

Media Warfare in the Cold War Era

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Summary: The Cold War, a prolonged period of geopolitical tension between the United States and the Soviet Union, spanned from the end of World War II in 1945 until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. This era was characterized by ideological conflict, nuclear arms races, and numerous proxy wars. However, beyond the military and political maneuvers, the Cold War was also fought on a psychological front, with media playing a pivotal role. Both superpowers leveraged media to propagate their ideologies, influence public perception, and undermine their adversary. This essay will analyze how media measures were utilized by the United States and the Soviet Union to shape narratives, bolster their geopolitical agendas, and maintain domestic control. By examining government propaganda, state-controlled media, and the impact of these efforts on public opinion, we can gain a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between media and power during one of the most critical periods of the 20th century.

Keywords: Cold War, media warfare

I. Introduction

Overview of the Cold war

The Cold War is believed to have started right after the end of World War II and lasted until 1991 when the Soviet Union officially dissolved. Throughout the Cold War period, the US and the Soviet Union never directly declared war on each other. Instead, they provided weapons and money to their allies to fight the allies of the opposing side. The element of war here is represented by the deep confrontation between the two blocs in terms of power and ideology. The term "cold" is reflected in the fact that the US and the Soviet Union did not use hot weapons (traditional weapons) but instead engaged in an arms race, notably with nuclear weapons, along with economic competition and propaganda. In 1945, World War II ended with the defeat of the fascist powers. Europe was heavily devastated, and countries like the UK and France gradually lost their status and influence. Meanwhile, the US and the Soviet Union emerged as world superpowers but had completely opposing ideologies. This conflict marked the beginning of a historical period known as the "Cold War." After the Yalta Conference in February 1945 to reorganize the world after World War II, the parties discussed and decided to divide Europe into two blocs with different social systems. The Western European bloc represented traditional capitalism, operating the economy through private ownership of property and means of production, promoting a free environment for economic development and investment, but this led to clear wealth disparities as capitalists exploited workers to maximize profits. In contrast, the Eastern European bloc was led by the Soviet Union, or communist ideology, operating the economy based on public ownership, aiming to create an equal society where people work according to their abilities and enjoy according to their needs. In 1947, the Truman Doctrine was born, marking the beginning of the Cold War. According to this doctrine, the US would aid any country they saw as threatened by communism. The comprehensive battle in economics, science, technology, space, military, and media officially began.

Significance of the Cold War in global history

In the final decade of the 20th century, after the Soviet Union collapsed, the socialist countries' system disintegrated and fell into a severe economic and social crisis, along with a heavy crisis of faith. The US and Western countries emerged victorious in the Cold War, a victory without war and gunpowder. Throughout the first decade after the Soviet Union disappeared from the world map, Russia—the successor state—experienced a lost decade, mired in a comprehensive political, economic, and social crisis, nearing the brink of bankruptcy. This was an opportunity for the

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US—the sole superpower with overwhelming economic, military, and political strength—to establish a unipolar world order led by the US, replacing the bipolar world order.

However, the period during which the US enjoyed its unrivaled superpower status, with overwhelming dominance over the rest of the world, did not last long. Significant upheavals occurred globally (the formation of the European Union, the rise of developing countries and their blocs, and riots on many continents) and within the US itself (the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the 2008 financial crisis), leading to discussions about the relative decline of the US in terms of its economic, political, and global leadership status.

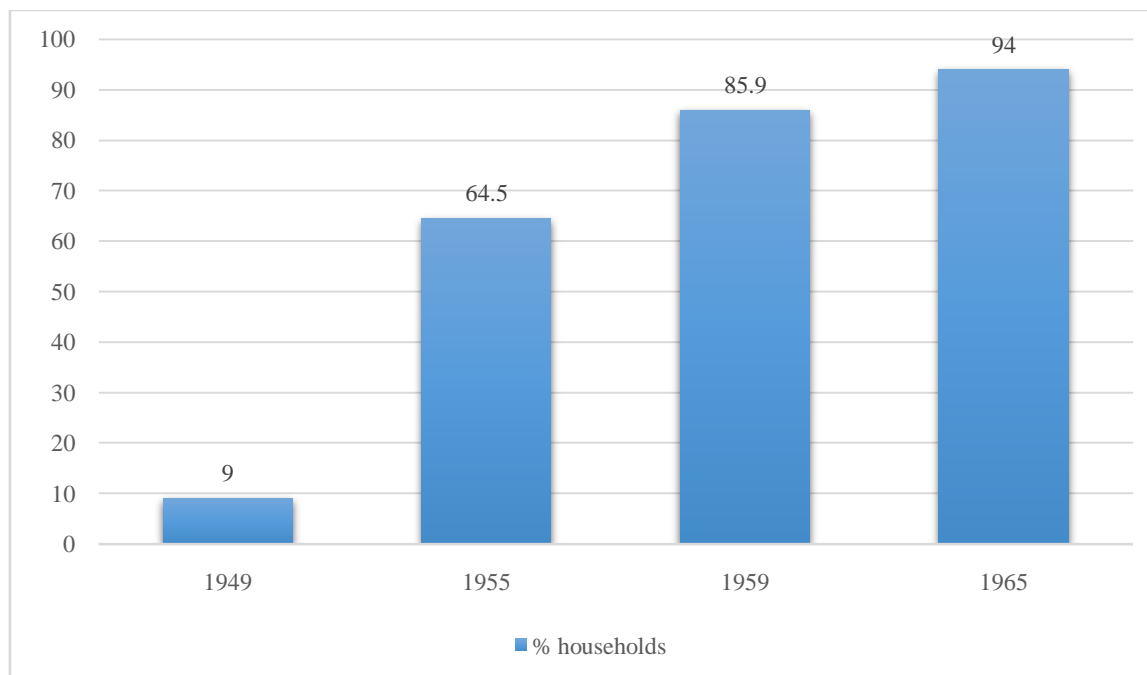
Overall, with the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union disappeared, and the nuclear arsenals were significantly reduced thanks to nuclear non-proliferation treaties between Washington and Moscow in the 1980s and 1990s. However, the Cold War continues to influence modern geopolitics. The world no longer witnesses the US as the sole superpower in a unipolar world, as the rise of other powers like China, the resurgence of Russia, and the other blocs such as ASEAN and BRICKS is leading to a more multipolar order. NATO—the military alliance established by the US to counter the communist bloc—still holds political power and has grown from 15 to 30 member countries. The alliance now stretches to Russia's borders and includes former Soviet Union countries and Warsaw Pact members, such as Poland and the Baltic states. Since the 1990s, Russia has viewed NATO's eastward expansion as a threat to its security. The event marking the tension between the two blocs was Russia's attack on Ukraine in February 2022, after Ukraine applied for NATO membership.

Overview of media's role during the Cold War

Since World War I, the media has played an important role and during the Cold War between the two super power sit became an essential tool. The United States has utilized media outlets such as Radio Free Europe and Voice of America to spread pro-Western and pro-Western news, highlighting themes of freedom, democracy, and capitalism, while at the same time providing anti-communist content. At the same time, the Soviet Union used political newspapers such as Pravda and Izvestia to disseminate communist ideology, promote social justice and criticize Western capitalism. Both sides' media policies aim to shape the ideology of their people and influence people around the world. Disinformation campaigns are also notable because they spread false information and create confusion, catching both enemies and the public off guard. The CIA and KGB were the agencies primarily responsible for these activities in the US and the Soviet Union, respectively.

Overall, the media played a key role in the Cold War, maintaining and intensifying the antagonism between bipolar powers. They do this by sensationalizing news, exploiting cultural divisions, perpetuating fear in society, and spreading propaganda. An important contribution to Cold War tensions was the development of subversive media strategies aimed at enemy populations. Before World War II, television and television networks were limited, and production was suspended during the war. After World War II, television production resumed, and by the 1950s, television became more popular. In 1949, there were fewer than 100,000 operating TVs in America, and only 9% of American households owned a TV. By 1953, this number had increased to about 20 million, with major networks such as NBC, ABC and CBS coming into operation. By 1959, the percentage of households with televisions had increased to 85.9%. By 1965, 94% of households owned a TV, and the number of television stations increased from 9 after World War II to 500 by 1960. This period is often known as the “golden age” of television.

Figure 1: Percentage of Households with TV



Source: The author's own compilation

II. Main content

2.1. Media in the United States

During the Cold War, American media played an important role in shaping public perceptions of the ongoing geopolitical struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. Newspapers, radio and television programs were filled with stories about the ideological and political conflicts between the two superpowers. These stories highlight the fundamental conflict between capitalism and social-communism, presenting the tension as a global struggle for dominance.

During the early stages of the Cold War, print media such as newspapers and magazines were the primary source of information for the American public. These publications provide in-depth analysis and commentary on the various events and policies that shaped the Cold War period. The press reported on espionage activities, diplomatic negotiations, and the arms race, keeping the public informed about threats from the Soviet Union.

Radio was another important medium during this period. The radio programs provide timely updates with experts offering their opinions on the latest developments in the Cold War. Programs such as Voice of America and Radio Free Europe played a dual role: they provided information to domestic audiences while also conveying American perspectives to audiences behind the Iron Curtain. These radio services aimed to counter Soviet propaganda and promote democratic ideals.

The advent of television in the 1950s marked a transformative period in Cold War media coverage. The so-called "golden age of TV" brought the Cold War into homes across America, with TV ownership rates reaching more than 90 percent by the late 1960s. News programs and movies The documentary provides visual accounts of notable events of the time such as the Vietnam War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Space Race with the Soviet Union. Iconic broadcasts, including speeches by President John F. Kennedy and live coverage of the construction of the Berlin Wall, had a profound impact on public opinion. Television makes abstract concepts of ideological conflict more tangible, immediate, and accessible.

Movies and television series were also created with the intention of reflecting and also shaping public perception of the Cold War. Hollywood produced many films that portrayed the Soviet Union as a threatening enemy and highlighted the virtues of the American way of life. Spy thrillers, science fiction films, and patriotic war films often take on Cold War themes, reinforcing the narrative of a world divided between good and evil.

2.1.1. Government Control and Propaganda

Office of War Information (OWI)

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The United States Office of War Information (OWI) was an agency established during World War II, operating from 1942 until the end of the war. Its main mission is to connect the front line and the home front through various forms of communication, including radio, film, newspapers, photos and other media. Besides its domestic activities, OWI also has branches on many different theaters around the world, especially in Europe and the Pacific.

OWI's important mission is to monitor and control campaigns, scripts, films and content that could negatively impact the image of America and its war efforts. During its three years of operation, the agency reviewed 1,652 screenplays, eliminating any material that might portray America unfavorably. OWI even had a specialized division in Hollywood designed to cleverly incorporate propaganda into entertainment, ensuring the public absorbed pro-American sentiment without realizing that they were being influenced.

Although OWI was dissolved after the World War II ended in September 1945 and had no direct influence on subsequent Cold War events, its legacy lives on. The United States continued to apply propaganda techniques and methods developed during World War II during the Cold War, a particular conflict of more ideological wars that had direct military contingency. This includes the spread of news and influence through multimedia such as through radio, movies and apps both domestically and internationally. Furthermore, many OWI employees continued to work in important Cold War media organizations such as the Voice of America (VOA), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the United States Information Agency (USIA), continues to hone expertise and strategy during their employment with OWI.

Voice of America

"The Voice of America speaks. Today, America has been at war for seventy-nine days. Daily at this time, we shall speak to you about America and the war. The news may be good or bad, we shall tell you the truth." This was the voice of announcer William Harlan Hale, broadcasting in February 1942 during the first transmission from studios located at 270 Madison Avenue in New York. It was from this broadcast that the new radio service, born within the network of informational offices created after the United States entered World War II, got its name. By March 1942, the acronym VOA had become the term used to refer to the broadcaster, regularly used both by on-air announcers and in correspondence.

Since World War II, the United States began using shortwave radio to broadcast information and commentary about the war through the External Information Service. The role of VOA (Voice of America) was considered important throughout World War II and was especially important during the Cold War. Around 1940, shortwave signals were transmitted to South America to counter and prevent the spread of Nazi ideology in the region. The first direct transmission from the United States to Europe was broadcast in February 1942 over longwave transmitters. In London, the BBC picked up the signal, then rebroadcast it to Germany on mediumwave. On February 26, 1942, regular broadcasts of a news program began, broadcast through London via the BBC, to Germany, France and Italy every day. Not stopping in Europe, VOA also set up additional transmitters in Hawaii and later in the Philippines. When the war officially ended in 1945, VOA had 39 transmitters and provided services in 40 languages (Kohler, Foy, 1951). However, as the war ended, many of VOA's programs were curtailed or eliminated altogether. In the years that followed, U.S. officials and the government wrestled with the question of VOA's mission: as a broadcaster of information and thought about America, or as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy against the Soviet Union.

In the early period of the Cold War, the entire United States was engulfed and intimidated by the "Red Scare," also known as the fear of Communism. A famous congressional investigator of this time was U.S. Senator Joseph R. McCarthy (1908-57) of Wisconsin. By using rumors, threats, hearings, and investigations, McCarthy established himself as a powerful and feared figure in American politics. Accusations of disloyalty targeted anyone, including celebrities, intellectuals, or those with societal status who did not share his political views. This also affected VOA employees, despite the lack of clear evidence or grounds. VOA's budget was significantly reduced, transmitter construction was halted, and a series of broadcasts in various languages were canceled. VOA went through the McCarthy years, and under President Eisenhower, the agency experienced significant development, especially in technical facilities. The U.S. Information Agency was created in 1953, and the Voice was transferred from the State Department to the new independent agency, enabling it to develop a "journalistic culture" (Nicolas J. Cull).

The end of World War II ushered in the Cold War, and the U.S. decided to use VOA as a tool to counter the Soviet Union in media. With the advantage of having many transmitters and various programs in multiple languages, VOA had an impressive audience: 194,000 regular listeners in Sweden, 2.1 million in France, and nearly 4 million in Italy (Kohler, Foy, 1951). VOA began a campaign to promote American culture and values to many countries worldwide, including the Soviet Union in 1947, when VOA started broadcasting in Russian. The Korean War further strengthened the U.S.'s belief in the importance of disseminating accurate information about America to counter the Soviet Union, the

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war, and the latest developments in the conflict with the Soviet Union. After becoming an independent agency, VOA faced challenges during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War. Public information was controlled and limited, especially regarding unfavorable aspects like the harshness of the Vietnam War or the growing anti-war movement in the U.S. and globally. This demonstrates that VOA was adhering to its promise made during its first broadcast in 1942 to deliver truthful information to its audience.

From the 1960s onward, VOA's infrastructure and the number of its broadcast programs expanded globally. They introduced English-language programs spoken at a slower pace, tailored especially for non-native English speakers. Besides news programs, VOA also launched live broadcasts, making its offerings more vibrant and diverse. In 1969, when Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon, nearly 800 million people and hundreds of radio stations relied on news from VOA (VOA website). During this period, VOA's candid and truthful reporting on the Vietnam War and the Watergate constitutional crisis made it one of the most trusted broadcasters among its audience. However, VOA's expanding influence faced some challenges, particularly in staffing, as the agency launched many new programs in countries like Iran, Afghanistan, Poland, and China. From the 1980s onward, VOA further expanded its transmission facilities across all continents, adding 19 studios to coordinate and manage its broadcasting stations worldwide. For every significant global event related to democracy in general, and Communism in particular, VOA was there to provide continuous and accurate news updates to listeners in those countries. For instance, in 1989, VOA increased its broadcasts in Mandarin and Cantonese during the tense political situation in China and the historic Tiananmen Square events. Another notable event was the Soviet uprising in August 1991 against the Communist leadership. After the Soviet Union officially dissolved, VOA continued to report on the newly formed countries in Eastern Europe.

2.1.2. Hollywood's Role

Hollywood held a significant role during the Cold War, serving both as a battleground for ideological conflicts and as a tool for propaganda. The film industry was instrumental in shaping public perceptions, promoting American values, and countering the influence of Soviet propaganda.

Elmer Davis, the director of the Office of War Information, once stated that Hollywood was ordered by the military as early as World War II to create products to sell the war to the American public. Individuals who had previously been trained to sell soap, cereal, and household goods were utilized for this purpose (CBC Radio, 2020). Filmmakers were encouraged to produce movies that depicted the Soviet Union and communism in a negative light while celebrating American democracy and capitalism.

More than 80 years ago, movies held significant influence, with about 90 million people (nearly 70% of the population at the time) going to the movies every week (CBC Radio, 2020). Using Hollywood to gradually instill anti-communist ideology was thus a very reasonable approach. Films like "The Red Menace" (1949) and "I Was a Communist for the FBI" (1951) exemplify this trend. These movies portrayed communists as treacherous and morally corrupt, reinforcing the fear and suspicion of the Soviet Union among American audiences. Such films were not merely entertainment but part of a broader strategy to influence public sentiment and garner support for U.S. foreign policy.

In the early phases of the Cold War, the media's impact was evident, as the US government deployed anti-Soviet propaganda to deter any domestic sympathies for communism. Propaganda during the Cold War manifested across various mediums, including print, radio, film, and television. To meet the demand for affordable content, state department agencies created propaganda films and distributed them for free to broadcasters in countries receiving U.S. aid. This strategy ensured widespread dissemination of government propaganda to the public.

Senator Joseph McCarthy fueled this climate of fear by claiming he had a list of 205 names of members of the Communist Party currently working in the government. This list later extended beyond politics to the entertainment industry, creating a blacklist that made those in the field afraid to speak freely or express personal opinions. They could easily be accused of having connections or expressing sympathy for an ideology that was completely different from American values at the time. The House Committee on Un-American Activities interrogated many people in the film industry, and by 1960, the blacklist contained over two thousand names (Grant Watts, 2014). In the end, countless careers were destroyed.

The University of Washington maintains a comprehensive list and detailed information about films considered "anti-communist," as well as a series of other films seen as responses and condemnations of House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)'s actions, including science fiction films that address political views. The first list of anti-communist films includes the earliest films produced since 1919, before the Cold War officially spread globally, indicating that this war of ideology existed beforehand as part of the early "Red Scare." The list of films protesting HUAC's actions includes fewer than 10 films, such as one by the famous Italian director Federico Fellini.

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From 1960 onwards, Hollywood shifted its focus to making films about espionage, bureaucracy in the political system, HUAC, McCarthy, the blacklist, and even the Hollywood Ten, who were imprisoned for their alleged communist associations. According to some opinions, Hollywood adopted an anti-communist trend not only due to political pressure but also because exploiting this topic would determine the survival of the entertainment industry. American society at that time was enveloped by the "Red Scare," and everyone was interested in the Cold War and the fight against communism. Therefore, making films or TV shows about this topic would certainly attract more attention from the audience, ensuring higher box office revenue and satisfying political demands. A prime example is the movie "Walk East on Bacon," which has a rating of less than 3 stars on Rotten Tomatoes but effectively portrays a trustworthy FBI agent protecting American people from the dangers of the Soviet Union.

The influence of the Hollywood film industry during the Cold War extended beyond the borders of the United States to a global audience. It also helped advance American foreign policy goals and spread American culture. Films were exported to allied countries, and their stories reinforced the image of the Soviet Union as the primary enemy of the West, not just the United States. This cultural export helped strengthen alliances and promote American values abroad.

In addition to movies, television also played an important role in disseminating anti-communist propaganda. Programs such as "I Led Three Lives," which aired from 1953 to 1956, depicted the life of a double agent who infiltrated communist groups in the United States. Programs with similar content or on this theme reinforced the idea that communists were a constant threat in American society and that communism was something evil. With the rapid increase in television ownership in the 1950s and 1960s, these messages were disseminated more quickly and widely, making them an effective tool for shaping public opinion.

The entertainment industry's involvement in Cold War propaganda also had its downsides. For example, the Hollywood Ten were blacklisted and imprisoned for refusing to testify before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Their plight highlights the intense pressure and fear of this period, not only in the entertainment industry but in society as a whole. The actions of HUAC and the subsequent blacklist were condemned as violations of civil liberties, and many of those blacklisted struggled to rebuild their careers even after the blacklist period ended.

2.2. Media in the Soviet Union

Despite the ideological differences between the United States and the Soviet Union, Hollywood in the early to mid-20th century was surprisingly open to producing films that portrayed the Soviet Union and socialism in a positive light. This was especially evident during and after World War II when the Soviet Union was a key ally of the United States. According to the University of Washington, 14 films released between 1925 and 1947 presented favorable images of the Soviet Union, socialist ideals, and the working class.

However, as the post-World War II period progressed—the beginning of the Cold War—the Soviet leadership launched a vigorous propaganda campaign against Anglo-American warmongers. The main goal of Soviet foreign policy in these early postwar years was to expand its influence globally. By establishing friendly political regimes in Eastern European countries, the Soviet Union aimed to create a "security zone" along its western borders. During this period, the Soviet state used the media as a powerful tool for ideological influence. The systematic and large-scale dissemination of propaganda was facilitated through state support and consensus among all levels of society. These state-controlled institutions ensured that the role of the media was not only to inform but also to manage public consciousness and reinforce the state narrative.

2.2.1. Print media and journalism

From the very beginning of the proletarian revolution, the media were understood not as a separate "fourth estate," but as an instrument of power. Lenin himself stated that newspapers should serve as "a collective propagandist, a collective agitator, a collective organizer." Consequently, the media were tightly controlled by the state on behalf of the people, primarily through control over the material means of communication. The media's role was to disseminate the Kremlin's teachings, adapting their content to reflect official Soviet ideology, the Soviet state, and the Soviet "ideal personality," as seen through an analysis of newspaper content.

"Pravda" was the official newspaper of the Soviet Communist Party and one of the most influential publications in the country, with circulation numbers reaching up to 11 million copies. After the October Revolution, it became the official mouthpiece of the Soviet Union and remained a part of the Central Committee of the Communist Party from 1912 until the dissolution of the USSR. Initially, when it began in 1903, Pravda lacked a clear political direction and was more of a cultural, artistic, and social magazine. The name "Pravda" comes from "Russkaya Pravda" (Russian Justice), which was the legal code of Kievan Rus' during the feudal fragmentation period in the 12th century. The first issue under Lenin's leadership was published in May 1912 after its headquarters moved from Vienna to St.

Petersburg, marking the newspaper's official political path. The inaugural issue featured articles on economic issues, the workers' movement, strikes, and even poetry about the proletariat.

In 1947, Pravda introduced the term "arms race," a phrase that would become a fixture in newspaper headlines for years to come. However, it's important to note that Soviet newspapers of the time, including Pravda, did not publish the full text of Churchill's speeches, often limiting coverage to selected quotes. As A. Ponsonby noted, during coverage of events at the front, paragraphs of official documents were deliberately "omitted, leaving only a few examples." M.V. Kiselev observed that "propaganda tends to simplify and create a two-dimensional picture of the world, allowing only black and white, with no other colors, shades, or nuances." This strategy was consistently applied by the Soviet media in depicting the situation abroad and describing events within the USSR. Similar to how the media in the US portrayed events, but in reverse, everything that happened in capitalist countries was painted in dark colors, while events within the Soviet Union were depicted in highly optimistic terms. For example, a Russian book from the period described the situation as follows: "*While the capitalist world continues to slide into a new economic crisis, leading to declining production levels, rising unemployment, hunger, and poverty among the working masses, the Soviet Union, despite the enormous damage caused by the war, is successfully solving the tasks of post-war economic development, improving the material well-being and culture of the Soviet people*" (Timosha, 2014).

The tone and style of writing in official newspapers like Pravda were crucial, as they were a form of communication designed to instill the belief that the West and capitalism were inherently evil. However, in their efforts to demonize capitalism and Western countries, many journalists of the time sometimes used inappropriate language or imagery. As a result, Pravda's editorial office had to establish guidelines to ensure that reporting adhered to the standards set by the Communist Party and the government without violating their principles.

To foster a sense of solidarity among the Soviet population with friendly and neutral countries, the Soviet press continued to depict an image of boundless love from citizens of other nations towards the Soviet Union. The specific content of Soviet press publications left citizens with the impression that the entire world was watching, breathless, as events in the USSR unfolded. All significant dates and holidays for Soviet citizens, according to Soviet newspapers, were widely celebrated abroad. For instance, Pravda reported that in a working-class district of Delhi, a large rally was held at the intersection of two streets to mark the 28th anniversary of Lenin's death, and that the May 1st holiday was celebrated by workers not only in Eastern European countries but practically all over the world.

On the other hand, there were also critical articles targeting the government or Stalin's decisions during the early Cold War period. For example, the Sunday newspaper "Пипл" (People) ran a provocative and slanderous headline, 'Stalin Dumps Gold Reserves on the Market to Sabotage Europe's Recovery,' claiming that Stalin had decided to flood the European market with Russian gold in a new attempt to undermine America's supremacy in international trade.

In addition to its crucial role in disseminating information and ideological education, the Soviet press also served as a public forum where citizens could contribute their ideas for the betterment of their community. This function was crucial in shaping the collective thinking of Soviet society, reinforcing the idea that the state was not only a provider of information but also a facilitator of public discourse, albeit within strict government-imposed boundaries. Through letters to the editor, public proposals, and even moderated discussions, the media allowed citizens to participate in state-approved narratives while still creating a sense of participation in the governing process. This participation was carefully managed to ensure that contributions were consistent with broader state goals, such as promoting socialist values, increasing productivity, or improving public life.

For example, newspapers often published letters from readers praising local achievements or suggesting improvements to public services, such as better transportation systems, more efficient public facilities, or enhanced cultural activities. These contributions were presented as evidence of the active role of the people in building socialism and were used to create a sense of collective responsibility and participation in the progress of the state.

Furthermore, this platform for public input helped the government gauge public opinion and address minor grievances before they could escalate into larger ones. Although the discussions were by no means free, the controlled environment allowed for a form of participation that maintained the illusion of a responsible and benevolent government, thus reinforcing the legitimacy of the Soviet state.

In conclusion, the primary task of the Soviet press during this period was the ideological education of the masses, instilling Soviet patriotism and socialist consciousness. Rather than serving as a straightforward source of news from various countries, Soviet newspapers assumed the role of interpreting global events through a distinct ideological lens. The press did not merely report facts; it framed and analyzed events in a manner that aligned with the state's objectives and narratives. Consequently, Soviet citizens were not required to engage in critical thinking or independent analysis; the press preemptively provided interpretations and conclusions. This approach ensured that the populace

absorbed a homogenized and controlled perspective on both domestic and international affairs, reinforcing the ideological and political objectives of the Soviet regime.

2.2.3 Radio propaganda

During the 1920s, the number of radio stations worldwide grew rapidly, necessitating the expansion of the broadcasting frequency spectrum. Initially, radio stations operated on medium waves, but by the late 1920s, long and short radio waves began to develop rapidly. Broadcasting in the shortwave range, which covered large distances, became politically attractive. This development opened up opportunities for organizing radio broadcasts directed towards remote territories of the USSR and foreign countries. Since 1929, foreign broadcasting from the USSR became regular, with the aim of spreading "the ideas of communism and proof of the advantages of socialism over capitalism" globally.

Since the late 1920s, the USSR developed a stable state radio broadcasting system. Radio gradually became the leading means of mass communication, playing a crucial role in Soviet state policy. The All-Union Committee for Radio Broadcasting (VKR), created in 1931, initiated state "radio construction," organizing radio committees in regions and union republics. Within a year of the VKR's creation, 12 committees were established. In 1933, the Council of People's Commissars approved the regulation on the All-Union Committee for Radiofication and Radio Broadcasting (VKRB). During this period, a large-scale task was set to develop wired radio, known as radiofication, which allowed the state to exercise information control by eliminating the possibility of receiving unwanted external information.

In the USSR, radiofication, the introduction of wire radio, became a significant method of protection against external propaganda influences. It provided control over information, eliminating the possibility of receiving foreign stations. The system allowed only one official radio station to be received. A special permit was required to have an over-the-air radio receiver. In contrast to wire radiofication, wave radio broadcasting primarily targeted foreign countries. When Germany attacked the USSR in 1941, starting the Great Patriotic War, public radio broadcasting in the USSR did not interrupt, playing a vital role in consolidating forces for victory.

The process of radiofication actively continued in the USSR, and by 1948, it was practically completed in both cities and rural areas. That year, the All-Union Radio switched to three-program broadcasting with an average volume of 45 hours per day. In 1949, the All-Union Radio and Radio Broadcasting Committee was transformed into two committees: the Committee on Radio Information (domestic radio broadcasting) and the Committee on Radio Broadcasting under the Council of Ministers of the USSR (foreign broadcasting). This reorganization was due to the beginning of the Cold War and the need to expand foreign broadcasting in response to propaganda radio stations in the USA and Great Britain broadcasting to the USSR. In 1953, both committees were reorganized into main departments.

If the Cold War was primarily an ideological conflict, then radio undoubtedly became one of its key tools. Radio broadcasting played a significant role in the confrontational struggle between the East and the West. Radio Free Europe (RFE), Voice of America (VOA), and Radio Liberty (RL) were at the heart of the geopolitical struggle between superpowers. The rapid expansion of radio broadcasting began in 1948 when the Soviet Union organized the Bureau of Communist Information (Cominform) to unite communist states in the battle against "Anglo-American imperialism." Radio became the main means of delivering propaganda across borders. Televisions became widely available later, and it was technically impossible to transmit a TV signal to a mass audience over long distances before commercial satellites. Thus, "Western voices" occupied a solid niche in the Soviet media landscape.

One of the earliest responses in Europe was "Radio in the American Sector" (RIAS). Established in 1946, RIAS served the American sector in West Berlin. Its significance increased during the Berlin Blockade of 1948 when it broadcast messages urging allies to resist Soviet intimidation. The broadcasts included news, commentary, and cultural programs, focusing on democracy and dismantling international communication barriers. Programs primarily targeted "special groups" within the German population, including youth, women, and farmers. As analyzed above, the U.S. developed a widespread transmitter system across continents, particularly targeting Eastern European countries bordering the Soviet Union. These broadcasts, especially in Russian, aimed to inform people about the democratic world with "accurate" information. In the Soviet Union, the name "Voice of America" became well-known. The USSR began jamming VOA broadcasts in 1948, a year after it went on the air, although there were periods when the sound was heard without interference, such as during Khrushchev's visit to the U.S. in September 1951 and Kennedy's call to end the Cold War in 1963. Listening to "foreign voices," as they were called, could lead to administrative and criminal prosecution in the USSR, as they were considered distributors of alien ideological propaganda.

On April 24, 1949, the USSR began jamming BBC broadcasts for the first time. The BBC responded by reaching an agreement with other Western radio stations, primarily the Voice of America, and began bombarding the USSR with simultaneous broadcasts on different frequencies. The tactic worked. Throughout the Cold War, many Soviet-allied countries, including Poland, Bulgaria, China, and the USSR, spent millions of dollars jamming VOA broadcasts. Edward

R. Murrow noted in 1966 that "the Russians spend more money jamming the Voice of America than we have to spend for the entire program of the entire Agency."

At the origins of Radio Liberty (RL), originally known as Radio Liberation, it was created as a propaganda radio station engaged in anti-communist propaganda and promoting Western democratic values. Early documents from the American radio administration openly used the term "propaganda." The main difference between stations like BBC, VOA, and Radio Liberty was that while the former did not focus on events in the USSR, Liberty's task was to conduct counter-propaganda with the help of emigrants familiar with Soviet life. Unlike VOA or the BBC, Radio Liberty devoted much more airtime to internal Russian affairs. Radio Liberty was a Western station financed by American taxpayers, but its employees were Russians by education, culture, and mentality. Radio broadcasts had to be structured to attract listeners. The radio management ensured that the airwaves were not filled with abuse directed at the Soviet government so that the listener would not feel bitterness. Criticism had to be reasoned, focusing on specific anti-people actions rather than personifying evil. Radio was created to fight communism, not the people. American propaganda through Radio Liberation and later Radio Liberty adhered to the concept of a "secret friend." All broadcasts were structured to attract listeners without being anti-people, Russophobic, or directed against the population. The Soviet government was criticized, but not personified as evil.

Radio Liberty was initially formed as a writers' radio station, with a concept different from other foreign stations. Most emigrants working for the station were prominent writers and publicists. The American management did not interfere with the literary broadcasting program, leaving it to the editors of the Russian Service. From the beginning, Radio Liberty focused on topics like the distortion of Russian history in the Soviet Union, human rights violations, official and underground literature, the "superfluous people" of the Soviet era, samizdat, literature of the Russian diaspora, the fate of writers abroad, and the image of the West in the USSR. Later then, Radio Liberty expanded its audience by broadcasting in languages other than Russian. By March 1954, Radio Liberty was broadcasting six to seven hours daily in 11 languages. By December 1954, it was broadcasting in 17 languages, including Ukrainian, Belarusian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, Uzbek, Tatar, Bashkir, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgian, and other languages of the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The Soviet media also used radio as a form of transnational propaganda within its states and abroad. Radio was especially useful for reaching the illiterate; receivers were placed in communal locations where peasants would come to hear news, such as changes to rationing, along with propaganda broadcasts. Soviet media, being state-censored, sought to legitimize its appearance by camouflaging its production origins. The USSR had many "international" radio stations that were actually located in Soviet Republics. These actions demonstrate the progression from a seemingly passive producer of public support to an active tool of the war itself.

The development and use of radio broadcasting during the Soviet era exemplified its role as a powerful tool in both domestic control and international propaganda. As radio became the leading medium of mass communication, it was strategically employed by the Soviet state to disseminate socialist ideology, maintain control over the population, and engage in the global ideological struggle of the Cold War. Through extensive radiofication and the targeted use of foreign broadcasting, the USSR sought to solidify its influence while countering Western propaganda efforts, illustrating the significant impact of radio in shaping public opinion and geopolitical dynamics during the 20th century.

III. Conclusion

The lasting effects of Cold War media strategies have cast a shadow over global historical memory. During the Cold War, media were not only vehicles for disseminating information but also powerful tools of ideological warfare, carefully crafted to control narratives and shape public perceptions on a global scale. The Soviet Union, with its tightly controlled press and propaganda channels such as Pravda, used the media to project an image of a prosperous socialist state while denouncing capitalist nations, especially the United States. On the other hand, Western media, especially through channels such as Voice of America and Radio Liberty, countered by broadcasting messages of democracy and freedom into the Soviet bloc, often portraying the West as a beacon of hope against the supposed tyranny of communism. These strategies have created narratives that have become deeply rooted in the ideologies of an entire generation and continue to influence international relations long after the end of the Cold War. The distrust, fear, and hostility created by decades of propaganda have not entirely disappeared; instead, they have evolved, finding new expressions in contemporary geopolitical conflicts. In today's world, media remain the battleground for information wars, with states and non-state actors leveraging traditional media channels, social media platforms, and cyber tools to shape global public opinion, influence elections, and even foment unrest. The legacy of the Cold War in this regard is unmistakable, as the techniques developed during that era—such as disinformation campaigns, selective truth telling, and the strategic use of media to reinforce state narratives—are now more sophisticated and widespread.

Media Warfare in the Cold War Era

In today's multipolar world, the lessons of the Cold War are more relevant than ever. The role of media in contemporary geopolitical conflicts echoes the past, as it remains a key tool for shaping narratives, justifying actions, and mobilizing populations. Whether through state-sponsored news channels, social media campaigns, or online disinformation, information manipulation continues to be a powerful weapon in the arsenal of global powers, especially with the growing reach of the internet and social media. Understanding Cold War media strategies is therefore crucial to navigating the complexities of today's information-driven conflicts.

IV. Methodology

Archival Analysis: Examined historical documents, media reports, and government records to understand how media was employed during the Cold War. This includes reviewing primary sources like newspapers, radio broadcasts, and official communications.

Historical Contextualization: Placed media practices and content within the broader historical and geopolitical context of the Cold War, including the origins, major events, and the ideological battle between capitalism and communism.

Thematic Analysis: Analyzed recurring themes and messages in media content from both the US and Soviet sides to understand how they were used to propagate ideological views and shape public perception.

Propaganda Analysis: Studied how media was used as a tool for propaganda by both superpowers. This includes analyzing specific examples like Radio Free Europe, Voice of America, Pravda, and Hollywood films to understand their roles in disseminating ideology and influencing both domestic and international audiences.

Audience Analysis: Assessed how different audiences, both domestic and international, received and interpreted media messages. This includes examining the impact of media on public opinion and how it contributed to the ideological struggle of the Cold War.

Ideological Critique: Evaluated how media content reflected and reinforced the ideological positions of the US and the Soviet Union. This includes studying how media was used to critique the opposing ideology and promote one's own political agenda.

Cross-National Comparison: Compared media practices and content between the US and the Soviet Union to highlight differences and similarities in propaganda techniques and ideological messaging.

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