https://doi.org/10.31861/mediaforum.2026.18.272-291
УДК: 327 (316.6)
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MECHANISMS OF PROPAGANDA IN NAZI GERMANY THROUGH THE LENS OF MASS COMMUNICATION THEORIES

The article examines the mechanisms of propaganda in Nazi Germany through the lens of mass communication theories, focusing on its influence on public opinion and the formation of collective consciousness. Propaganda in Nazi Germany developed as a coherent, institutionalized system of mass communication, integrated into all spheres of social life. Its effectiveness was based on centralized management, control over the media space, and targeted psychological influence on the audience.

The study employs mass communication models (Lasswell), affective theories of influence, framing theory, the "magic bullet" model, as well as ideas from Le Bon, Ellul, Benjamin, and Arendt. This approach allows Nazi propaganda to be understood as a structured communication process aimed at shaping cognitive, emotional, and behavioral patterns in mass consciousness. Key mechanisms of influence include narrative repetition, unification of linguistic and symbolic forms, dominance of emotional over rational appeal, framing of political reality, and the construction of the "enemy" image.

The effectiveness of propaganda lay not so much in convincing the audience of the factual accuracy of messages, but in creating a sense of collective belonging and the "obviousness" of the proposed worldview. Through emotional engagement, ritualization of politics, and the use of mass culture, propaganda transformed individual perception into collective experience, reducing critical thinking and alternative interpretations.

The study also demonstrates that many mechanisms of Nazi propaganda remain relevant in contemporary information wars and authoritarian media systems. Reconsidering Nazi propaganda through the lens of mass communication theories provides a deeper understanding of the nature of mass influence in both totalitarian and modern societies, highlighting organizational and institutional aspects of propaganda, key strategies and methods of psychological influence, as well as the continuity of these mechanisms in the contemporary media environment.

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Keywords: *propaganda, Nazi Germany, mass communication, media strategies, information wars, mass influence, manipulation, J. Goebbels, totalitarianism, narratives, communication models.*

Механізми пропаганди в нацистській Німеччині крізь призму теорій масової комунікації

У статті досліджуються механізми пропаганди в нацистській Німеччині крізь призму теорій масової комунікації, зокрема її вплив на громадську думку та формування колективної свідомості. Пропаганда в нацистській Німеччині розвинулася як цілісна, інституціоналізована система масової комунікації, інтегрована у всі сфери суспільного життя. Її ефективність ґрунтувалася на централізації управління, контролі над медійним простором та цілеспрямованому психологічному впливі на аудиторію.

Дослідження використовує моделі масової комунікації (Лассвелл), афективні концепції впливу, теорію фреймінгу, модель «магічної кулі», а також ідеї Лебона, Еллюля, Беньяміна та Арендт. Це дозволяє розглядати нацистську пропаганду як структурований комунікаційний процес, спрямований на формування когнітивних, емоційних і поведінкових моделей масової свідомості. Ключові механізми впливу включають повторюваність наративів, уніфікацію мовних і символічних форм, домінування емоційного над раціональним, фреймінг політичної реальності та конструювання образу «ворога».

Ефективність пропаганди полягала не стільки у переконанні в об'єктивності повідомлень, скільки у створенні відчуття колективної приналежності та «очевидності» запропонованого світоустрою. Через емоційне залучення, ритуалізацію політики та використання масової культури пропаганда трансформувала індивідуальне сприйняття у колективний досвід, знижуючи критичне мислення та альтернативні інтерпретації.

Дослідження показує, що багато механізмів нацистської пропаганди залишаються актуальними у сучасних інформаційних війнах і авторитарних медіасистемах. Переосмислення нацистської пропаганди крізь призму теорій масової комунікації дозволяє глибше зрозуміти природу масового впливу у тоталітарних і сучасних суспільствах, висвітлюючи організаційні та інституційні аспекти пропаганди, ключові стратегії та способи психологічного впливу, а також спадковість цих механізмів у сучасному медіа-середовищі.

Ключові слова: *пропаганда, нацистська Німеччина, масова комунікація, медіа-стратегії, інформаційні війни, масовий вплив, маніпулювання, Й. Ґеббельс, тоталітаризм, наративи, моделі комунікації.*

Statement of the Scientific Problem. Propaganda as a social and communicative phenomenon played a decisive role in shaping the political reality of the twentieth century. This was particularly evident in Nazi Germany, where propaganda became not only an instrument of political mobilization but also a central mechanism of state control over public consciousness. In 1933-1945, in the Third Reich, propaganda was systematized and institutionalized through the activities of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda under the leadership of J. Goebbels, which exercised centralized control over the press, radio, cinema, and other forms of public communication. Such a model made it possible not only to disseminate ideological narratives but also to purposefully shape the ways in which political reality was perceived by a large part of German society.

Scholarly interest in the problem of Nazi propaganda has traditionally focused primarily on the historical description of events and ideological analysis. At the same time, contemporary research increasingly emphasizes the analysis of propaganda from the perspective of mass communication theories, which makes it possible to consider it as a system of strategically organized communicative processes. This approach is important not only for a deeper understanding of historical experience but also for comprehending the logic of modern information wars, in which propagandistic strategies are combined with digital technologies and new media.

Despite the significant number of scholarly works devoted to the propaganda of the Third Reich, it is mostly examined as a component of totalitarian ideology or as an instrument of political mobilization. Meanwhile, its communicative logic, mechanisms of influence on mass audiences, and methods of shaping collective consciousness remain insufficiently systematized and theoretically conceptualized.

The scientific problem lies in the need to reinterpret Nazi propaganda not merely as a historical phenomenon, but as an integrated system of mass communication that functioned in accordance with specific theoretical models of audience influence. This involves analyzing such mechanisms as the centralization of communication channels, monopolization of the information space, the emotional dominance of messages, the framing of

political reality, the repetition of narratives, and the construction of the image of the "enemy." It was precisely these mechanisms that ensured not only the transmission of ideological messages but also the formation of stable cognitive and behavioral patterns in mass consciousness.

The study of propaganda from the standpoint of mass communication theories is important because it allows for the integration of historical analysis with modern communication approaches and provides a deeper understanding of the nature of mass influence in totalitarian societies. Moreover, this approach has significant practical relevance, as the conclusions drawn may be applied to the analysis of contemporary information wars, within which propagandistic strategies continue to affect public consciousness, political processes, and the functioning of democratic institutions.

Analysis of previous studies. The main scholarly literature used in this article forms a coherent theoretical and analytical framework for the study of propaganda as a communicative phenomenon. An important place is occupied by works devoted to the analysis of propaganda and information wars, in particular studies of the role of propagandists and persuasion strategies in historical and contemporary contexts (Pomarantsev, 2025). A significant theoretical foundation of the study is provided by classical concepts of mass society and propaganda, which reveal the psychological and social mechanisms of influence on audiences (Le Bon; Ellul; Arendt).

At the same time, cultural aspects of political communication, including the role of visuality, ritualization, and the aestheticization of politics, are examined in works devoted to the interaction between media, ideology, and mass culture (Benjamin). The combination of these approaches with modern theories of mass communication, H. Lasswell's communication model, and concepts of framing, narrative repetition, and affective influence makes it possible to comprehensively analyze the mechanisms of propaganda in Nazi Germany and to trace their relevance in the contemporary information space.

Formulation of the Purpose and Objectives of the Article. The purpose of the article is to analyze the mechanisms of propaganda in Nazi Germany through the lens of mass communication theories, with the aim of identifying key communicative strategies and methods of influencing mass audiences, as well as determining their significance for the formation of collective consciousness in a totalitarian society.

To achieve this purpose, the following objectives were set: to examine political propaganda as a social and communicative phenomenon within the framework of mass communication theories; to analyze the historical experience of Nazi Germany in terms of the centralization and institutionalization of propaganda through the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda; to identify the key mechanisms of propaganda's influence on mass audiences, such as the emotional dominance of messages, the repetition of narratives, the framing of political reality, and the construction of the image of the enemy; to demonstrate the relationship between the propagandistic strategies of the Third Reich and contemporary approaches to mass persuasion in information wars; and to assess the significance of the analyzed propaganda mechanisms for understanding the nature of mass influence in totalitarian and contemporary societies.

Presentation of the Main Material. Political propaganda in scholarly discourse is increasingly conceptualized not merely as an instrument of ideological influence, but as a structural phenomenon of mass communication embedded within the institutional, technological, and cultural mechanisms of modern society. The growing interest in propaganda as an object of interdisciplinary analysis is linked to an awareness of its role in shaping collective identity, legitimizing power, and normalizing political violence. In the classical definition proposed by H. Lasswell, propaganda appears as a mechanism of influence that shapes and manages perceptions of political reality through the selective presentation of information and symbols, compelling audiences to adopt specific positions and emotional evaluations of events (Lasswell, H.D. 1938, pp. 45-47). It was precisely in Nazi Germany that control over mass consciousness through the management of information flows and interpretive frameworks was first institutionalized as a systematic state policy, which transformed propaganda into an object not only of historical inquiry but also of comprehensive communication analysis.

In this context, Lasswell's concept became a methodological foundation for further understanding propaganda as an integrated communication process that combines actors of power, channels of message dissemination, and anticipated effects on mass audiences. His proposed analytical model ("who says what, through which channel, to whom, and with what effect") made it possible to move beyond a purely descriptive approach and to consider propaganda as a managed and reproducible mechanism of

symbolic control (Makuch-Fedorkova I.I. 2016, p. 143). In our view, this contributed to the institutionalization of propaganda within the scholarly discourse of political communication and laid the groundwork for its interdisciplinary analysis within political science, sociology, psychology, and media studies. It should be recalled that in Lasswell's classical conception the communication process is viewed as a stimulus – response sequence, where messages and symbols function as stimuli that influence audience perception and behavior (Makuch-Fedorkova I.I. 2016, p. 138). Such an approach allows for the analysis not only of the content of propaganda but also of the mechanisms of its impact on mass consciousness. In the context of Nazi Germany, this meant that control over information flows and the systematic use of media symbols made it possible to shape expected public reactions, constructing specific perceptions of political reality and legitimizing political behavior. Through this lens, propaganda emerges not merely as an ideological tool, but as a structural element of mass communication integrating institutional, technological, and cultural mechanisms of society.

Continuing this line of reasoning, it should be emphasized that Nazi Germany represents a classical example of the centralization of propaganda as a comprehensive mechanism of political influence. The establishment of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda under the leadership of Joseph Goebbels ensured centralized control over all aspects of the information sphere, from the press and radio to cinema, literature and theatre (Welch, D. 2002, p. 25). This made it possible not only to coordinate message content but also to standardize symbolic codes and narratives intended to shape desired emotional reactions and political attitudes among the population. The institutionalization of propaganda through the ministry was not limited to information control; it also included the systematic implementation of educational and cultural programs that legitimized the regime's ideology and normalized political violence. According to Lasswell's model, this allowed for a clear identification of "who" (the state ministry), "what" (ideological narratives), "through which channel" (media, education, cultural institutions), "to whom" (the population), and "with what effect" (the formation of desired political consciousness and behavior) control was exercised. From the perspective of mass communication theories, propaganda operated through a number of basic mechanisms that were realized in the Third Reich in their most concentrated form. Thus, the historical experience of Nazi Germany

demonstrates how centralized propaganda can become a key mechanism of political governance, integrating technological, institutional, and cultural means of influence into a unified communication strategy.

It should also be noted that Nazi propaganda was built not only on the transmission of information but, above all, on the formation of the audience's emotional experience. This aspect, the dominance of emotion over rational argument, can be examined within the framework of the affective concept of communication, which emphasizes that emotional engagement plays a decisive role in perception and mass mobilization. These ideas were theoretically articulated by J. Ellul, who emphasized that effective propaganda primarily appeals to emotions, as they reduce the audience's capacity for critical reflection (Ellul, 1965, p. 62). Ellul stressed that propaganda does not merely transmit political or ideological messages but also performs an important psychological function, acting as a remedy for loneliness. It integrates individuals into the collective, fills social isolation and inner emptiness, creates a sense of belonging, and shapes collective identity. In Nazi Germany, this manifested through the exploitation of fear and feelings of national humiliation not only as tools of persuasion but also as mechanisms of emotional and social stabilization, satisfying deep psychological needs and strengthening the bond between the individual and the collective, thereby ensuring mass mobilization and loyalty within the totalitarian system.

The practical implementation of the affective strategy of Nazi propaganda can be traced in various communicative practices of the regime. In particular, the mass party rallies of the NSDAP in Nuremberg were constructed as emotional political rituals that, through scale, monumental architecture, symbolism, music, and synchronized actions of participants, generated a sense of collective unity and subordination of the individual to the idea of the "people's community" (Volksgemeinschaft), which was represented as the highest form of national identity (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2018). A similar emotional effect was produced by visual media, especially the propaganda films of Leni Riefenstahl, notably Triumph of the Will (1935), which documented the 1934 Nuremberg Rally and employed cinematic techniques such as mass scenes, dynamic camera angles, montage, and musical accompaniment to create images of power, order, and charismatic leadership aimed at emotional captivation and identification with the regime. At the same time, antisemitic propaganda systematically appealed to emotions of fear

and disgust, portraying Jews as an existential threat to the German nation, thereby facilitating the emotional legitimation of discriminatory, repressive, and violent policies of the Nazi regime (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2017). These examples demonstrate that emotions functioned as a key mechanism of political mobilization, confirming the central premise of the affective communication concept regarding the dominance of emotional influence over rational persuasion in mass societies.

In this context, attention should be paid to the psychological mechanisms of influence underlying any effective propaganda. Propaganda theorists consciously relied on Freudian psychoanalytic ideas, viewing the psyche as a complex system in which unconscious instincts of the Id often dominate rational Ego, while the Superego imposes moral constraints. They recognized that direct appeals to emotional and instinctual needs allow rational analysis to be bypassed, prompting individuals to act impulsively under the influence of fear, pride, or perceived threat (McLeod, S. 2025). These ideas were integrated with behaviorist approaches focusing on observable behavior and conditioned responses to stimuli: repeated signals, visual images, rituals, and emotionally charged messages generate predictable reactions regardless of conscious evaluation (Makuch-Fedorkova I.I. 2016, p. 140). The combination of psychoanalysis and behaviorism provided a theoretical basis for the assertion that mass audiences are incapable of full rational self-control and that their behavior can be systematically directed through emotional stimuli. These psychological principles explain why propaganda appealing to fear, humiliation, collective unity, or group grandeur is so effective, as it operates through unconscious psychological mechanisms that decisively shape perception and action and reaffirm the core idea of affective communication that emotional influence dominates rational persuasion in processes of mass mobilization.

The psychological mechanisms outlined above explain why emotional appeal and systematic stimulation of unconscious impulses were so effective: when individuals lack full rational control, their perceptions and behavior become vulnerable to repeated signals and symbols. This vulnerability paved the way for another key technique of Nazi propaganda, the unification of images, symbols, and narratives that ensured simplicity, repetition, and recognizability of messages. Repetition as a communication strategy reinforced ideological attitudes in everyday consciousness, transforming them into elements of "self-evident" reality. In this context, language ceased to perform a purely descriptive function and became

a tool for constructing reality: stable clichés, slogans, and emotionally charged formulas not only conveyed ideological meanings but also limited the possibility of alternative interpretations of events.

This approach is developed by J. Riecke, a German linguist and historian of the German language, professor at Heidelberg University, who specializes in the analysis of linguistic practices in political ideologies. In his article The Language of the Third Reich, he emphasizes that systematic repetition of identical linguistic patterns in public and everyday discourse led to the internalization of Nazi categories of thought even among those who did not identify with the regime's ideology (Riecke, J. 2019). According to the researcher, the constant presence of the same lexical formulas, metaphors, and syntactic constructions in political speeches, mass media, and everyday communication contributed to the formation of stable cognitive templates perceived as neutral and natural. Propaganda language ceased to be perceived as ideologically imposed and gradually integrated into habitual cognitive perception, shaping modes of understanding social and political phenomena. As Riecke notes, such normalization reduced the capacity for critical analysis, as thinking automatically reproduced ideological structures without conscious reflection (Riecke, J. 2019). He also refers to the work of V. Klemperer, a German philologist and literary scholar who lived in Nazi Germany and demonstrated how repeated linguistic constructions of propaganda gradually shaped the boundaries of permissible interpretation of reality. The repetition of linguistic models served not only a communicative but also a disciplinary function, narrowing the framework of thought and reinforcing the corresponding ideological order in individual consciousness.

In this context, the repetition of linguistic patterns can be viewed not merely as a linguistic or stylistic phenomenon but as a mechanism for forming stable interpretive structures. At this level, the analysis of propaganda language intersects with the concept of framing, which helps explain how repeated linguistic and symbolic elements consolidate specific ways of seeing reality and restrict the range of possible interpretations.

The concept of the frame originates in interdisciplinary studies of communication, sociology, and cognitive psychology. The first theoretical formulations were proposed by G. Bateson, who viewed frames as metacommunicative signals defining the context and rules for interpreting messages (Bateson, 1972).

The idea of framing was further developed by E. Goffman, particularly in Frame Analysis, where frames are described as stable cognitive schemes through which individuals organize and structure their social experience, determining what is considered important or secondary in a given situation and influencing interpretations of social behavior (Goffman, 1974, pp. 52-54). In other words, frames form "mental templates" through which people perceive and interpret events, assigning meaning and organizing social reality.

In media and political studies, the concept of framing was adapted as a powerful tool for influencing public opinion. The works of M. Entman (1993) demonstrated that framing allows not only the selection and presentation of information but also the attribution of meaning by emphasizing certain aspects of reality while downplaying others, significantly shaping perceptions of socio-political processes. Through this, media and political actors can direct audience attention to specific problems, causes, or moral evaluations, guiding interpretation and shaping public perception.

Thus, combining the approaches of Goffman and Entman allows frames to be viewed simultaneously as cognitive and communicative instruments: they structure internal perceptions of social reality and, through media and political narratives, influence collective understandings of the world. In this sense, framing becomes a mechanism that shapes ideological perception by establishing boundaries of what is considered "normal," "acceptable," or "unacceptable" in public discourse.

In Nazi propaganda, framing functioned as a key mechanism of ideological influence closely linked to the repetition of linguistic patterns described by Riecke and Klemperer. The constant reproduction of identical lexical formulas, metaphors, and narrative schemes entrenched frames through which social reality was interpreted via clear oppositions such as "us/them," "order/threat," and "purity/contamination." These frames structured thought so that evaluations of actions and events automatically aligned with ideological categories.

For example, the Jewish population was consistently portrayed as a "threat to internal order," while the German people were depicted as "defenders of purity and stability." This frame was systematically repeated in Goebbels's speeches, cinematic narratives, and newspaper publications, reinforcing the perceived necessity of a "struggle for national survival" and the naturalization of discriminatory policies (Entman, 1993, pp. 52-54).

Another vivid example is the frame of "patriotic sacrifice," disseminated through stories of soldiers and party members allegedly defending the people from enemies. Repeated images and metaphors shaped moral evaluations: the heroic actions of "our own" were automatically perceived as noble, while "enemies" were framed as morally dangerous.

These frames operated alongside the linguistic models described by Klemperer, as everyday vocabulary, keywords, and slogans did not merely describe reality but structured its meaning, forming cognitive frameworks in which ideological categories appeared natural and neutral. Ultimately, repetition and framing together created mental templates that significantly reduced space for critical analysis and alternative interpretations (Entman, 1993, pp. 52-54).

Similar mechanisms of framing and repeated linguistic constructions can be observed in contemporary authoritarian media, particularly in Russian propaganda. Like Nazi propaganda, modern Russian media systematically employ stable lexical templates and narratives to shape desired perceptions of events and political actors.

For example, events in Donbas and Ukraine are often framed as the "protection of Russian-speaking populations" and a "fight against fascism/extremism," creating a binary opposition of "us/them" and legitimizing Russia's military actions. These frames are accompanied by repeated terms such as "neo-Nazis," "Kyiv junta," and "special operation," forming cognitive frameworks in which certain actions are perceived as justified and morally necessary. Russian propaganda has transformed the historical concept of "denazification" into a strategic narrative for legitimizing aggression, constructing an external enemy, and mobilizing society through federal television, social media, and diplomatic channels. As noted in the article "'Denazification' as a Key Narrative of Russian Propaganda in the Hybrid War against Ukraine," the concept has been deliberately reinterpreted and used to justify military aggression (Gridina, Ivanets, Pakhomenko, 2025, p. 71).

Another striking example is the frame of "external threat," used to explain economic difficulties, sanctions, or restrictions on freedom of speech: external "enemies" are blamed for internal problems, and the population is mobilized around "national unity" (Vakulich, Novorodovska, 2023, pp. 125-127). This frame simultaneously activates patriotic sentiments and reduces space for critical evaluation of government decisions, similarly

to how Nazi propaganda normalized discriminatory practices and war through repeated narratives (Entman, 1993, pp. 52-54).

It should be noted that although the concept of "framing" as a distinct theoretical category emerged much later in mass communication studies, the mechanism of interpretive structuring of political reality was actively employed in interwar propaganda practices. In Nazi Germany, propaganda systematically constructed stable interpretive frameworks through which social and political phenomena were understood via simplified binary oppositions such as "us–them," "order–chaos," and "purity–threat." This selective emphasis allowed not only the direction of perception but also the restriction of interpretive possibilities, creating a sense of obviousness and naturalness of ideological meanings in mass consciousness. As a result, propaganda performed not only an informational but also a cognitive function, defining boundaries of thought and consolidating a desired model of reality.

In this context, the reflections of British writer, journalist, and propaganda researcher P. Pomerantsev are also noteworthy. In How to Win an Information War. The Propagandist Who Outwitted Hitler (Pomerantsev, 2025), propaganda is presented not as a collection of manipulative messages but as a holistic system of reality construction and collective perception. Analyzing the work of British propagandist Sefton Delmer, the author emphasizes that effective propaganda operates primarily at the level of emotions and social identities rather than through direct imposition of facts or slogans. Pomerantsev stresses that plausibility is the key condition of influence: propaganda messages succeed when they are embedded in existing beliefs, fears, and everyday experiences of the audience, creating a sense of "obviousness" and "naturalness" of proposed interpretations.

In this context, it is apt to quote Sefton Delmer, one of the most effective propagandists of the anti-Nazi information war during World War II: "The real power of propaganda is not to persuade or even confuse, but to give you a sense of belonging" (Pomerantsev, 2025, p. 35). This thesis fundamentally shifts the emphasis from rational persuasion to the affective and social dimensions of propaganda, where the decisive factor is not the truthfulness of the message but its ability to integrate individuals into a symbolic community with clearly defined boundaries of "us" and "them." Through this sense of belonging, propaganda shapes collective identity, within which acceptance of certain narratives becomes a marker

of loyalty, while critical thinking is perceived as a threat to collective order. In this logic, framing performs not only an interpretive but also an integrative function: it does not merely explain events but embeds them into a morally and emotionally significant narrative that allows individuals to feel part of the "right" side of history. As demonstrated by both Nazi and contemporary authoritarian propaganda, appeals to belonging – to the nation, a "historical mission," or a shared threat – ensure the long-term stability of ideological influence, transforming propaganda from a tool of persuasion into a mechanism of social inclusion and consciousness control.

It is also important to note that propaganda does not necessarily seek complete trust; it is often sufficient to create a state of cognitive disorientation in which the audience loses confidence in distinguishing truth from falsehood, significantly weakening critical thinking. In this sense, Pomerantsev describes propaganda as an instrument that does not so much persuade as blur interpretive boundaries, pushing individuals to seek security within the dominant narrative (Pomerantsev, 2025, p. 35).

These observations are directly related to Entman's framing concept mentioned above, which posits that emphasizing certain aspects of reality while silencing others defines the range of possible meanings and limits how events can be understood. In contemporary Russian propaganda, as in the Nazi linguistic practices described by Klemperer, such frames are reinforced through repeated lexical formulas and narratives, particularly the frame of "external threat," which explains socio-economic difficulties, sanctions, and restrictions of freedoms by hostile external forces. This frame simultaneously removes responsibility from political authorities and unites society around a sense of constant danger. Over time, propaganda ceases to appear as imposition and begins to be perceived as an obvious and natural worldview, narrowing interpretive space and reinforcing a predetermined mode of thinking, thus turning framing into a key mechanism of authoritarian ideological control.

Research on propaganda of that period relied on the widely accepted concept known as the "magic bullet theory," "hypodermic needle theory," or "theory of subcutaneous injection." Although it has no single author, it reflected beliefs about the direct and powerful impact of media on audiences (Makuch-Fedorkova I.I. 2023, p. 186). Ukrainian scholar, Doctor of Philology and Professor Serhii Kvit, notes in Mass Communications that this theory emerged in response to the rise of a society of isolated

individuals vulnerable to media influence in conditions of urbanization and industrialization, remaining relevant until the end of the Great Depression, with the Institute for Propaganda Analysis established in 1937 (Kvit, 2008). The theory is grounded in behaviorism and assumes that media act as a "magic bullet" capable of achieving specific goals and altering behavior and consciousness on a large scale. It was among the earliest classical mass communication theories of the twentieth century, formed amid the rapid spread of radio, cinema, and mass press in the interwar period and the extensive use of political propaganda during World Wars I and II. The theory assumes that media can "inject" messages directly into audience consciousness and that audiences are passive, homogeneous, and incapable of resistance or critical evaluation (Robinson, M.J. 2024).

In summary, although the magic bullet theory was later criticized by media effects scholars after the 1940s, who demonstrated that media influence is neither uniform nor direct and that audiences actively interpret content based on social context and individual characteristics, it remains an important historical reference point for understanding how political propaganda could shape public opinion in totalitarian systems.

Nazi Germany's propaganda was particularly characterized by the concept of direct, powerful, and uniform media influence. Goebbels's Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda actively used radio for daily dissemination of political narratives, cinema for emotional impact, and posters with unambiguous symbols for broad visual reach. The Ministry became the institutional foundation for implementing these mechanisms, transforming propaganda from a collection of ideological slogans into a comprehensive communication system permeating all levels of social life. This institutionalization ensured control not only over the internal information space but also over external and occupation propaganda, where messages were adapted to local contexts while maintaining core ideological frames. Understanding propaganda as an "art of mass influence" that must remain unnoticed by its audience ultimately reinforces its status as a complex communication phenomenon rather than merely an instrument of political domination. Goebbels's rhetorical style, marked by excessive pathos and emotional intensity, made his speeches instantly recognizable. He skillfully shaped mass emotional reactions and fostered a sense of collective involvement (Loveyko, T.V.; Perevertun, O.P. 2023, p. 46). Short, memorable slogans such as "Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer" and "Juden sind unser Unglück" exemplified simplicity combined

with extraordinary effectiveness in shaping public consciousness and emotional mobilization.

To understand the mechanisms of Nazi propaganda, it is essential to consider the psychological and cultural factors influencing mass consciousness in the interwar period. One of the most influential thinkers in this field was French social psychologist and anthropologist Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931), whose works remain highly relevant (Makuch-Fedorkova I.I. 2025, p. 102). His studies of crowd psychology were foundational in explaining how collective moods influence individual behavior and shape public opinion. In The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind, Le Bon emphasized emotional contagion and behavioral similarity within crowds (Le Bon, 1896). His theory of collective psychology informed Goebbels's strategies of unity, collective identity, and mass mobilization through rituals, rallies, demonstrations, and symbolism. Le Bon argued that crowds are highly susceptible to emotional influence and less capable of critical thinking, enabling propaganda to transform individual reactions into mass emotional experience. He also highlighted the role of charismatic leaders who influence masses through simplified and emotionally charged rhetoric, relying on repetition, simplification, and authority.

Le Bon's ideas resonate not only in historical examples but also in contemporary studies of mass communication and influence psychology. In Nazi Germany, these approaches were practically implemented through Goebbels's propaganda strategies. Public rallies, demonstrations, symbolism, and rituals became tools for shaping mass emotions and collective identity, while repetition, simplification, and appeals to authority entrenched Nazi ideas and enabled manipulation of large groups. This underscores the enduring relevance of Le Bon's insights into crowd psychology.

The same psychological foundation underpinned strategies involving rituals, symbols, and mass culture as tools of communication and social influence, which played a key role in Nazi propaganda of the 1930s-1940s. In this context, the ideas of W. Benjamin (1892-1940), German philosopher and cultural critic of the Frankfurt School, are particularly significant. In the 1930s, Benjamin examined how technological reproduction transformed mass culture and art perception, arguing that reproduction through film, photography, and other media altered art's unique "aura," enabling simultaneous access for large audiences (Benjamin, 1968, p. 223). This transformation allowed political and ideological influence through

standardized, repeatable images and symbols. Nazi propaganda practically applied these ideas through symbolism, rituals, and mass events – party rallies, parades, demonstrations – to create collective emotional experiences and reinforce unity. Visual imagery, anthems, banners, and ritualized actions appealed to emotions and embedded ideological messages in mass consciousness, enabling effective control and mobilization (Benjamin, 1968).

The intensive use of mass communication, rituals, and symbols in Nazi Germany during the 1930s-1940s became a subject of extensive postwar scholarly study. Researchers focused on psychological mechanisms of media influence, mass communication effects, and collective identity formation. Studies by P. Lazarsfeld and colleagues in the United States revealed the role of interpersonal networks and opinion leaders in media influence processes (Katz, E.; Lazarsfeld, P. 1964). Analysis of Nazi propaganda practices laid the foundation for modern theories of media effects, social psychology, and cultural studies, demonstrating that propaganda relies on complex interactions between individual psychology, social structures, and cultural codes.

After World War II, interest in totalitarianism as a political and social phenomenon grew significantly. The concept became central in twentieth-century political philosophy, with H. Arendt's The Origins of Totalitarianism (1951) serving as a foundational work (Arendt, 1951). Arendt emphasized that totalitarian leaders embody ideology, shape moral norms, and construct alternative realities through propaganda, censorship, and terror. Subsequent scholars such as J. Monnerot, J. Talmon, and C. Friedrich further developed interpretations of totalitarianism, identifying ideology, leader cults, propaganda, and terror as core mechanisms of control. These approaches remain relevant today, as modern authoritarian and hybrid regimes employ similar strategies of ideological manipulation, propaganda, and information control to shape public opinion and suppress critical thinking.

Conclusions. In conclusion, it can be stated that propaganda in Nazi Germany was not merely an auxiliary tool of political influence but a comprehensive, institutionalized system of mass communication integrated into all spheres of social life. Its effectiveness was based on centralized control, complete oversight of the media, and targeted psychological influence on the mass audience.

The application of mass communication theories, particularly H. Lasswell's model, the affective concept of influence, framing theory, the "magic bullet" notion, as well as the ideas of G. Le Bon, J. Ellul, W. Benjamin, and H. Arendt, allowed Nazi propaganda to be understood not only as a historical manifestation of totalitarian ideology but also as a structurally organized communication process aimed at shaping cognitive, emotional, and behavioral patterns of mass consciousness. Propaganda operated through repetitive narratives, the standardization of linguistic and symbolic forms, the dominance of emotional over rational influence, the framing of political reality, and the systematic construction of the "enemy" image.

The study demonstrated that the key condition for the effectiveness of Nazi propaganda was not so much the persuasion of factual truth but the creation of a sense of belonging, collective identity, and the "obviousness" of the proposed worldview. Through emotional engagement, the ritualization of politics, and the use of mass culture and media technologies, propaganda transformed individual perception into a collective experience, reducing the capacity for critical thinking and alternative interpretations.

Another important conclusion is that many mechanisms tested in Nazi Germany remain relevant in contemporary information wars and authoritarian media systems. The repetition of linguistic clichés, the framing of an "external threat," appeals to emotions such as fear and pride, and the manipulation of national or cultural belonging continue to serve as universal tools of mass influence, adapted to the digital environment.

Thus, reconsidering Nazi propaganda through the lens of mass communication theories allows for a deeper understanding of the nature of mass influence in both totalitarian and contemporary societies. The findings are not only of historical and theoretical significance but also hold practical value for analyzing and countering modern propagandistic strategies that threaten democratic institutions, information security, and the critical thinking of society.

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Надійшла до редакції / Received: 08.02.2026 *Схвалено до друку / Accepted: 13.04.2026*

Опубліковано / Published: 29.05.2026