-trump-arrested/index.html>>

<sup>185</sup> Harding, Borger and Sabbagh, “Kremlin papers... White House” *The Guardian*, July 15, 2021

<sup>186</sup> Martin Pengelly, “Trump challenges media and Democrats to debate his electoral fraud lie,” *The Guardian*, Donald Trump. <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/29/trump-press-democrats-debate-electoral-fraud-lie-schiff-meadows-capitol-attack>>



between the legitimate use of intelligence collection on Americans versus the patriotic loyalty we should demand of them. In neither case, are Americans truly represented by parties that seek to uphold freedom. The improper collection and use of private data for “psychometric modeling” by Cambridge Analytica on behalf of the Trump campaign, in order to disseminate untraceable propaganda directed toward Republican voters’ individual psyches, may be reasonably deemed “mind control” given the context of this paper’s argument. It should be noted, however, that this technology was also used in a more-or-less legal manner by the Obama campaign in 2008, where data experts disseminated *traceable propaganda* (“paid for by the Obama Campaign”) using estimations of Democrats’ psychological patterns.<sup>187</sup> Because of those considerations, it may or may not be fair to identify Barack Obama, his campaign, his Democratic presidential successor Joe Biden, and staff as “agents of mind control” as well. Just the same, these surveillance tools were first turned on the American public by the administration of George W. Bush, whose administration knowingly lied to the American republic using misinformation obtained from this mass surveillance apparatus. By 2021, both major parties are swimming in oceans of individual psychological voter data. A suspicion that the 2020 election wasn’t fair is only natural; we were all effectively managed, by countless actors domestically and across the world, into supporting one of two candidates based on our personal psychological data.

Whether or not any of the American political leaders of the last 20 years behaved ethically in the realm of free and fair elections is a question this paper cannot answer. These arguments are necessarily made against the backdrop of globalization and violence writ large. However, the Obama administration’s expansion of surveillance programs first established under

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<sup>187</sup> Daniel Kreiss, “Yes We Can (Profile You): A Brief Primer On Campaigns And Political Data.” Symposium issue, Stanford Law review

President Bush was surely a violation of American citizen's constitutional rights and a violation of trust of the security alliances made with our partners in Europe. The Obama Administration also holds the guilt of allowing this technology to proliferate to semi-autocratic and malicious state actors without the awareness of the American public.

What we also know for sure is that the Trump Administration was made aware of these threats as soon as President Trump was sworn into office, and that he did virtually nothing to stop them. Additionally, many of these campaigns served to benefit him and his most loyal supporters directly. Between our former president's ties (as well as those of his closest advisors and campaign engineers) to the tech industry, Russian nationals, and criminals and fraudsters in the United States, we have no choice but to confront the idea that Donald J. Trump was compromised in the game of interstate psychological warfare. We must also question our allegiance to his goals whether we are currently serving as Republicans in office or merely participating in politics as concerned American citizens. For his part, Joe Biden has surrounded himself with tech, economic, and foreign security experts who are working to address the problem, but his administration has done a terrible job with forthright communication about the emerging international warfare landscape, as is the express role of the Commander-in-Chief.

It is entirely possible that the popular support expressed for the last two Presidents is not the result of genuine ideological representation of Americans' beliefs, but the outcome of an unconstitutional, zero checks-and-balances system that blatantly violates the first and fourth amendments when state-run shadow information campaigns are directed across oceans at our deepest individual fears and psychological insecurities.

“Your claim then is that your truth is of so esoteric a nature that it is beyond the understanding of a plain man.

It seems to me that *truth* should be clearer than that, less mysterious, more open to the mind.”

- Isaac Asimov, Russian-American science fiction writer and biochemist  
“*Foundation*”  
(Gnome Press, New York: August 30, 1951) Italics added.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

The path to peace, after these dark years of psychological war, is not an impossibility.

The stories we believe about history influence the way we perceive the institutions and associations that shape civil society. The myths we spell out for each other about our nation inform our sense of duty, justice, and morality. Let us tell a *true* story about one of the darkest and most confusing times in our country’s history:

The history of mind control is a story of the subtle, slow erosion of the legal rights and individual psychological freedom following the end of World War II and into the first three decades of the 21st century. Secret laboratory experiments, international coups, and naval information warfare make for the most exciting stories, but the bulk of this history, was told by fear-based propaganda and the imagined-into-existence tools of “brainwashing” that were directed toward social consciousness in modernized societies in a concerted effort to indoctrinate individuals into national state formations capable of triumphing in warfare over others. The rights of free citizens were trampled for decades by several shadowy government agencies

working under the umbrella of “national security,” allying themselves with former Nazis and rogue scientists who pioneered nearly every aspect of modern psychological warfare.

In our conceptualization of written history, we may be tempted to name this era the *managerial period*, where political and economic actors strategically withheld knowledge and information to become the masters of consciousness and economic forecasting through mass media that deconstructed common knowledge and constructed popular ideals.

This is the history of the “nation-state” in the years following the *modern* era, during the colonial-mercantile period bookended by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 through the conclusion of World War II in 1948. National statehood following the end of WWII meant the adaptation of the most powerful self-governing states, both capitalist and socialist, into global propaganda-producing behemoths.

After 9/11, this issue was further compounded by mass data collection and the predictive capability of state security agencies in order to stop future terror attacks. It was during this time that misinformation became a particularly potent weapon to throw American intelligence off the trail of genuine threats, as intelligence analysts were on hyper-alert for any sort of potential follow up attack in a similar pattern to the plane hijacking tactics during the September 11.<sup>188</sup>

These tactics of data collection and behavioral prediction proliferated to the international stage as the U.S. shared this technology with its allies, particularly Israel, whose geostrategic location made it useful in deciphering the stories that can be told from patterns in data. Of course, by now these tools (which have been in use for more than 20 years) have been mimicked, stolen, or otherwise perfected by dictatorial and neo-fascistic state security agencies. All the

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<sup>188</sup> Aiden Orr, National security experts discuss how 9/11 shaped U.S. intelligence community” *The GW Hatchet*, (GW University Student Publication) Nov. 3, 2021. <<https://www.gwhatchet.com/2021/11/03/national-security-experts-discuss-how-9-11-shaped-u-s-intelligence-community/>>

while, the United States has kept its ideological allies — such as European states — at arms length, even going so far as to turn this surveillance technology on other foreign leaders under *both* the Obama and Trump Administrations in order to get an edge on critical conversations about state priorities. Unfortunately, this decades-long focus on espionage and technologically advanced physical warfare and not cyber, informational, or psychological warfare has landed our country in a particularly violent security dilemma: the current crisis of mind control weapons being used at scale on American citizens.

Despite attempts on part of state intelligence agencies to find a genuine scientific understanding of the phenomenon of mind control through fantastical exploits (such as LSD, sensory deprivation, electroshock torture, etc.), the economic-nationalist state formation of societies — what we commonly call the Cold War between “capitalism” and “communism” — did not become genuine “mind control” until two more historical conditions were fulfilled: first, the development and evolution of mathematical tools capable of estimating individual consciousness (a trend that evolved out of the security concerns following 9/11) and second, the *untraceable deployment of individualized propaganda* derived from those mathematical estimations by political actors who sought to undermine free thinking.

In terms of other unanswered questions, there is also considerable concern, among data-psychologists, that the 2016 “Brexit” campaign and the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine were political events engineered by untraceable, personalized propaganda. What this paper can reasonably conclude is the following: we should be mindful of the growing proportion of time we have spent online or connected to a smart device over the last two decades and how that has affected our perception of reality. To avoid an all-out World War III or a Second American Civil War, it may be necessary to quickly adopt postmodern frameworks of seeing the world, giving

room for intelligent and civically-engaged social debates about issues of scale, exponentiality, complexity, memory, and the formation of ideas.

If we are considering questions of value, theory, and praxis, we may feel tempted to draw the conclusion that people like Adolph Hitler and Osama Bin Laden — who sought to destroy free society through the values of fear, control, and paranoia — were successful in spreading their mission by imparting such values onto American managerial capitalism and state intelligence practices. We should look critically at the evolution of this historical trend through the particularly pernicious lens of *information marketing* and the various ways in which we have popularized *commercial truths* (“Google it!” “watch a YouTube video” “educate yourself on Instagram” “keep up with the news on Twitter”).

*Research* and *education* are not political ads, they are not websites, they are not hashtags. While we can surely learn things from those spaces — and utilize them to spread certain opinions in the public sphere, we must also understand that the internet, as it currently exists, is not *public space*. Access to the “metaverse of information” in the “Web 2.0” era is almost always arbitrated by companies or other incorporated entities who collect data on your online behavior, such as a university, a government agency, or a non-profit/non-governmental organization.

That data is history. Everything else we have ever been told about the past is mythology told through the psychological lens of individuals with their own biases, agendas, hopes, and perspectives. As an individual, I of course have an interest in convincing people that “research” and “education” work this way: if I did not, then I would have never attended an academic institution and learned the skills of scholarship in order to propose a *thesis*. We have spent time here, as author and audience, investigating these questions and rationally dissecting thoughts in our experience. The work is far from complete: academic knowledge operates on the assumption

that rational, slow, and deliberate research can challenge the claims made in this paper. Such counter-research is welcomed, so long as it remains in the interest of transparency, good faith, and knowledge. The opposite, which may very well occur as a result of my publishing of these arguments, is a media campaign designed to erode trust and adapt the content discussed here to support baseless digital myths that promote violence. The real world and the alternative world invented on the internet are at war. Using the internet with the knowledge in this paper, we can think critically instead of listening to whatever lies make us happiest. (Though I would challenge the notion that any of us were sustainably happy before beginning this investigation; especially any reader who has been deeply and personally distressed by this new knowledge.)

“Research” and “education” are formal, established theories of reason that require indoctrination into a science-based methodology of rationality, instruction, and critical thinking. While *learning* (obviously) happens outside the classroom or library, and easy access to the internet can *teach* us many things, we should be hesitant to view any information we obtained for free as “*knowledge*.” In a world where the most profitable businesses on earth make their money by scanning your psychological habits, free information obtained online is at best only ever an attempt to collect information on you and what you believe. As we have seen in this paper, free information is also frequently disseminated to harm people and erode society. (As a statement of transparency, the information you have obtained by reading thus far was not free. I assumed a great deal of student debt to bring you this knowledge!) Even then, we must be critical and aware of the theories that permeate our experiences even when we have paid into a system of knowledge or productivity. That criticism should come from a place of genuine concern for sustainable happiness and the minimization of suffering — a field of psychology that has also benefited from decades of research, education, and formalized knowledge.

By the very nature of abstract theorization, all of what you have just read is only that: a theory based on observations. By the nature of those observations being mine, what I have written for you here is only my opinion. I am hopeful that such an opinion will be adopted, analyzed, criticized, and refined by others over time, consistent with the scientific method and the pursuit of international standards of truth, freedom, and peace. I do not pretend that this dry, long, and difficult thesis is an absolute, undeniable record of events. But I do propose that we think more broadly about what sort of absolute, undeniable records are out there — what tools we have unleashed to record and analyze the day-to-day lives of billions of people, and how those tools can be used by those in power.

Orwell, a socialist, believed in the fate of the free world and declared that “the huge, invincible, everlasting slave empire of which [James] Burnham appears to dream will not be established, or, if established, will not endure, because slavery is no longer a stable basis for human society.”<sup>189</sup> James Burnham, a conservative American scholar and theorist who rejected the promises of Marxism, came to fear that managerial capitalism, if technologically advanced enough, would become an inescapable black hole for the promises of freedom and liberty.

George Orwell was wrong. James Burnham was right.

The emergence of techno-psychological empires has been successfully established.

Will the world allow them to endure?

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