

News, Agenda Building, and Intelligence Agencies: A Systematic Review of the Field from the Discipline of Journalism, Media, and Communications

The International Journal of Press/Politics
2015, Vol. 20(2) 131–144
© The Author(s) 2015
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1940161214566693
ijpp.sagepub.com



Vian Bakir¹

Abstract

Reflecting on Edward Snowden's whistle-blowing revelations regarding indiscriminate online and telephone surveillance and social media manipulation by signals intelligence agencies, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom, this article highlights the hitherto limited nature of public knowledge of, and internationally uneven concern regarding, intelligence agencies' contemporary techniques of communications surveillance and manipulative agenda building. While noting that the interdisciplinary field of intelligence studies has started to theorize intelligence agencies' agenda-building activities, also observable is a remarkable lacuna from the discipline of Journalism, Media, and Communications. A systematic review of all research articles (up until December 2014) from the archives of sixteen journals in the discipline of Journalism, Media, and Communications confirms this lack of attention. Only 0.1 percent of the discipline's articles are centrally on the field of the press, intelligence agencies, and agenda-building processes, even when these are broadly defined. Patterns within this tiny field are delineated, comprising intelligence agencies' techniques of, and success in, manipulating different agenda-building nodes involving the press, journalists' practices and challenges in dealing with intelligence, the public's role in press-related agenda building on intelligence issues, and methodological patterns and issues in examining this field. The systematic review contextualizes and situates the six research articles comprising this Special Issue.

¹Bangor University, Bangor, UK

Corresponding Author:

Vian Bakir, School of Creative Studies and Media, Bangor University, Bangor, Gwynedd, Wales LL57 2DG, UK.

Email: v.bakir@bangor.ac.uk

Keywords

systematic review, journalism, agenda building, intelligence agencies, Edward Snowden, surveillance, media manipulation

Introduction

Within political communication research, there is a large body of work on the media's role in agenda-setting, and more nuanced agenda-building, processes. This research dates back to the 1960s (Cohen 1963) and continues to flourish today (T. J. Johnson 2013). Agenda-setting research investigates whether issues emphasized in news coverage subsequently occupy prominent positions on public or policymakers' agendas—its hypothesis being that the media influence which issues are discussed and prioritized in society. Given that the direction of influence between media, publics, and politicians has been increasingly debated, especially with the rise of the Internet, social media, and multiple global news channels delivering a broad range of mediated voices (Bakir 2010; Castells 2009), the more nuanced construct of agenda-*building* research examines reciprocal influences of the media, government, and citizens on each other's agendas (Bakir 2013; Lang and Lang 1981, 1983). As the consequences mount from the biggest intelligence leak in history—Edward Snowden's 2013 leak of (reportedly) 1.7 million classified documents demonstrating intelligence agencies' mass surveillance of unsuspecting citizens and their ability to manipulate digital media—never has it been more important to understand intelligence agencies' manipulative agenda-building activities and outcomes. Yet, as this article demonstrates, the discipline of Journalism, Media, and Communications has been remarkably silent in this field. Following a discussion of Snowden's revelations, this article offers a systematic review of the field of the press, agenda-building processes and intelligence agencies, delineating key aspects, and situating the contributions to this Special Issue therein.

The Snowden Revelations: Surveillance and Media Manipulation

A media and political storm erupted in summer 2013 over National Security Agency (NSA) contractor Edward Snowden's whistle-blowing revelations regarding online and telephone surveillance by signals intelligence agencies from the "Five Eyes"¹ countries—especially the United States's NSA under PRISM and the United Kingdom's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) under TEMPORA. PRISM surveils electronic data collected directly from the servers of U.S. service providers (Microsoft, Yahoo, Google, Facebook, Paltalk, AOL, Skype, YouTube, Apple), without having to request data from the service providers and without having to obtain individual court orders.² TEMPORA surveils electronic data tapped from fiber-optic undersea cables entering the United Kingdom. Together, they provide both meta-data (the "envelope" of a communication: who it is from, when it was sent, from where, to

whom, and to where) and the actual content of communications (such as recordings of phone calls, the content of e-mails, and entries on Facebook).³ Governments insist that their methods are legal, if secret, and necessary to fight the War on Terror and organized crime (Wright and Kreissl 2013). In both the United States and the United Kingdom, the telecommunications and Internet corporations involved have been legally prevented from informing their users about the scope of government surveillance. As a result, in the United States, these companies have legally objected to the gag order. For instance, in October 2014, Twitter filed a lawsuit for violation of its First Amendment rights (freedom of expression) against the Federal Bureau of Investigation and U.S. Department of Justice, arguing that their prohibition on publishing its Transparency Report on government surveillance of users “forces Twitter either to engage in speech that has been preapproved by government officials or else to refrain from speaking altogether.”⁴

Snowden’s revelations further show that beyond indiscriminate, mass surveillance of their own suspectless citizens (and no doubt, building on the surveillance data they collect), intelligence agencies have attempted to manipulate the social media environment using “leaders,” “trust,” “obedience,” and “compliance” and utilizing psychological concepts familiar to agenda-setting and agenda-building researchers, such as “priming,” “anchoring,” “confirmation bias,” and “hindsight bias.”⁵ For instance, the Joint Threat Research Intelligence Group (JTRIG), a department within GCHQ, possesses among the following tools for online covert action: “CLEAN SWEEP” that can “Masquerade Facebook Wall Posts for individuals or entire countries,” “GATEWAY” that can “artificially increase traffic to a Web site,” and “SLIPSTREAM” that can “inflate page views on Web sites.” Among its “techniques,” the JTRIG document describes “CHANGELING” that provides the “ability to spoof any e-mail address and send e-mail under that identity” and “HAVOK,” a “real-time Web site cloning technique allowing on-the-fly alterations.”⁶ Whether such intelligence tools and techniques are aimed at manipulating the perceptions of, or about, key individuals (including terrorists, those suspected, but not charged or convicted, of ordinary crimes, companies, and “hacktivists”) or wider mass audiences (such as subjects in authoritarian regimes), their deceptive nature in altering the very fabric of computational traces raises serious questions concerning our “ontological security” (Giddens 1991: 66)—our basic trust in the world’s stability, and our place therein. The secrecy (until Snowden’s revelations) of such manipulative techniques discouraged public discussion of their appropriateness, legitimacy, or unintended consequences. (Imagine the sociological and psychological ramifications of a heavily mediatized and digitized world, where basic trust in the authenticity and authorship of any communication beyond those conducted face-to-face has evaporated.) Although total surveillance is Orwellian, secretly altering reality to fit the lie that governments want to tell is Kafka-esque.

Snowden’s leaks highlight the hitherto limited nature of public knowledge of intelligence agencies’ contemporary techniques concerning communications surveillance and manipulative agenda building. This situation has now changed, at least in the United States. A Pew Research Center (2014) study of U.S. adults finds that 43 percent

have heard “a lot” about the government’s mass surveillance as part of its efforts to monitor terrorist activity, 80 percent “agree” or “strongly agree” that Americans should be concerned about the government’s monitoring, 71 percent of U.S. social networking site users say that they are “at least somewhat concerned about the government accessing some of the information they share on social networking sites without their knowledge,” and 88 percent of U.S. adults “agree” or “strongly agree” that it would be very difficult to remove inaccurate information about them online. However, while debate over Snowden’s revelations continues to rage in the United States, which has cherished Fourth Amendment protections, in the United Kingdom it has ignited far less attention in mainstream press (apart from the *Guardian*, which broke the story), and among politicians and the public. Explanations for this include Britain’s more entrenched culture of official secrecy, GCHQ’s central role in the mass surveillance, and the extensive political pressure from the United Kingdom’s Cameron–Clegg administration on the *Guardian* for its role in publicizing the Snowden leaks (Greenwald 2014; Harding 2014). Although research has yet to establish direct impacts on public opinion of this media management, a series of public opinion polls in the United Kingdom find that, unlike the Americans, the British public does not have a strong or favorable opinion of the Snowden leaks. For instance, an Angus Reid Global October 2013 survey of American, Canadian, and British adults finds that when asked to assume that their national government routinely conducts electronic surveillance of the general public, while 60 percent of Americans and Canadians describe this as “unacceptable,” Britons were more split (52 percent unacceptable vs. 48 percent acceptable; Wright and Kreissl 2013: 25). A TNS poll from January 2014 finds that 64 percent of the British public thinks that British intelligence agencies should be allowed to access and store the Internet communications of criminals or terrorists by monitoring the communications of the public at large (TNS 2014). A YouGov poll in April 2014 finds that while 46 percent of British adults think it is “good for society” that newspapers reported on the Snowden leaks, 31 percent do not know and 22 percent think it is “bad for society” (YouGov 2014). That Snowden’s revelations prompted an internationally uneven response from mainstream media, politicians and publics to their intelligence agencies’ activities indicates that these agenda-building nodes have nationally specific relational dynamics.

The Press, Agenda Building, and Intelligence Agencies: State of the Field

Recent studies from the interdisciplinary field of intelligence studies have attempted to systematically analyze and theorize the relationships between these agenda-setting nodes, albeit from an exclusively American perspective. L. K. Johnson (2014) highlights that in the United States, there are correlations between levels of media coverage and the degree of energetic intelligence oversight exercised by government officials: low oversight if a low level of media coverage, moderate if moderate, and high if high. Correlation, of course, does not prove causation or furnish explanations. Media coverage, for instance, may neither reflect nor be caused by intelligence oversight activities,

but rather may result from officially authorized intelligence leaks designed to further a specific agenda builder's strategic aims (Bakir 2013). As Hastedt (2005) discusses, intelligence leaks in the United States may variously be "promotional," where secret intelligence is leaked episodically and is uncontested, to highlight oneself or a policy problem, or to defend or distance oneself from a policy failure; "orchestrated," carried out on a sustained basis, uncontested and systematically leaked to advance a policy position; "warring," leaked by opposing sides on a sustained and contested basis to wear challengers down; and "entrepreneurial," used by disputing sides to advance or block a policy. Reflecting more broadly on the role of the press in intelligence oversight, Hillebrand (2012) suggests that news media may variously act as an information transmitter and stimulator for formal scrutinizers; a substitute watchdog, where official oversight bodies are unwilling, or incapable, of scrutinizing; a legitimizer, to reassure the public about intelligence agencies' work; or a lapdog, failing to sufficiently question government policies or transmitting unsubstantiated government claims. That the interdisciplinary field of intelligence studies has started to theorize intelligence agencies' manipulative agenda-building activities is not before time, given that the covert manipulation of publics, press, and foreign governments has long been a function of intelligence agencies (Dover and Goodman 2009). Yet, despite the fact that within political communication more broadly, there is an accumulation of research into the media's agenda-setting and agenda-building role, a systematic review of the discipline of Journalism, Media, and Communications finds little examining the field of the press, agenda-building processes, and intelligence agencies.

To conduct the systematic review (Petticrew and Roberts 2006), sixteen journals, ranging from long-standing to recently established, and broad disciplinary leaders to specialized niche journals, were selected from the discipline of Journalism, Media, and Communications (see Table 1). Using the keyword "intelligence," the entire archives of each of these journals were searched up until December 2014, retaining only those that centrally addressed intelligence agencies and agenda-building *processes*. Of these articles centrally on the field, none explicitly utilize the agenda-setting hypothesis, or the more nuanced agenda-building framework, a testimony to the difficulty of detecting agenda building by intelligence agencies given their secretive and sometimes mendacious nature. More articles, however, deal with influence more broadly defined. They use terminology such as *psychological operations/warfare*, *information operations/warfare*, *propaganda*, *public relations*, *strategic (political) communication*, *ensorship*, *public diplomacy*, *indexing*, and *framing*—all elements that are implicitly or explicitly part of agenda-building processes. For the purpose of this systematic review, research articles using all such terminology were deemed relevant if they addressed the reciprocal influences between any of the nodes of the press, the public, and politicians on one hand, and intelligence or intelligence agencies on the other.⁷

Each *journal's* attention to the field was calculated by dividing the total number of articles centrally on the field in that journal by the total number of articles in that journal's archive from its start of publication to December 2014.⁸ The extent to which the *discipline* of Journalism, Media, and Communications addresses the field was derived

Table 1. Quantity of Media, Communication, and Journalism Journal Articles Centrally Studying Intelligence Agencies, the Press, and Agenda Building (from Start of Archive to December 2014).

Journal	No. of Articles in Archive	No. of Articles Centrally on Field	% of Articles Centrally on Field
<i>Journalism & Communication Monographs</i> (1999–2014)	79	1	1.3
<i>Global Media & Communication</i> (2005–2014)	234	2	0.9
<i>Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism</i> (2000–2014)	513	3	0.6
<i>Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television</i> (1981–2014)	708	2	0.3
<i>Journalism Studies</i> (2000–2014)	685	2	0.3
<i>Journal of Communication</i> (1951–2014)	1,270	2	0.2
<i>Political Communication</i> (1980–2014)	634	1	0.2
<i>International Journal of Press/Politics</i> (1996–2014)	675	1	0.1
<i>Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media</i> (1956–2014)	1,933	1	0.1
<i>Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly</i> (1955–2014)	4,029	3	0.1
<i>Media, Culture & Society</i> (1979–2014)	1,408	2	0.1
<i>The Public Opinion Quarterly</i> (1936–2014)	3,651	3	0.1
<i>Crime, Media, Culture</i> (2005–2014)	210	0	0.0
<i>Journalism Practice</i> (2007–2014)	300	0	0.0
<i>Media, War & Conflict</i> (2008–2014)	126	0	0.0
<i>New Media & Society</i> (1999–2014)	536	0	0.0
Disciplinary total	16,987	23	0.1

by dividing the total number of articles on the field in the sixteen journals by the total number of articles published since the start of each of these journals to December 2014. Table 1 shows that the discipline has only 23 articles centrally on the field, this comprising just 0.1 percent of the discipline's articles, quantifying how rarely the field is addressed. To date, the journal leading the discipline with 1.3 percent of its articles centrally on the field is *Journalism & Communication Monographs* (1999–2014):

However, this relatively high percentage reflects its tiny archive (79 articles), so that just 1 article centrally on the field (Sweeney and Washburn 2014) delivers a relatively high percentage. No single journal offers more than 3 articles centrally on the field—even journals with large archives such as *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly's* (1955–2014) 4,029 articles. Two of the more niche journals—*Crime, Media, Culture* (2005–2014) and *Media, War & Conflict* (2008–2014)—are surprisingly silent, given the increasing importance of intelligence in fighting crime and terrorism (Carter and Carter 2009; Niva 2013). That *New Media & Society* (1999–2014) fails to produce any articles centrally on the field again underscores the surprise of Snowden's revelations regarding surveillance and manipulation of the digital realm. From the 23 journal articles centrally addressing the field, several features are noteworthy.

Intelligence Agencies' Techniques of, and Success in, Manipulating Different Agenda-Building Nodes Involving the Press

By far, the most common theme addressed is intelligence agencies' manipulative agenda-building techniques. These comprise censorship (reinforced by legislation and courts; Dee 1989; Sweeney and Washburn 2014); the creation of propaganda-oriented policy, institutions, and organizational machinery (Barth 1943; Hawkins and Pettee 1943); financially supporting foreign news services, usually covertly (Barker 2008; Fletcher 1982; Granville 2004; Soley 1982; Sussman 2007); providing propagandistic content for the foreign press to persuade foreign publics (Fletcher 1982; Vaughan 2002); using the press as cover for agents overseas (Fletcher 1982); disinformation and psychological warfare persuasive techniques, often based on forgeries and deceptions (Barker 2008; Boyd-Barrett 2004; Martin 1982); spying on journalists (Alwood 2007; Masaharu 1999); blacklisting and harassing media employees (Spaulding 2009); cultivating sympathetic journalists (Alwood 2010; Boyd-Barrett 2004); and selective authorized leaks, declassification, and misdirection (Lashmar 2013).

This Special Issue adds to this literature on intelligence agencies' manipulative agenda-building activities regarding the press. Clila Magen's *Media Strategies and Manipulations of Intelligence Services: The Case of Israel* demonstrates that media strategies applied by Israel's intelligence community include secrecy, silencing, exploitation of patriotism, cooptation, and psychological warfare. However, while we are building an understanding of intelligence agencies' manipulative agenda-building activities regarding the press, less well understood is how intelligence agencies' manipulative techniques adapt to changing media environments – for instance of increasing digitization, globalization, and convergence between mainstream and social media. This gap is addressed in this Special Issue, with Emma Briant's *Allies and Audiences: Evolving Strategies in Defense and Intelligence Propaganda*. Focusing on American and British propaganda strategies to deal with global asymmetric threats post-9/11, Briant elucidates the challenges to democratic restrictions on, and oversight of, propaganda given the fluidity of audiences in globalized media environments, and

given how the United States and the United Kingdom coordinate their propaganda to exploit mutual domestic propaganda restrictions and strengths.

Journalists' Practices and Challenges in Dealing with Intelligence

Less than half of the articles centrally on the field deal with journalists' practices and challenges in engaging with intelligence agencies, agents, sources, and products. Journalistic practices in this area range from collaborative to oppositional. Collaborative practices include journalists acting as intelligence informants (Alwood 2007, 2010), spreading intelligence-sourced propaganda (Boyd-Barrett 2004), and formalized or semi-formal agreements with intelligence agencies on how they are sourced (Lashmar 2013). Collaborative journalistic practices also include the tone of news coverage. This ranges from uncritical reporting of intelligence agencies stemming from high faith in government, as in the United States in the 2000s (Bakir 2011), to corporate journalists reaching an artificial consensus on intelligence events to avoid appearing incorrect in their own assessments (McCoy 2001). Research into oppositional journalistic practices is comparatively rare, comprising just two articles. One examines how journalists exposed secret policies on torture and extraordinary rendition in the Bush administration's War on Terror (Tulloch 2007). The other examines how a U.S. newspaper, the *Chicago Tribune*, legally challenged the U.S. government's attempted use of the Espionage Act in World War II for the *Tribune's* front-page account of the Battle of Midway (Sweeney and Washburn 2014). Journalists' main challenges in dealing with intelligence revolve around finding, understanding, and verifying information. This includes gaining access to knowledgeable sources, especially where intelligence agents face prosecution if discovered to have leaked classified information, and when sources may intentionally mix truths with lies (Gup 2004; Wheelwright 2014). Another challenge is having the time and expertise to recognize disinformation (Boyd-Barrett 2004; Wheelwright 2014). Thus, the source-journalist relationship, long studied by sociologists of journalism (Gans 1979), faces heightened difficulties regarding access, verification, and trust when concerned with intelligence agencies.

Interest in journalists' practices in dealing with intelligence agencies continues in this Special Issue, with the predominant finding again being journalistic collaboration rather than opposition. Stephen Dorril's "*Russia Accuses Fleet Street*": *Journalists and MI6 during the Cold War* analyzes the covert relationship between foreign correspondents and Britain's Secret Intelligence Service during the cold war, establishing that journalists were recruited as agents and used intelligence-derived material in their news articles. Moving into the contemporary period, Lada Trifanova Price's *Secrets, Lies and Journalist-Spies: The Contemporary Moral Dilemma for Bulgarian Media Professionals* addresses the past and present role and status of Bulgarian journalists who collaborated with the communist secret service during Bulgaria's communist past. Locating her study within debates on transitional justice, she concludes that Bulgarian journalists are still affected by the influence of former communist spies on the Bulgarian media. Justin Schlosberg's *End of Story: Accountability Spectacle as "Closure" in National Security News* examines the limits of British journalism's

watchdog performance in its failure to properly hold to account the British national security state. Locating his study within debates on news framing and ideological power, his analysis of public service broadcasting news coverage of allegations of corruption by British Aerospace Systems with respect to an arms deal indicates that broadcasters were complicit in an official strategy to bring closure to the story.

The Public's Role in Press-Related Agenda Building on Intelligence Issues

This is examined in only one-fifth of journal articles centrally on the field and only as a sideline to the article's main focus. These include evaluations of intelligence agencies' means of targeting, and claims of influencing, public opinion via the press (Barth 1943; Browne 1966; Sussman 2007); and public perceptions of press-mediated intelligence agencies, agents, sources, and information (Gup 2004; McCoy 2001). For instance, Gup (2004) notes that journalists face difficulties convincing citizens that they have a legitimate and vested interest in keeping abreast of intelligence conduct. In contrast, McCoy (2001) notes that talk shows and online fora showed that African-Americans were outraged by U.S. news revelations in 1996 of links between the spread of crack cocaine in the United States and fund-raising for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)-backed contra rebels in Central America. Thus, the limited research that exists on the public's views of intelligence agencies and their activities ranges from stances of ignorance and apathy to conspiracy theories. As these articles were published, there has been further democratization of the production and distribution of media content through the rise of social media and whistle-blowing Web sites, allowing publics to take a more active agenda-building role. It is of increasing importance, then, that we address the research lacuna on the public's agenda-building role regarding intelligence issues. This Special Issue begins this process with Jie Qin's *Hero on Twitter, Traitor on News: How Social Media and Legacy News Frame Snowden*. Qin's analysis of Snowden's portrayal on Twitter versus mainstream news finds that social media users associated Snowden's case with other whistle-blowers, bipartisan issues, and personal privacy issues, with these independent frames all favoring Snowden. This contrasted with mainstream news whose discourse was more unified, connecting the Snowden incident with issues of national security and international relations, and framing him a traitor.

Methodological Patterns and Issues

Standard techniques for studying media agenda setting and agenda building in political communication are framing (Entman 1993, 2004) and indexing (Bennett, 1990; Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston 2007). Yet, their relevance for studying intelligence agencies' role in this process is questionable, as secrecy, misdirection, and disinformation make difficult establishing broad, causal agenda-building links (Bakir 2013). Certainly, none of the twenty-three studies centrally about the field use these techniques. The only article predominantly using textual analysis of media content (McCoy 2001) identifies qualitative themes in the press, but does not systematically link these to the agendas of the public, politicians, or intelligence agencies. Other

rarely used methods in this field include interviews (only four articles), indicating that access is a significant barrier (McCoy 2001; Sweeney & Washburn 2014; Tulloch 2007; Wheelwright 2014); reflective, insider accounts (two articles, from a journalist and a documentary-maker) attesting to the prevalence of secrecy (Lashmar 2013; Wheelwright 2014); and researcher-generated public opinion polling or other means of audience measurement (totally absent). Lengthy declassification periods for intelligence-related matters (Dacre et al. 2009) explain why, with eleven articles, the historical approach is among the most popular of methods (Alwood 2007, 2010; Fletcher 1982; Granville 2004; Martin 1982; Masaharu 1999; Soley 1982; Spaulding 2009; Sussman 2007; Sweeney & Washburn 2014; Vaughan 2002). This reflects the methodological trend in intelligence studies per se (Scott and Jackson 2004). The other most popular method, also with eleven articles, is the case study (Bakir 2011; Barker 2008; Barth 1943; Boyd-Barrett 2004; Browne 1966; Dee 1989; Fletcher 1982; Gup 2004; Hawkins and Pettee 1943; Lashmar 2013; McCoy 2001). Its popularity stems from its maximization of context and specialization in understanding contradictory details from multiple sources, as these are ideal attributes for unraveling intelligence agencies' agenda-building processes.

Most of the articles in this Special Issue echo some of these more common methodological approaches. For instance, most use the case study approach, although always in conjunction with other methods, showing a healthy, and hitherto rare, focus on the contemporary, rather than historical, moment. Importantly, articles in this Special Issue also utilize and advance methods rarely used by the field. While standard tools of indexing and framing for unpicking agenda-building processes are often confounded when the agenda builders are, or concern, the intelligence agencies, Schlosberg's *End of Story* successfully uses elements of framing and content analysis in conjunction with critical discourse analysis and a longitudinal case study to reveal journalism's ultimate complicity in the national security state. Framing analysis is also used and methodologically advanced in Qin's *Hero on Twitter, Traitor on News* that introduces a method not yet used by the field—semantic network analysis. In doing so, she shows how the conceptualization of frames, the mechanism of the framing process, and the operationalization of framing analysis need to be reconsidered when analyzing social media. Thus, Schlosberg and Qin both show that framing can be adequately used for studying this field, as long as the method is combined with other methods, or redeveloped to suit the context examined. Although interviews are rarely used in studying this field, often due to the unwillingness or inability of involved parties to participate, we are fortunate to have three articles that centrally rely on interviews (Briant, Magen, Trifanova Price).

Conclusion

This Special Issue advances the field by adding seven new articles—increasing the field's size by 30 percent and clearly delineating the field. They progress understanding both of relatively well-trodden areas (intelligence agencies' techniques of, and success in, manipulating different agenda-building nodes involving the press,

particularly in the United States) and less frequently researched areas (journalists' practices and challenges in dealing with intelligence, the public's role in press-related agenda building on intelligence issues, and non-U.S. contexts). Methodologically, these articles rescue the relevance of framing and indexing (the standard techniques for studying media agenda setting and agenda building) via methodological combination and development. While confirming the continuing utility of historical and case study approaches, they also significantly add to the body of work using interviews, indicating that securing access is not an insurmountable problem. As Snowden's revelations continue to reverberate, this Special Issue provides substantial food for thought regarding the national and international contexts, histories, practices, impacts, and accountability of intelligence agencies' agenda-building activities involving the press and wider media environments. Importantly, they demonstrate how such secretive and mendacious processes can be productively researched.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. The "Five Eyes" is a partnership of signals intelligence agencies from the United States (National Security Agency [NSA]), the United Kingdom (Government Communications Headquarters [GCHQ]), Canada (Communications Security Establishment Canada), Australia (Australian Signals Directorate), and New Zealand (Security Intelligence Service).
2. Greenwald, Glenn, and Ewen MacAskill. 2013. "NSA Prism Program Taps in to User Data of Apple, Google and Others." *The Guardian*, June 7. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/06/us-tech-giants-nsa-data> (accessed January 7, 2015).
3. MacAskill, Ewen, Julian Borger, Nick Hopkins, Nick Davies, and James Ball. 2013. "GCHQ Taps Fibre-Optic Cables for Secret Access to World's Communication." *The Guardian*, June 21. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2013/jun/21/gchq-cables-secret-world-communications-nsa> (accessed January 7, 2015).
4. Boyd, Aaron. 2014. "Twitter Files First Amendment Lawsuit against DOJ, FBI." *DefenseNews*, October 7. <http://www.defensenews.com/article/M3/20141007/IT/310070024/Twitter-files-First-Amendment-lawsuit-against-DOJ-FBI> (accessed January 7, 2015).
5. Greenwald, Glenn. 2014. "DISPATCHES. How Covert Agents Infiltrate the Internet to Manipulate, Deceive, and Destroy Reputations." *The Intercept*, February 24. <https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2014/02/24/jtrig-manipulation> (accessed January 7, 2015).
6. Joint Threat Research Intelligence Group. 2014. "JTRIG Tools and Techniques." *The Intercept*, July 14. <https://firstlook.org/theintercept/document/2014/07/14/jtrig-tools-techniques/> (accessed January 7, 2015).
7. While this systematic review leaves out book-length research monographs, a recent narrative review (Dover and Goodman 2009) observes that there has been little sustained

academic analysis of the wider relationship between the media and intelligence agencies. To date, Bakir's (2013) is the only book-length research monograph to have centrally grappled with the field of the press, agenda-building processes, and intelligence agencies.

8. The number of articles in each journal's archive was calculated by multiplying the journal's total number of issues by the average number of articles per issue (this, in turn, derived from a sample of nine separate issues chosen randomly across each journal's archive).

References

- Alwood, Edward. 2007. "Watching the Watchdogs: FBI Spying on Journalists in the 1940s." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 84 (1): 137–50.
- Alwood, Edward. 2010. "The Spy Case of AP Correspondent William Oatis: A Muddled Victim/Hero Myth of the Cold War." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 87 (2): 263–80.
- Bakir, Vian. 2010. *Sousveillance, Media and Strategic Political Communication: Iraq, USA, UK*. New York: Continuum.
- Bakir, Vian. 2011. "Torture and Intelligence in the War on Terror: The Struggle Over Strategic Political Communication." *Global Media and Communication* 7 (3): 239–43.
- Bakir, Vian. 2013. *Torture, Intelligence and Sousveillance in the War on Terror: Agenda-Building Struggles*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.
- Barker, Michael J. 2008. "Democracy or Polyarchy? US-Funded Media Developments in Afghanistan and Iraq Post 9/11." *Media, Culture & Society* 30 (1): 109–30.
- Barth, Alan. 1943. "The Bureau of Intelligence." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 7 (1): 66–76.
- Bennett, W. Lance. 1990. "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations in the United States." *Journal of Communication* 40 (2): 103–25.
- Bennett, W. Lance, Regina G. Lawrence, and Steven Livingston. 2007. *When the Press Fails: Political Power and the News Media from Iraq to Katrina*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Boyd-Barrett, Oliver. 2004. "Judith Miller, The New York Times, and the Propaganda Model." *Journalism Studies* 5 (4): 435–49.
- Browne, Don R. 1966. "RIAS Berlin: A Case Study of a Cold War Broadcast Operation." *Journal of Broadcasting* 10 (2): 119–36.
- Carter, David L., and Jeremy G. Carter. 2009. "Intelligence-Led Policing: Conceptual and Functional Considerations for Public Policy." *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 20 (3): 310–25.
- Castells, Manuel. 2009. *Communication Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, Bernard C. 1963. *The Press and Foreign Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Dacre, Paul, David Cannadine, and Joseph Pilling. 2009. *Review of the 30 Year Rule*. The Stationary Office.
- Dee, Juliet. 1989. "Legal Confrontations between Press, Ex-CIA Agents and the Government." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 66 (2): 418–26.
- Dover, Robert, and Michael S. Goodman, eds. 2009. *Spinning Intelligence: Why Intelligence Needs the Media, Why the Media Needs Intelligence*. London: C. Hurst.
- Entman, Robert M. 1993. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43:51–58.
- Entman, Robert M. 2004. *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and US Foreign Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Fletcher, Richard J. 1982. "British Propaganda Since World War II—A Case Study." *Media, Culture & Society* 4 (2): 97–109.
- Gans, Herbert J. 1979. *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Granville, Johanna. 2004. "Radio Free Europe and International Decision-Making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 24 (4): 589–611.
- Greenwald, Glenn. 2014. *No Place to Hide*. New York: Macmillan.
- Gup, Ted. 2004. "Covering the CIA in Times of Crisis: Obstacles and Strategies." *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 9 (3): 28–39.
- Harding, Luke. 2014. *The Snowden Files: The Inside Story of the World's Most Wanted Man*. London: Guardian Books.
- Hastedt, Glenn. 2005. "Public Intelligence: Leaks as Policy Instruments—The Case of the Iraq War." *Intelligence and National Security* 20 (3): 419–39.
- Hawkins, Lester G., Jr., and George S. Pettee. 1943. "OWI—Organization and Problems." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 7 (1): 15–33.
- Hillebrand, Claudia. 2012. "The Role of News Media in Intelligence Oversight." *Intelligence and National Security* 27 (5): 689–706.
- Johnson, Loch K. 2014. "Intelligence Shocks, Media Coverage, and Congressional Accountability, 1947–2012." *Journal of Intelligence History* 13 (1): 1–21.
- Johnson, Thomas J., ed. 2013. *Agenda Setting in a 2.0 World*. London: Routledge.
- Lang, Gladys E., and Kurt Lang. 1981. "Watergate: An Exploration of the Agenda Building Process." In *Mass Communication Review Yearbook*. ed. G. C. Wilhoit and H. DeBock. Vol. 2, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage: pp.447–468.
- Lang, Gladys E., and Lang Kurt. 1983. *The Battle for Public Opinion: The President, the Press, and the Polls during Watergate*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lashmar, Paul. 2013. "Urinal or Conduit? Institutional Information Flow between the UK Intelligence Services and the News Media." *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism* 14 (8): 1–17.
- Martin, L. John. 1982. "Disinformation: An Instrumentality in the Propaganda Arsenal." *Political Communication* 2 (1): 47–64.
- Masaharu, Sato. 1999. "'Negro Propaganda Operations': Japan's Short-Wave Radio Broadcasts for World War II Black Americans." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 19 (1): 5–26.
- McCoy, Mary E. 2001. "Dark Alliance: News Repair and Institutional Authority in the Age of the Internet." *Journal of Communication* 51 (1): 164–93.
- Niva, Steve. 2013. "Disappearing Violence: JSOC and the Pentagon's New Cartography of Networked Warfare." *Security Dialogue* 44 (3): 185–202.
- Petticrew, Mark, and Helen Roberts. 2006. *Systematic Reviews in the Social Sciences: A Practical Guide*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Pew Research Center. 2014. *Public Perceptions of Privacy and Security in the Post-Snowden Era*. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/11/12/public-privacy-perceptions/> (accessed January 7, 2015).
- Scott, Len, and Peter Jackson. 2004. "Introduction." *Intelligence and National Security* 19 (2): 9–10.

- Soley, Lawrence. 1982. "Radio: Clandestine Broadcasting, 1948–1967." *Journal of Communication* 32 (1): 165–80.
- Spaulding, Stacey. 2009. "Off the Blacklist, but Still a Target." *Journalism Studies* 10 (6): 789–804.
- Sussman, Gerald. 2007. "Covering Eastern European and Russian Elections: The US Media's Double Standard." *Global Media and Communication* 3 (3): 356–61.
- Sweeney, Michael S., and Patrick S. Washburn. 2014. "'Aint Justice Wonderful': The Chicago Tribune's Battle of Midway Story and the Government's Attempt at an Espionage Act Indictment in 1942." *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 16 (7): 7–97.
- TNS. 2014. *Public Opinion Monitor: Britons Give Safeguarding Security a Higher Priority than Protecting Privacy*. <http://www.tnsglobal.com/uk/press-release/public-opinion-monitor-britons-give-safeguarding-security-higher-priority-protecting-p> (accessed January 7, 2015).
- Tulloch, John. 2007. "Hunting Ghost Planes: An Interview with Journalist Stephen Grey." *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism* 8 (5): 510–16.
- Vaughan, James. 2002. "Propaganda by Proxy? Britain, America, and Arab Radio Broadcasting, 1953–1957." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22 (2): 157–72.
- Wheelwright, Julie. 2014. "Beyond the Spooks: The Problem of the Narrator in Literary History." *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism* 15 (5): 561–72.
- Wright, David, and Reinhard Kreissl. 2013. *European Responses to the Snowden Revelations: A Discussion Paper*. Increasing Resilience in Surveillance Societies. irissproject.eu/ (accessed January 7, 2015).
- YouGov. 2014. *YouGov Survey Results*. <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2014/04/18/reporting-nsa-revelations-good-society/> (accessed January 7, 2015).

Author Biography

Vian Bakir lectures in Journalism at Bangor University, Wales, UK. She is the author of *Torture, Intelligence and Sousveillance in the War on Terror: Agenda-Building Struggles* (2013) and *Sousveillance, Media and Strategic Political Communication: Iraq, USA, UK* (2010). She is the coeditor of *Communication in the Age of Suspicion: Trust and the Media* (2007), and on the editorial board of *Media, War & Conflict*. She is the principal investigator for the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Seminar Series (2014–2016) *DATA-PSST! Debating and Assessing Transparency Arrangements—Privacy, Security, Surveillance, Trust*.

Allies and Audiences: Evolving Strategies in Defense and Intelligence Propaganda

The International Journal of Press/Politics
2015, Vol. 20(2) 145–165
© The Author(s) 2014
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1940161214552031
ijpp.sagepub.com



Emma L. Briant¹

Abstract

This article discusses changes to what were seen by government planners as “outdated” British and American propaganda systems following 9/11 and the Iraq War. It presents qualitative research examining how government propaganda strategies responded to global asymmetric threats in a post-9/11 media environment. The article draws on both documentary evidence and the accounts of elite sources from Britain and the United States including Public Relations professionals, journalists, and foreign policy, defense, and intelligence personnel. Recently, the intelligence contractor Edward Snowden revealed the extent to which the speed of adaptation in surveillance practices has left policy and oversight behind, raising concern over ethics, privacy, and transparency. The article will explore an adaptation of propaganda systems that also occurred unhindered by public debate. It will show how U.S. and U.K. Governments believed existing propaganda systems were not responding to the information environment and discusses legal, structural, and cultural issues in propaganda practices, post-9/11. Planners assisted in gradually changing structures and cultures of propaganda in both countries for reasons of operational effectiveness. The Anglo-American relationship will be highlighted as one tool capable of overcoming obstacles or restrictions in propaganda for purposes of counterterrorism. Interviews indicated that this was enabled by the countries’ different capabilities and weak legislative restrictions, which some highlighted as advantageous to planning. The article will consider the resilience of U.S./U.K. restrictions and governance of propaganda, highlighting areas for concern.

Keywords

propaganda, Anglo-American relations, national security, intelligence, counterterrorism

¹University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

Corresponding Author:

Emma L. Briant, Department of Journalism Studies, University of Sheffield, 9 Mappin Street, Sheffield S1 4DT, UK.

Email: e.briant@sheffield.ac.uk

Introduction

This article will discuss traditional U.S./U.K. propaganda restrictions in intelligence and defense (explored further below) and recent propaganda strategy responses to the challenges posed by rapidly evolving media systems which challenge these restrictions. Propaganda is “a process by which an idea or an opinion is communicated to someone else for a specific persuasive purpose” (Taylor 2003: 7). Both Britain and the United States have divided their propaganda capabilities according to audience, sensitivity of operation, and extent of persuasion used. In democracies, external propaganda traditionally permitted more aggressive persuasion including deception (particularly toward enemies), and commitments to the media’s “fourth estate” role allowed some scope for debate domestically. One reason given for these restrictions is transparency and ensuring domestically (and between allies) that propaganda remains “uncontaminated” by messages intended for the enemy. This claim and institutionalized divisions have long been considered essential to present propaganda as justifiable within democracies. Taylor and Snow (2006) have called this a twentieth-century “democratic propaganda model” (p. 390), yet it has in reality been far from democratic especially in intelligence. Other authors have pointed to the weakness of democratic claims (e.g., D. Miller and Sabir 2012) and demonstrate the void of accountability and reality of frequent avoidance of audience restrictions in the exercise of power and persuasion throughout twentieth-century conflicts (including Bacevich 2006; Dorril 2002; French 2012; Herman and Chomsky 2008; Weiner 2008). Differences in U.S./U.K. defense, intelligence, and media also are significant in creating divergent, if cooperative, approaches (Moran and Murphy 2013; Nagl 2005; Papacharissi and Oliveira 2008). Another, *operational*, reason underpins targeting: Multiple messages are refined for separate audiences due to different persuasion objectives and cultural differences between those audiences. Messages not tailored for a specific audience are considered less effective (see, for example, Bernays 2004; Ellul 1973; Tatham 2008).

This article will present evidence that following 9/11, American and British planners sought to overcome what were seen as “out-dated” propaganda systems, defined by their emergence in an old-media system of sovereign states with stable target audiences. Efforts to enhance operational effectiveness in a fluid propaganda environment will be shown to be harnessing the Internet’s fluidity which now challenges the new and traditional domestic media’s freedom. The article argues that inadequate protections exist to prevent differences in national U.S./U.K. restrictions being used to enable activities that would otherwise raise concern. In propaganda, this appeared more advantageous to the United States, where legislative audience restrictions applied. Challenges raised by new media demand a reappraisal of propaganda restrictions, for which governments must allow greater transparency to enable debate, legal judgment, and independent academic inquiry.

Method

The article draws on a broader research project analyzing the evolving Anglo-American counterterrorism propaganda strategies that spanned wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and

'reconstruction' (2001–2013). A detailed analysis of British and American documentary sources was undertaken but the primary method for data gathering was exploratory elite face-to-face and telephone interviews of which sixty-six were conducted. Where interviewing was not possible, e-mail correspondence was used (forty-five e-mails overall). Access was facilitated by introductions and "snowball" sampling. The seventy-five U.S. and British participants included Public Relations professionals, journalists, and foreign policy, defense, and intelligence personnel.¹ For the present article, eighteen interviews and eleven e-mails were drawn on. The research design was not a strict comparative study but focused on the negotiation of Anglo-American relationships and the role they played in policy making and planning of propaganda. Thematic Analysis was applied to the data, identifying implicit and explicit themes or ideas within the data and coding these for analysis (e.g., for co-occurrence, etc.; Guest et al. 2012).

U.K. and U.S. "Democratic" Restrictions

In the U.S. context, foreign-domestic propaganda authorizations and restrictions are often ascribed to the *Smith-Mundt Act 1948* (See: *United States Information and Educational Exchange Act, 1948*), which in fact only applies to parts of the State Department not to Defense and is not "anti-propaganda" as often thought. It restricted the State Department from "monopoly" in the "production or sponsorship" of information, however, and its propaganda had to be attributable. U.S. Military and Intelligence propaganda is authorized under the *1956 U.S. Code*. Title 10 reserves the military's use of Psychological Operations (PSYOP), its strongest form of propaganda, for special forces under a Commander and in support of ongoing or "anticipated" hostilities. *DOD Directive S-3321.1* (1984) governs *overt* PSYOP during peacetime and specifies "foreign countries." *U.S. Code* Title 50 covers Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)–led Covert Action. Former CIA Station Chief Ren Stelloh (2009) described the difference:

The Department of State is responsible for articulating [CIA] policy. [where] the President determines, "well we can't invade the country but we still wanna . . . keep it boiling around the edges", so we oughta engage in non-attributable activities . . . if the military gets engaged, by definition, it's *attributable*. Cause they don't *have* those authorities . . . if you wanna do it in a truly clandestine way . . . then it's gotta be The Agency.

Covert strategic propaganda operations are traditionally CIA responsibilities, not Department of Defense (DOD), but the global counterterrorism campaign has expanded the range of DOD activities, and as Silverberg and Heimann (2009) state,

labelling the ongoing effort a "global war" or even a "worldwide irregular campaign" greatly expands the range of activities that can be justified as a "military mission." (p. 79)

Professor Thomas Wingfield (2013a), a legal authority in this area, said,

Title 10 of the US Code does prohibit publicity and propaganda by DOD within the US, but the exception, unless “otherwise specifically authorized by law” allows Congress to permit DOD broad authorities (in Defense Authorization Acts, etc.) for public affairs, recruiting, etc. These prohibitions are much more about coordination and transparency in authorization than they are about preventing the activities themselves.

They ensure, for example, funds are allocated correctly and responsibilities are clearly defined. Finally, *Executive Order S-12333* (2008) governs intelligence and also “covert action” more generally including by the military; it states it must not be “intended to influence United States political processes, public opinion, policies, or media.”

Externally, the United States has a fairly free reign. Former U.S. Special Forces, Military and Intelligence Officer Joel Harding (2013a) said that “the restrictions only apply within the borders of the United States, outside the US it is basically a free-fire zone, only the restrictions by the Ambassador or a military commander prevail.” Professor Wingfield confirmed this, stating that “PSYOP may be used whenever they are not specifically prohibited” and that the CIA

can do almost anything that is 1.) authorized in a presidential finding, 2.) not targeted against a US person, and 3.) not a violation of a jus cogens norm (Wingfield 2013a).²

The CIA targeted U.S. citizens repeatedly in its history, however; recent revelations are preceded by domestic activities under Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and G. W. Bush (see Weiner 2008). In 1996, a *Council for Foreign Relations* independent task force recommended taking a “fresh look . . . at limits on the use of non-official ‘covers’ for hiding and protecting those involved in clandestine activities” including journalists (quoted in Houghton 1996). John Deutch, then Director of Central Intelligence, responded at that time that there was “no need to change U.S. policy as Haass had advocated, since the CIA already had the power to use U.S. reporters as spies” (quoted in Houghton 1996).

In the United Kingdom, there is no direct equivalent to *Smith-Mundt* or *U.S. Code* prohibitions. Military operations are governed by the Law of Armed Conflict (2004), which allows that “Ruses of war are not prohibited. Such ruses are acts which are intended to mislead an adversary or to induce him to act recklessly” and states that “mock operations and misinformation” are permitted. Britain must also abide by the four Geneva Conventions with three additional protocols and the Hague Regulations³ (Convention (III and IV, Respectively) Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War 1949).⁴ In legal terms for the British military, “There is a system of checks and balances in UK Information Operations operated through Central Legal Services within the MoD” (Anonymous 2013b). However, British defense has historically been less codified than the United States, its rules mainly doctrinal, offering greater flexibility (Nagl 2005). An MoD Freedom of Information (FOI) response advised that “the Department does not hold any specific policy regarding information operations and when legal advice must be sought.”⁵ Legislation governing British intelligence makes

no mention of propaganda. MI6 I/Ops potentially has more scope in what it is allowed to do, than its U.S. equivalent, as it does not require ministerial sanction in the same way the CIA needs congressional approval. By comparison, even CIA propaganda activities are subject to open debate. The *Intelligence Services Act 1994* states the function of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) as “to obtain and provide information relating to the actions or intentions of persons outside the British Islands; and to perform other tasks relating to the actions or intentions of such persons [emphasis added].” It makes the now-parliament-appointed *Intelligence and Security Committee* responsible for governance and oversight of intelligence agencies including to the *Joint Intelligence Committee* and SIS. Recently, the *House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on Counter-terrorism* (2014) commented that they “do not believe the current system of oversight is effective” and expressed “concerns that the weak nature of that system has an impact upon the credibility of the [intelligence] agencies accountability, and to the credibility of Parliament itself.” The *Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000* has allowed monitoring of private communications, a power that has been extensively used (Kennedy 2007). Domestic targeting is also clear from the work by Newbery (2009), for instance, on Northern Ireland interrogations. Intelligence helps in targeting propaganda activities, and recently released documents regarding Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) Joint Threat Research Intelligence Group clearly demonstrate the interconnect of these capabilities in Online Covert Action to “Deny, Degrade, Distrust, Deceive” or for “credential harvesting” through foreign journalists (Cole et al. 2014). Intelligence is also used to assist with profiling by information operation (IO) staff within the Ministry of Defence (MoD; Taverner 2013).

“Boundaries” between domestic (e.g., Public Affairs [PA]) and foreign (e.g., PSYOP) activities were stated by Air Commodore Graham Wright, the former U.K. MoD Director of Targeting and Information Operations, and other interviewees, to be an *American* construct (Wright 2009). Both countries’ personnel sometimes voiced traditional narratives regarding propaganda audience protections. Former Dir. Media Operations (Policy) in Office of Director General of Media and Communication Colonel Angus Taverner stressed that the MoD only do truthful PSYOP: “British doctrine for information operations [IO] is all white.⁶ To the best of my knowledge we have not done black propaganda in the British military for many, many a long year” (Taverner 2013). Former British Army Intelligence Corps, Former Director Plans, Office of Strategic Communications of Coalition Provisional Authority Baghdad Ian Tunnicliffe (2013), stated that “their [U.S.] idea of legality was completely separate from ours . . . They seemed to be able to operate in ways that we couldn’t.” But Former Director of Targeting and Information Operations Air Vice-Marshal Mike Heath has insisted that, under directions of the *Secretary of State*, IO must be “truthful at all times” with the “very specific exception of *that bit where we would try and lie and dissuade or persuade* military commanders [emphasis added]” (House of Commons Select Committee on Defense 2004). It is also possible to mislead without recourse to lies and is often more effective to do so utilizing truthful information. Black propaganda tends to be commonly designated to covert or clandestine activity. Although,

compared with America, U.K. resource in influence is small, the number of personnel “in the loop” is further restricted on some sensitive activities. This limited circle is also partly to protect individual operations from public exposure—it ensures their effectiveness where the credibility of a message might be affected if the source were known. According to MoD Assistant Head Defense Media and Communications Operations Plans, Ralph Arundell, “people that have been involved in this area you could probably count on the fingers of two hands at most, at the higher level anyway, probably not even that many.” He stated that “not everybody at all levels, for example, would have been exposed to all of what we were doing in TIO” in line with this security restriction. In addition, Colonel Arundell (2013) confirmed that in the United Kingdom, “there is a big difference between the sort of activity conducted at the tactical level and what has then been subsequently conducted at the strategic level.”

Some practitioners across government have come to question boundaries they see as having prevented necessary coordination. Colonel Arundell said culturally in the military it was almost an

urban myth. We all go: “Go separate out IO and media” . . . and you then turn to somebody and go “Where’s it actually written down that we’ve got to do that?” And everybody goes: “Do you know, I’ve no idea. We just—we just don’t do it do we?” Now, there are very sensible reasons why you would maintain a degree of separation but ultimately both sides have got to work to a common information strategy. I think we’re getting to a much better place in terms of ensuring that IO and media are joined up. There needs to be a degree of separation but then, so long as you are delivering clear straight factual information, I see absolutely no problem with coordinating it.

Colonel Arundell clarified U.S. constraints, stating that

The Americans are not allowed to conduct non-attributable information activity and have some very strict constitutional rules. The other area where they are extremely limited in what they can do is particularly with the internet . . . the Americans can’t conduct activity that could potentially play back against the US audience.⁷

Former National Security Council Director for Global Outreach Kevin McCarty described the U.S. situation: “In the strategic communication, influence world, you start walking into a lot of lines that are really fuzzy and people are afraid to go there.” There was a strong belief that the existing U.S. audience rules are outdated. McCarty (2013) expressed the concern that “every Department, Agency or Office including that of the President, have limitations around what they can and can’t do. And none of them were written for the world we live in now.” McCarty is referring to a contemporary environment where Internet fluidity disrupts geographical propaganda targeting and America’s “enemy” is transnational, not a sovereign state (*The Smith-Mundt Act and U.S. Code* date from a time before the Internet).

Some American interviewees asserted that British rules were less restrictive. Former Advertising Executive Sean Fitzpatrick, as a CIA/DOD contractor also worked for the British in Northern Ireland, said, “I think your country has [counterterrorism]

better handled.” MI5, he said, is not bound by the constraints of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as a law enforcement agency and does not have to prove a *criminal* act:

And if you screw up they’ll lock you up. Well you know, you’re in much more dangerous territory [as a government] But . . . nothing sharpens the mind like the prospect of hanging in the morning. (Fitzpatrick 2009)

Potomac Institute for Policy Studies were contracted to the Pentagon’s *Office of Strategic Influence*—their Director Dennis McBride (2009) commented that “the British are very clever, and . . . don’t have the restrictions we do.” On domestic/foreign propaganda restrictions, he said, “the British were less concerned with that kind of problem.” In public diplomacy (PD), McCarty (2013) also compared America with the United Kingdom: “Whereas like, in the UK, . . . the Government *does* things like this [operate or sponsor broadcasts to its own people]. I mean, there is no foreign-domestic line like there is in the United States.” He pointed to the *BBC*, stating that the United States cannot allow a broadcaster such as *Voice of America* to broadcast to and potentially influence Americans no matter how it were operated (McCarty 2013). On this Professor Wingfield said,

Your interviewees may have been right when they said that the US has more legal restrictions than the UK, BUT: the common core of both systems is much greater than the differences; there are slightly more restrictions; and the impact of these additional restrictions has little operational significance—they are much more about domestic approval chains, rather than flat-out prohibitions of this or that. (2013a)

The “restrictiveness” being encountered may relate more to bureaucracy and the U.S. military’s formal hierarchical approval structures being cumbersome to navigate.

Fluid Propaganda Audiences

“External” propaganda’s legitimacy hinges ultimately on feelings of insecurity in an anarchic international system, exploiting a fundamental suspicion of “foreigners.” Secretary of State Colin Powell apparently discussed with his Chief of Staff how much easier it was when there was a distinct “other” during the Cold War, and Lawrence Wilkerson (2009) recalled this, discussing how

. . . you always need an enemy, you need an “other” . . . in both our countries, we’ve always had the majority with a very distinct impression of the “other” and it was easy to manipulate . . . propagandise and so forth.

A globalized media environment means a full informational monopoly while isolating audiences is difficult. Audiences cannot be treated as distinct and targeted with differing messages without risking contradiction. The Pentagon recognized this back

in 2003; Defense Secretary Rumsfeld said that the global media age meant covert PSYOP messages were increasingly entering the U.S. domestic media (DOD 2003). Crucially, government propaganda campaigns cannot be seen to contradict; the lack of a consistent and culturally nuanced message destroys credibility. As the former Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Lawrence Wilkerson put it, the propaganda message “can’t be the same for the Indian Muslims, as it is for the Indonesian Muslims,” and “you can’t send the same signals to the 1.5bn Muslims, as you’re sending to your own people to Ra-Ra them up for the conflict.” (Wilkerson 2009)

In interview, Former National Security Council (NSC) Director of Global Outreach Kevin McCarty challenged the U.S. organizational structures saying that “Our government agencies are divided by borders and rules that don’t exist anymore.” (2013). U.S. planners recognized this early on, and Retired U.S. Air Force Colonel Sam Gardiner (2003) said the United States had “allowed strategic psychological operations to become part of public affairs” (p. 4). Colonel Jeffrey Jones (2005), former NSC Director for Strategic Communications and Information, concluded that “traditional dividing lines between public affairs, public diplomacy, and military information operations are blurred” (p. 109). The “global counter-terrorism campaign” expanded the range of DOD activities. Legally, military PSYOP must be associated with a specific *military mission* but Silverberg and Heimann (2009) state that

labelling the ongoing effort a “global war” or even a “worldwide irregular campaign” greatly expands the range of activities that can be justified as a “military mission.” (p. 79)

Coordination of PSYOP and PA involved institutional struggles in both countries, but particularly 2005–2008 in the United States (see Briant 2014). Successive planners have become increasingly concerned with adaptation and finding a solution for what is seen primarily as a *coordination* problem not one of ethics.

Intelligence personnel play a prominent role in strategic coordination of U.S. propaganda. Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (2009–2012) Doug Wilson (2013) stated that

in the time I’ve been in government, with stretches of service over 40 years, there’s a greater involvement now of intelligence organisation Public Affairs Officers in discussions involving national communications strategy. Public Affairs Office Representatives of the NSC, the State Department, the Pentagon, and the intelligence agencies all on the same line talking together.

Strategy coordination also occurs in the U.K. government and, since 2010, it takes place through the Cabinet Office NSC Communications Team. Kirsteen Rowlands (2013), Head of Afghanistan Communications in the *NSC Communications Team*, describes its role as to

coordinate all the activity across Whitehall and theatre on communications . . . around Afghanistan . . . the overarching strategy, our objectives, the top line messaging and . . . the direction.

Colonel Arundell stated that the big question for planners became “how do you conduct an operation for effect, for an informational effect against a constantly fluid enemy that has no tangible borders?” (2013). Now those responsible for the domestic message have accepted “playback” of international messages in the United Kingdom, and vice versa as inevitable and seek to avoid conflicting messages. In the United Kingdom, the essential elements of key foreign messages that will be used for the theater audience are being worked into the domestic, Media and Press Office output. On the NSC Communications Team, Rowlands said,

We absolutely recognise that . . . what we say to our domestic audience will be replayed to other audiences and . . . we see one of our key jobs as banging home that message to all our people who are messaging on Afghanistan . . . it’s an easy one to forget when you’re giving a message to domestic audiences, on for example, draw-down. That you need to balance that message . . . recognising that it’ll be picked up by Afghan audiences where the message is our long-term commitment. So we try to make sure we don’t talk about draw-down without talking about our on-going commitment post-2014.

Rowlands reaffirmed that

There is no longer such a thing as a clearly defined domestic audience . . . Anything that runs in our media gets picked up . . . by the Afghan media. The growth of the Afghan media has been utterly explosive . . .

The priority is consistency of message—prioritizing the conflict outcome and overall defense objectives: “We try to think more about the effect, rather than targeting to specific audiences.” (Rowlands 2013)

McCarty also described pressures that faced U.S. practitioners in a changing media environment and made old approaches to influence seem outdated. For practitioners, it is not enough to establish a large propaganda organization or broadcaster and get it pumping out information; its messages will get lost among the numerous other competing voices and rival, respected, news organizations. McCarty observed that “It’s become a very pull environment”—he argued today’s highly segmented audiences require a different approach for governments. He contended that, instead, the message needs to be carried on a medium already being “pulled” by the target audience, a source that is already credible and widely accessed. McCarty argued that

there’s so many voices out there, so many media channels . . . the old model of building a BBC or . . . your own website . . . there’s already a thousand of them out there, you build one more . . . how much of an impact is it going to have? So the infrastructure approach of making communications work, to me is an old model that doesn’t work. It has to be about *how do you affect the information flow*. How do you insert into that, get it to grow (McCarty 2013).

“Insertions” can be overt or covert and these are coordinated. Regarding U.K. covert messaging, Britain’s Colonel Arundell said that “increasingly we’re going to

shift” to “messaging an audience directly,” but this needs to be credible. A younger audience’s chief information source is “stuff that’s relayed by their mates through social networking sites—Twitter” and “if I say I’m Col Ralph Arundell from the British Army they’ll go ‘I’m not listening to that’” but if “done in the right way” it might go viral. This gives an advantage as “Nobody looks at a viral video on YouTube . . . and goes who planted that?” But it needs to be from a known source (Arundell 2013).

Former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage (2009) told how U.S. messages are designed to cross borders:

We cannot do perception management here in the United States, that’s against our law, but if we were going to do perception management in Europe this would be a covert operation where we’d insert . . . certain stories in certain newspapers that would try and affect, for instance, the thinking of Saddam Hussein . . .

Covert actions hinge on deniability. They are hidden from the public even after action has occurred. What international media content is “perception management” is impossible for the public to know. Deniability gives intelligence agencies an ability to act even where actions may be publicly unacceptable, as it limits the scope for debating activity.⁸ It ensures credibility of the source being “pulled.” And it raises the concern that PSYOP messages could reenter domestic media, should restrictions be ill-equipped to prevent this.

U.S. Checks and Oversight

Deliberate targeting of a U.S. domestic audience would be unlawful and it is required that the “intent” be to target a foreign audience (Department of Defense 2003). With overt operations, in terms of liability, the assurance that deliberate domestic targeting will not occur rests on compliance with directives and “chain of command, for military MISO ops [Military Information Support Operations, formerly referred to only as PSYOP], with legal review at the brigade level and higher” (Wingfield 2013b). But regarding U.S. PSYOP flowing into the U.S. media, there is little to prevent this from *accidentally* happening. There is little active effort to minimize impact on the domestic media or weigh whether risk is proportional. As Wingfield (2013c) states,

as long as you had the right target, got the right authorizations, and took the right precautions, then it doesn’t matter what kind of spillover happens—there’s nothing blameworthy in your op. Stuff happens, especially in this line of work.

Furthermore, proving a state of mind such as “intent” is difficult. To ensure Commanders comply, Wingfield (2013d) stated that in *covert* PSYOP, “the process requires the President to take personal responsibility (in writing) for each covert op” and legal opinion will be obtained. The lawyer would need to take into account proportionality considering whether the risk of the PSYOP output entering U.S. domestic

media is outweighed by the value of the operation. There is also post-operation oversight by Congress but they have “no role in prior approval” (Wingfield 2013d). Ren Stelloh (2009) explained congressional oversights for the CIA through four principal committees: The *Senate Appropriations Committee* and *House Appropriations Committee* who “say ‘ok we’re gonna give you a hundred million dollars to go and do that’” and then the *House Permanent Select* and *Senate Select Committees on Intelligence*. But these are “not full committees, it’s the covert action staff⁹ [which] has the ability to be intrusive and ask questions . . .” (Stelloh 2009). Wingfield (2013d) stated that

I think Congress is looking out for English-language covert PSYOP that could have an effect on the US public if inappropriately released through our media—although, in their case, almost always¹⁰ after the fact.

He said Congress and the President “both have an institutional interest in keeping an eye on sloppy PSYOP that might leak to domestic media.” (Wingfield 2013e).

In reality, however, regarding the “proportionality” of covert operations, concern is more focused on “kinetic” covert action, where lives are at risk. There is considered to be little risk of “harm” where the fallout is informational—“PSYOP almost never produce the kind of physical damage required for a full-on law of war analysis with distinction and proportionality evaluations.” (Wingfield 2013c). So any operation that spilled back into U.S. media would still likely be considered “proportionate,” despite the difficulty of proving any “benefit” or impact of a propaganda campaign in shaping battlefield outcomes or effectiveness in-theater. When asked about this, Wingfield (2013e) stated that

You’re right that there can never be absolute certainty about the ultimate effect of any military operation, but the concern is somewhat reduced if it is a cyber or psyop intel activity that, even in a worst-case scenario, wouldn’t kill anybody. Some leakage to US audiences is probably inevitable, but as long as the intent is not there to target the US, and all reasonable precautions have been taken, then a well-designed operation has a very small chance of blowing back and becoming a US media sensation.

If the lawyer, or congress or whoever, is weighing a campaign’s downsides, against its positive impact, the assessment of proportionality is dependent on measures of effect. This raises an important question explored below:

Interviewer: Even if it doesn’t become a damaging “media sensation” in the US, if you can’t prove the operation was effective in theater, how can *any* leakage to the US be proportionate?

Wingfield’s reply: “Measuring the effectiveness of PSYOP is a whole other problem, if they are targeted at a public and not a few identifiable decision-makers. The proportionality thing is only a legal requirement if you’re killing people and blowing things up—otherwise, it’s just a good idea.” (Wingfield 2013f)

The following account indicates that if propaganda reenters the United States, as long as those responsible make a case to demonstrate the propaganda was “intended” for an external audience, Congress are satisfied. Former CIA Station Chief Ren Stelloh (2009) recalled how after 9/11,

within a few weeks our then [Deputy Director of Operations] Jim Pavitt sent a back-channel to the domestic chiefs asking that we redouble and if we hadn’t started, start right now, scrubbing the commercial world, . . . for tools that we could bring to bear on the war on terrorism.

PhaseOne, a propaganda contractor who kept a very low profile,¹¹ forecasted psychological persuasiveness of communications for both DOD and CIA, developing propaganda. Their profiling and forecasting techniques initially were developed by SIS and CIA during World War II and perfected in commercial and academic applications afterward. Stelloh described how even among foreign audiences “the lingua franca of the Internet is English!” so this means

the lawyers will . . . say obviously you’re targeting English speakers . . . and we say “well, yeh . . . [laughing] but they’re not Americans!” . . . well how can you ensure that? . . . so you go through *things* . . . to try to make that case.

This clearly leaves a wide berth for subjectivity and interpretation and Stelloh’s (2009) account demonstrates a nonchalant response of Congress to occurrences of “feedback”:

There is a requirement however that, if anything spilled . . . there is always a foreign focus, . . . whatever activities undertaken should never be *designed* to influence an internal audience, . . . and if there is inadvertent spill-over, say the New York Times picks it up and replays it and you, “Oh shit.” We go tell Congress and say—And, 9 times out of 10, they say . . . “*ok!*” [emphasis added]

Senior Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control on the National Security Council Franklin C. Miller (2009) observed that during wartime “I don’t know that we’ve had that many operations . . . actually . . . denied.”

Anglo-American Coordination

In this section, relationships in the propaganda context will be examined in relation to defense and intelligence. Some interviewees said that Britain’s capabilities were prized, partly in the context of U.S. restrictions some found outdated. Britain’s legislative restrictions were perceived as weaker and advantageous to planning. As part of an overall war effort, coalitions account for differing skill sets and capabilities of their members in producing a division of labor that will allow members to perform an assistive, complementary role and optimize their overall resource in meeting operational objectives. British policy after 9/11 emphasized “interoperability,” converging

doctrine, and providing unique capabilities in an attempt to secure “fit” and relative value to America, all factors which shaped the propaganda war. One writer stated in 2009 that about 40 percent of CIA activities to prevent terrorist attacks on America are focused on Britain (Shipman 2009).

As a coalition, different countries can complement each other and widen the range of possible engagement for each. Beyond material resource, the balance of *restrictions* of two countries at any time can also affect the balance of what each country brings to an overall war effort. The extension of a U.S. “military mission” had this effect. During preparations for Iraq, and before the war, Ian Tunnicliffe described U.S./U.K. legal differences in IO:

the no-fly zones . . . had been previously defined as areas in which we could operate . . . whereas outside of them it was still Iraqi sovereign territory . . . An effort to broadcast into that was technically an aggressive act.

On this occasion, for Britain it meant, “In the run-up . . . you didn’t get any active IO . . . there was covert stuff . . . not run out of MoD . . . other agencies might’ve been doing things.” (Tunnicliffe 2013) The United States defining a wider military mission often enabled its military engagement. In another example, Air Commodore Wright explained that

if we wanted to do something in the Maghreb, because our military say look we’re worried about [Al Qaeda from Mesopotamia] Our policy people in the MoD would say . . . We’re not doing military operations there

This would restrict Britain from relying on embassies, which could be restrictive, as Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) “don’t have the capabilities that [MoD] do in terms of doing things on the ground in other places” (Wright 2009). In contrast, America could act where a military response was deemed necessary due to its widely defined reach; in this case “doing influence activity, in its broadest sense, in Africa to prevent operations ever happening.”¹²

Besides weak restrictions, some interviews indicated that Britain is seen as providing particular or complimentary skill in covert IO. As Former Director of the U.S. Advisory Commission for Public Diplomacy Matt Armstrong notes, different countries including Britain also have different areas of specialism in “‘The black arts’ . . . what I mean is covert information operations. Their PSYOP and MISO type of stuff” and this means “there are things where we look for from our allies and they look for from us” (Armstrong 2013). Within the MoD, Colonel Ralph Arundell confirmed this: “The Americans like to think we’re very good at this sort of activity. Because we have a long historical background with it.” (2013)

The scope of each country’s intelligence agency activities is complimentary. The two countries have worked together increasingly as “threats” were seen as requiring global “solutions,” and attempts were made to draw on any propaganda capabilities that might complement each others’ objectives. Placing false stories in foreign media

with the intention of them reentering the country was something Dr. Stephen Dorril (2010) said he thought the Americans had been taught “by MI6.” “Surfacing” has the potential advantage of circumnavigating domestic audience targeting rules and distances the propagandist from the propaganda, giving the message some wider credibility. Dorril said an SIS agent would first

plant a story in a third country, you tell the journalist who’s your contact . . . He gets the story . . . he comes back to you [the agent] and you say yeh it’s true, they can build a . . . nuclear weapon in 6 months. Then he puts the story in the press that “intelligence sources confirm that . . .”

This “double-sourcing” adds credibility to the story, and “the person who usually backs it up is also the person who planted the story in the first place” (Dorril 2010). *UN Weapons Inspector* Scott Ritter was asked to provide SIS with “information on Iraq that could be planted in newspapers in India, Poland and South Africa from where it would ‘feed back’ to Britain and America” (Rufford 2003; see also Ritter 2005: 281). Seymore Hersh (2003) has also revealed how the CIA relationship with SIS operates to enable a deniable route to get U.S. messages into the wider media. SIS functioning this way could be argued to provide a complementary and “unique” capability within the alliance, particularly given how London’s reporting sets the agenda for U.S. coverage of world events. Different “capabilities” in the intelligence community, or military, would clearly prove the Anglo-American relationship advantageous in wartime.

The remarks of MoD Assistant Head Defense Media and Communications Operations Plans (and former Assistant Head—Targeting and Information Operations) Colonel Arundell were noted above on the existence of U.S. constraints to “non-attributable” campaigns and “activity that could potentially play back against the US audience.” Importantly, American IO operatives were pushing to change these restrictions (Briant 2014). During interview, Arundell was asked whether this meant Britain was of high value to the United States in this kind of activity, and he replied, “Yes, of course it is.” Arundell clarified his point:

. . . And that’s not because we can be used as a pawn to do America’s bidding. *We* could come up with a bright idea and say right we want to do X the Americans might go “*that’s fabulous*, you crack on and do that. We’ll ensure we deconflict with that.” (2013).

From this military account, for the United Kingdom to be of high value in this area would require it to be proactively connected with the United States to be able to anticipate, provide complimentary operations, and deconflict. These connections do seem to be firmly in place, ensuring dialogue about objectives, interests, and desired outcomes.

When asked where U.S. restrictions have made British assistance valuable, one American interviewee confirmed that this applies to a specific area when “there are restrictions on its *ability* to have *covert* information, unattributed information, intentionally come into the United States” (Anonymous 2013a). This intent, of course,

makes an activity illegal for military or intelligence personnel, according to Professor Wingfield's analysis. Former NSC Director Franklin Miller nervously said, "If it's influencing our own people, which is I know, forbidden by law . . . then you wouldn't really want your ally to be doing for you what you're not allowed to do yourself . . ." (Miller 2009) But Joel Harding (2013b), former U.S. Special Forces, Military Intelligence, and Director of the IO Institute, confirmed,

Both the US and the UK can take advantage of one another's laws to skirt around restrictions, legal and otherwise. If the UK could not do something with a UK citizen, for instance, the US can assist. I'm especially thinking of extremists. That could be a repugnant situation, however, as we honestly think of you guys as family. At least I do, as do most veterans. But as a former intelligence officer I've used that relationship a few times . . . especially when I was working in Special Operations. 'nuff said.

The extent of this is unclear. America's press already relies heavily on official sources (Papacharissi and Oliveira 2008), so it seems likely use of the relationship would have greatest value online. According to Former Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communication and Global Outreach Mark Pfeifle (2013), this depth of coordination is more about individuals' initiative than an overall policy: "I would *hope* that there were that much coordination and insight, I would *think*, to a point, but not from a global or overall level." Edward Snowden has revealed evidence of a reciprocal domestic surveillance relationship between British and American intelligence agencies and a system of British oversight weaker than that of the United States (Hopkins and Ackerman 2013), and parallels exist in propaganda. American use of U.S. journalists would engage U.S. oversight but activities anticipated by British intelligence or military and undertaken in pursuit of common objectives may receive less U.S. scrutiny, and indeed, little within Britain.

Allies delivering IO would follow their own country's doctrine and oversight. But some intercountry coordination seeks to ensure a common purpose is maintained and allows the partner to consider the content and evaluate "risk." Regarding this, Matt Armstrong stated that, with covert information coming back into the states,

What somebody will *say* to that, might be to watch, what we would call the Washington Post-test . . . "Am I comfortable with seeing this on the front page of the Washington Post?"—That's not *law* . . . That is probably the bigger *driver* . . . [as far as whether objections might be raised or a plan approved]. (Armstrong 2013).

Conclusion

As governments introduce changes, it is crucial to consider *all* propaganda as a *global communication issue* that impacts on our national, domestic populations to whom planners owe a responsibility. "Boundaries" are becoming more fluid and indeed never really were inviolable; as these underlie a perceived mandate for propaganda, government policies must be reexamined. The present research demonstrates the

weakness of governance in intelligence, and military propaganda “feedback” practices and complacency among government personnel regarding potential for harm. Key differences in U.S./U.K. propaganda leave both countries’ publics with few protections in this area.

Recently, the Head of GCHQ Sir Iain Lobban recently was required to comment on an allegation that they were using relationships with the U.S. services “in order to circumvent British law”; he stated, “We are subject to the law” (Intelligence and Security Committee 2013). Leaked documents regarding GCHQ clearly suggest that in surveillance too, British oversight is more flexible than that of the United States, and that the United States seeks to exploit the differential: *Weakness* of British laws was considered to be a “selling point” with the Americans (Hopkins and Berger 2013). This research found evidence of this in the area of propaganda from multiple government sources. The use of international relations to evade propaganda restrictions bypasses the *already weak* systems of domestic oversight that give a veneer of accountability in the United Kingdom and the United States.

The development described here of intelligence and defense propaganda planning responses to the rise of the Internet and globalized media adds to existing challenges in reporting (Dorriell 2002; Gup 2004; Lashmar 2013). Evidence of greater targeting of credible news sources poses a particular concern, particularly if it includes covert propaganda “insertions.” Calls for transparency often emphasize censorship but covert propaganda can be just as distorting to our ability to challenge the direction of British and U.S. foreign policy, if not more so. This is particularly so where information sources are seen as reliable, and indeed they are targeted for that reason.

Members of Parliament (MPs) have questioned the unclear laws in the area of surveillance. But Len Scott (2004) rightly questions why scholars examining the intelligence agencies focus on comparatively well-researched information gathering, rather than “clandestine diplomacy” and “secret intervention” which is crucial to exposing hidden political agendas (p. 322). It is important to highlight how surveillance—to “monitor . . . the human terrain”—is fused with the strategic influence operations used to “shape” it (Cole et al 2014). In the online world, GCHQ is moving toward a greater “offensive” role. With “Squeaky Dolphin” it is “crafting messaging campaigns to go viral” using Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, and Facebook.¹³ The speed of adaptation has left policy and oversight behind in propaganda too. Sir Menzies Campbell has asked whether the “existing legal framework is adequate to deal with the enormous consequences of the revolution in technology” (Intelligence and Security Committee 2013). Frequent reexamination and public engagement in the development of controls and restrictions in national security propaganda is necessary for U.S. and British Government transparency and accountability, as well as the formation of policies that both respect citizens and build positive foreign relations.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research was funded in part by an Economic and Social Research Council PhD Studentship.

Notes

1. Forty U.K. participants—thirty-seven U.K. interviews and eight U.K. e-mails. Thirty-five U.S. participants—twenty-nine interviews and thirty-six e-mails (including one Iraqi-American and one Egyptian-American). Plus one Australian e-mail participant who worked closely with U.K./U.S. personnel.
2. .Note. According to Wingfield “Jus Cogens Norms” fall under crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide, and common article 3 human rights violations.
3. Freedom of Information (FOI) Response from Tracy Sexton. June 4, 2014. MoD: Ref. FOI2014/01246.
4. See the Geneva Convention which mentions propaganda in relation to “respect for the moral person of the prisoner” and for “voluntary enlistment” in an occupied territory (Convention (III and IV, Respectively) Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War 1949).
5. FOI Response from Tracy Sexton. 4th June 2014. MoD: Ref. FOI2014/01246.
6. White, black, and gray are terms used to describe propaganda. White propaganda is overt, sourced, and information largely accurate; black propaganda is covert, may be falsely attributed, and is often lies; gray propaganda is characterized by uncertainty either of the *source* or its *accuracy* (Jowett and O’Donnell 1992).
7. Ibid. Arundell (2013).
8. Weiner (2008), for example, cites cases where he argues U.S. Presidents were unaware of questionable or illegal Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) activities which protected that organization or credibly denied U.S. involvement.
9. See above, on U.S. Code Title 50 which designates covert action as traditionally CIA-led.
10. When asked to clarify this, Wingfield stated that “although under the US system of congressional oversight most reporting to the two committees is after the fact, it is possible to imagine a before-the-fact case in which funding for a large intelligence program is sought which proses unlawful elements. Members of the committees could raise their concerns at that point in negotiations with the executive. More likely, though, anything that would violate jus cogens international norms, almost all of which are uncontroversial parts of US domestic criminal law, would not be written in to a program plan, but rather would emerge as violations in execution—identified and dealt with after the fact (ala Abu Ghraib)” (Wingfield 2014).
11. Stelloh, while still CIA Station Chief, became increasingly involved with PhaseOne. The day after leaving the CIA, he became their Chief Operating Officer and President. They have recently been bought by *SI* (Now Vencore: <http://www.vencore.com/>).
12. Ibid. Wright (2009)
13. Ibid. Cole et al. (2014)

References

- Anonymous. 2013a. *Senior State Department Official*, E-mail.
- Anonymous. 2013b. *UK Official*. Interview.
- Armitage, Richard. 2009. *Former Deputy Secretary of State, Department of State*. Interview, July 21. Washington, D.C.

- Armstrong, Matt. 2013. *US Chairman of the US Broadcasting Board of Governors, Former Executive Director of the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (March 2011-December 2011)*. Telephone Interview, March 6.
- Arundell, Ralph. 2013. *UK Assistant Head Defense Media and Communications Operations Plans and former Assistant Director—Targeting and Information Operations, MoD*, Interview, April 18. London.
- Bacevich, Andrew. 2006. *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bernays, Edward. 2004. *Propaganda*. Brooklyn: Ig Publishing.
- Briant, Emma, L. 2014. *Propaganda and Counter-terrorism: Strategies for Global Change*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Cole, Matthew, Richard Esposito, Mark Schone, and Glenn Greenwald. 2014. "Snowden Docs: British Spies Used Sex and 'Dirty Tricks.'" *NBC News*, February 7. <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/investigations/snowden-docs-british-spies-used-sex-dirty-tricks-n23091>.
- Convention (III and IV, Respectively) Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. 1949. August 12. Geneva: <https://www.icrc.org/ihl/INTRO/305?OpenDocument>.
- Department of Defense. 2003. *Information Operations Roadmap*. Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, National Security Archive. http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB177/info_ops_roadmap.pdf.
- DOD Directive S-3321.1. 1984. *Overt Psychological Operations Conducted by the Military Services in Peacetime (U)*. <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/332101p.pdf>.
- Dorril, Stephen. 2002. *MI6: Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Dorril, Stephen. 2010. *Academic, Investigative Journalist and Author of Numerous Key Texts on MI6*. Telephone Interview, July 20.
- Ellul, Jacques. 1973. *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Executive Order S-12333. 2008. *United States Intelligence Activities (Amended)*. <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/eo/eo-12333-2008.pdf>.
- Fitzpatrick, Sean, K. 2009. *Former Executive Vice President and Vice Chair of the Board of McCann-Erickson World Group, Creative Director—National Center For Unconventional Thought at Potomac Institute for Policy Studies*. Interview, June 30. Williamsburg, VA.
- French, David. 2012. *The British Way in Counterinsurgency 1945-1967*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gardiner, Sam. 2003. *Truth from These Podia: Summary of a Study of Strategic Influence, Perception Management, Strategic Information Warfare and Strategic Psychological Operations in Gulf II*. <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB177/Info%20-Operations%20Roadmap%20Truth%20from%20These%20Podia.pdf>.
- Guest, Greg, Kathleen M. MacQueen, and Emily E. Namey. 2012. *Applied Thematic Analysis*. London: Sage.
- Gup, Ted. 2004. "Covering the CIA in Times of Crisis: Obstacles and Strategies." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 9 (3): 28–39.
- Harding, Joel. 2013a. *US Former Special Forces, SAIC (2005-2007) & Former Director of the IO Institute*. E-mail, April 30.
- Harding, Joel. 2013b. *US Former Special Forces, SAIC (2005-2007) & Former Director of the IO Institute*. E-mail, May 3.
- Herman, Edward, and Noam Chomsky. 2008. *Manufacturing Consent*. London: Bodley Head.

- Hersh, Seymour. 2003. "Who Lied to Whom." *The New Yorker*, March 31. http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/03/31/030331fa_fact1?printable=true.
- Hopkins, Nick, and Spencer Ackerman. 2013. "Flexible Laws and Weak Oversight Give GCHQ Room for Manoeuvre." *The Guardian*, August 2. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/aug/02/gchq-laws-oversight-nsa>.
- Hopkins, Nick, and Julian Borger. 2013. "Exclusive: NSA Pays £100m in Secret Funding for GCHQ." *The Guardian*, August 1. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/aug/01/nsa-paid-gchq-spying-edward-snowden>.
- Houghton, Kate. 1996. "Subverting Journalism: Reporters and the CIA." In *Committee to Protect Journalists SPECIAL REPORT: The United States Subverting Journalism*. <http://www.cpj.org/attacks96/sreports/cia.html>.
- House of Commons Home Affairs Committee on Counter-terrorism. 2014. *Seventeenth Report*. www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmhaff/231/23102.htm.
- House of Commons Select Committee on Defense. 2004. *Third Report*. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmdfence/63/6302.htm>.
- Intelligence and Security Committee. 2013. *Uncorrected Transcript of Evidence*. http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/library/reports/2013/20131107_isc_uncorrected_transcript.pdf.
- Intelligence Services Act 1994*. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/13/contents>.
- Jones, Jeffrey B. 2005. "Strategic Communication: A Mandate for the United States." *Joint Force Quarterly* 39 (Autumn): 108–14.
- Jowett, Garth S., and Victoria O'Donnell. 1992. *Propaganda and Persuasion*. 2nd Edition. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Kennedy, Paul. 2007. *Report of the Interception of Communications Commissioner for 2007*. <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/hc0708/hc09/0947/0947.pdf>.
- Lashmar, Paul. 2013. "Urinal or Conduit? Institutional Information Flow between the UK Intelligence Services and News Media." *Journalism* 14 (8): 1024–40.
- Law of Armed Conflict. 2004. "Chiefs of Staff." In *JSP 383: Manual of the Law of Armed Conflict*. http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27874/JSP3832004Edition.pdf.
- McBride, Dennis. 2009. *Director—Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, and former Naval Captain*, Interview, June 5. Washington, D.C.
- McCarty, Kevin. 2013. *US Former National Security Council Director for Global Outreach, Former U.S. Naval Officer, Intelligence Officer NSC and Currently Commercial Communications Consultant*. Telephone Interview, March 13.
- Miller, David, and Rizwaan Sabir. 2012. "Counter-terrorism as Counterinsurgency in the UK 'War on Terror.'" In *Counter-terrorism and State Political Violence: The "War on Terror" as Terror*, ed. Scott Poynting and David Whyte, 12–32. London: Routledge.
- Miller, Franklin C. 2009. *Senior Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control on the National Security Council*. Interview: The Cohen Group, August 3. Washington, D.C.
- Moran, Christopher, and Christopher Murphy. 2013. *Intelligence Studies in Britain and the US: Historiography since 1945*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Nagl, John. 2005. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Newbery, Samantha. 2009. "Intelligence and Controversial British Interrogation Techniques: The Northern Ireland Case, 1971-2." *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 20:103–19.
- Papacharissi, Zizi, and Maria Oliveira. 2008. "News Frames Terrorism: A Comparative Analysis of Frames Employed in Terrorism Coverage in U.S. and U.K. Newspapers." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 13 (1): 52–74.

- Pfeifle, Mark. 2013. *Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communication and Global Outreach (2007-2009)*. Telephone Interview, July 12.
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. Chapter 23. HM Government. National Archives: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/23/contents>.
- Ritter, Scott. 2005. *Iraq Confidential*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Rowlands, Kirsteen. 2013. *UK Cabinet Office NSC Comms Team, Head of Afghanistan Communications*. Interview, April 17. London.
- Rufford, Nicholas. 2003. "Revealed: How MI6 Sold the Iraq War." *The Sunday Times*, December 28: http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/article222162.ece
- Scott, Len. 2004. "Secret Intelligence, Covert Action and Clandestine Diplomacy." *Intelligence and National Security* 19 (2): 322–41.
- Shipman, Tim. 2009. "Why the CIA Has to Spy on Britain." *The Spectator*, February 28, 20–21.
- Silverberg, Daniel, & Heimann Joseph. 2009. "An Ever-Expanding War: Legal Aspects of Online Strategic Communication." *Parameters* 39 (Summer): 77–93.
- United States Information and Educational Exchange Act 1948. (Commonly known as Smith-Mundt Act) Enacted January 27 1948. Public Laws Chs 35-36: 6-14. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/177574.pdf>
- Stelloh, Ren. 2009. *Chief Operating Officer/President PhaseOne Communications & Former CIA Station Chief*. Interview, June 23. Washington, D.C.
- Tatham, Steve. 2008. "Strategic Communication: A Primer." In *Advanced Research and Assessment Group*. Shrivenham, UK: Defence Academy of UK. [http://www.da.mod.uk/colleges/arag/document-listings/special/08\(28\)ST.pdf](http://www.da.mod.uk/colleges/arag/document-listings/special/08(28)ST.pdf).
- Taverner, Angus. 2013. *UK Former Dir. Media Operations (Policy)—Office of Director General of Media and Communication MoD*. Interview, January 23. Glasgow.
- Taylor, Philip. 2003. *Munitions of the Mind - Third Edition*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Taylor, Philip, and Nancy Snow. 2006. "The Revival of the Propaganda State: US Propaganda at Home and Abroad since 9/11." *International Communication Gazette* 68 (5–6): 389–407.
- Tunncliffe, Ian. 2013. *Former British Army Intelligence Corps, Former Director Plans in the Office of Strategic Communications of the Coalition Provisional Authority, MoD*. Telephone Interview, July 8.
- U.S. Code 1956. Legal Information Institute, Cornell University Law School, NY: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/1956>.
- Weiner, Tim. 2008. *Legacy of Ashes: History of the CIA*. London: Penguin.
- Wilkerson, Lawrence. 2009. *Former Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell, Department of State 2002-2005*. Interview, June 23. Washington, D.C.
- Wilson, Doug. 2013. *US Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs*. Telephone Interview, May 10.
- Wingfield, Thomas. 2013a. *Professor of International Law George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies & Civilian Rule of Law Advisor to Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal's Counterinsurgency Advisory and Assistance Team (October 2009-February 2010)*. E-mail, May 1.
- Wingfield, Thomas. 2013b. *Professor of International Law George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies & Civilian Rule of Law Advisor to Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal's Counterinsurgency Advisory and Assistance Team (October 2009-February 2010)*. E-mail, May 10.
- Wingfield, Thomas. 2013c. *Professor of International Law George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies & Civilian Rule of Law Advisor to Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal's*

- Counterinsurgency Advisory and Assistance Team (October 2009-February 2010)*. E-mail, May 21.
- Wingfield, Thomas. 2013d. *Professor of International Law George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies & Civilian Rule of Law Advisor to Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal's Counterinsurgency Advisory and Assistance Team (October 2009-February 2010)*. E-mail, May 22.
- Wingfield, Thomas. 2013e. *Professor of International Law George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies & Civilian Rule of Law Advisor to Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal's Counterinsurgency Advisory and Assistance Team (October 2009-February 2010)*. E-mail, May 29.
- Wingfield, Thomas. 2013f. *Professor of International Law George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies & Civilian Rule of Law Advisor to Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal's Counterinsurgency Advisory and Assistance Team (October 2009-February 2010)*. E-mail, June 8.
- Wingfield, Thomas. 2014. *Professor of International Law George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies & Civilian Rule of Law Advisor to Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal's Counterinsurgency Advisory and Assistance Team (October 2009-February 2010)*. E-mail, July 15.
- Wright, Graham. 2009. *Former UK Director of Targeting and Information Operations—MoD, & British Liaison to Joint Chiefs at Department of Defense*. Interview, June 1. Washington, D.C.

Author Biography

Emma L. Briant is a Lecturer in Journalism Studies at the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom. Her upcoming book, *Propaganda and Counter-terrorism: Strategies for Global Change*, is to be published by Manchester University Press in 2014. Her research draws on a large number of elite interviews and examines propaganda strategy adaptation in U.S. and U.K. counterterrorism planning. Other work includes research with the Glasgow Media Group which explored media coverage of disability in the United Kingdom and media coverage of asylum—the subject of her recent co-authored book *Bad News for Refugees*.

Hero on Twitter, Traitor on News: How Social Media and Legacy News Frame Snowden

The International Journal of Press/Politics
2015, Vol. 20(2) 166–184
© The Author(s) 2015
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1940161214566709
ijpp.sagepub.com



Jie Qin^{1,2}

Abstract

Is Edward Snowden a hero or traitor? In what ways do frames on social media and legacy news differ in covering the incident of Edward Snowden? Utilizing the approach of semantic network analysis, the study found social media users associated Snowden's case with other whistle-blowers, bipartisan issues, and personal privacy issues, while professional journalists associated the Snowden incident with issues of national security and international relations. Frames on social media portray Edward Snowden as a hero while the frames on legacy news make him a traitor. The study further identified media frames on social media and legacy news differ in two ways: word selection and word salience. In addition, the study discussed the challenges and opportunities of framing analysis in the context of social media.

Keywords

framing theory, semantic network, social media, legacy news, public opinion

While the debates on whether Julian Assange and Bradley Manning are heroes or villains still linger, another whistle-blower arrived. Edward Snowden, the former employer of National Security Agency (NSA) in the United States, hid in Hong Kong, leaking and accusing the NSA of massive surveillance. As usual, a global debate titled “Edward Snowden: a hero or traitor” was on. President Obama called it “modest encroachments on privacy” (Dorning and Strohm 2013), while Ron Paul, the Representative for Texas

¹City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

²SCAD Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Corresponding Author:

Jie Qin, Professor of Communications, Department of Liberal Arts, SCAD Hong Kong, 292 Tai Po Road, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Email: jqin@scad.edu

and former presidential candidate, said, “We should be thankful for individuals like Edward Snowden and Glenn Greenwald who see injustice being carried out by their own government and speak out, despite the risk” (Walsh 2013).

Which camp will prevail, Snowden’s attackers or defenders? According to Kirn (2013), the winner is the latter, “at least on Twitter,” as Twitter is different from newspapers or magazines, “where muddiness flourishes and space is at less of a premium.” His assumption does not only concern who is the winner, more importantly, it triggers an important, yet rarely studied research question: In what ways do frames on social media and legacy news differ? To address this question, this article is organized as four parts. The first part reviews the classic conceptualization, mechanism, and operationalization of framing analysis, and discusses the challenges toward the three issues in the context of social media. The second part introduces hashtags as new framing devices and semantic network analysis as an alternative to traditional framing analysis in the context of social media. The third part begins with a brief overview of the Snowden incident, and then offers a semantic network analysis and compares in what ways frames on social media and legacy news differ in covering the Snowden incident. The fourth part concludes and discusses new opportunities for framing analysis in the context of social media.

Rethinking the Conceptualization, Mechanism, and Operationalization of Framing Analysis

Framing Analysis in the Context of Legacy News

Exhaustive discussions have been made on the origins of framing theory. Pan and Kosicki (1993) suggested two traditions: sociological tradition and psychological tradition of framing theory. The sociological tradition started with Goffman (1974), and the psychological tradition has a longer history, which can be traced back to scholars like Piaget (1929) in early twentieth century. Goffman defined frame as a “strip” or “any arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing actives” (Goffman 1974: 10). According to Piaget, frames are interchangeable with schemas. A schema outlines an object or a construct, such as cloud, life, and so on, and will “be taken as the general” (Piaget 1929: 204).

Regarding the conceptualization of frames in communication research, Scheufele (1999) made a distinction between two types of frames: media frames and individual frames. A media frame is “a set of interpretive packages that give meaning to an issue” (Gamson and Modigliani 1989: 3), while individual frames “are internal structures of the mind that help individuals to order and give meaning to the dizzying parade of events” (Kinder and Sanders 1990: 74). For example, Gamson and Modigliani’s (1989) study on media coverage of nuclear issues is a classic example of media frame analysis. The authors examined five types of framing devices in daily newspapers and network evening news broadcasts, including metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depiction, and visual images to identify different interpretive packages from 1940s to 1980s. Take the interpretive package in 1950s for example. During that time, the

progress package was identified as the dominant interpretive package. An editorial in *New York Times* was quoted as an example of the progress package: “We face the prospect either of destruction on a scale which dwarfs anything thus far reported, or of a golden era of social change which would satisfy the most romantic utopian” (Gamson and Modigliani 1989: 12).

Regarding the mechanism of framing process, it involves two elements: selection and salience (Bakker and Hellsten 2013; Scheufele 1999). As Entman (1993) elaborated,

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (Entman 1993: 52)

For example, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) found that the dominant frames that media agencies employed to cover nuclear issues kept changing from 1940s to 1980s. Media agencies had selected some aspects of nuclear issues and made them more salient. Meanwhile, different media agencies had selected different frames regarding this controversial issue, which implied “a range of position” of the media agencies, “rather than any single one, allowing for a degree of controversy among those who share a common frame” (Gamson and Modigliani 1989: 3).

Regarding the operationalization of framing analysis, let us go back to Gamson and Modigliani’s (1989) study again. The first step was to collect a considerable amount of texts on a given issue. And then, the authors developed several “meta-frames” and “sub-frames” as the coding schemes based on researchers’ subjective or even arbitrary selections. At the end, the authors recruited coders to go over all the texts and put each article into corresponding sub-frame. When this top-down approach is applied in the context of social media, it becomes problematic, which will be elaborated in the next section.

Challenges for Framing Analysis in the Context of Social Media

Regarding the conceptualization of frames, a major challenge is whether the frames in social media are media frames or individual frames in nature, given the fact that social media are a mixture of institutional accounts and individual accounts? Take Twitter for example. Wu et al. (2011) found that Twitter users can be classed into at least five types: celebrities, media agencies, other organizational accounts, bloggers, and ordinary individual accounts. So the social media frames in nature are not simply the interpretive packages that media agencies employ, but also are far more complex than individual schemas. However, existing dualistic conceptualization, media frames and individual frames, fail to capture the nature of social media frames. To address this issue, I employed a network perspective to conceptualize social media frames. In this article, social media frames are conceptualized as the networks that are composed of various framing devices, such as hashtags, keywords, and so on. Compared with existing dualistic conceptualization, my conceptualization is innovative in two aspects.

First, it involves a bottom–up perspective, in contrast with the top–down perspective in existing dualistic conceptualization. Second, it sheds light on the connections between different framing devices, which has been overlooked in extant studies.

Regarding the mechanism of framing process, the challenge is how to measure the process of selection and salience, given the massive amounts of contents on social media, which are beyond the processing capacity of traditional content analysis? In this article, I proposed two new measures based on the network perspective. Selection refers to the framing devices that are included in a network, and salience is measured by the degrees of centrality of each framing device in the network. More details on the two measures will be elaborated in analyzing the incident of Edward Snowden in the following part.

Regarding the operationalization of framing analysis, the challenges are twofold. First, the framing devices identified in legacy news are either absent or transformed on social media. Tankard (2001: 101) offered a list of framing devices, which has been widely used in extant framing research. The list contains eleven common framing devices on legacy news: (1) headlines and kickers; (2) subheads; (3) photographs; (4) photo captions; (5) leads; (6) selection of sources or affiliations; (7) selection of quotes; (8) pull quotes; (9) logos; (10) statistics, charts, and graphs; and (11) concluding statements or paragraphs of articles. However, on social media, take Twitter for example, headlines, leads, and news sources are absent while tweets, retweets, replies, hashtags, attached hyperlinks, photos, and videos are what we have. To analyze social media frames, we need to identify appropriate framing devices. Hashtags, which have drawn considerable media attention (e.g., *ABC News* 2010) and preliminary academic attention (e.g., Hemphill et al. 2013; Parmelee 2013) will be introduced as the framing device on social media in the next section.

The second challenge is the scholar-centered approach. Unlike news articles which bear rich contextual cues for framing analysis, tweets are usually too short to carry sufficient contextual cues. For example, in Sukosd and Fu's (2013) study, the authors aimed to explore how netizens discussed seven major environmental conflicts in China on Weibo. The authors borrowed five media frames from Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) study, along with seven self-selected frames as the benchmarks. Coders were allowed to choose the one and only one proximal frame for each tweet. The authors were at risk of over-interpreting a considerable amount of tweets. For example, the decision of putting "Concerned!" into the "what's next frame" is questionable, since it could not be wrong to put it into any other frames. As Tankard strongly criticized,

This approach makes frame identification a rather subjective process. Does one reader saying a story is using a conflict frame make that really the case? Indeed, coming up with the names for frames itself involves a kind of framing. (Tankard 2001: 98)

New Method for Framing Analysis on Social Media

Hashtags as Framing Devices on Social Media

Hashtags are words or phrases with the hash symbol "#." For example, "#wikileaks" is a hashtag to highlight this tweet is about WikiLeaks. I offered a detailed

explanation of the most visible hashtags in the semantic network of Snowden incident on Twitter in Table 3. In practice, Twitter users are encouraged to add hashtags in their tweets to increase the visibility in Twitter Search (Twitter 2014). From an academic perspective, hashtags “are both text and metatext, information and tag, pragmatic and metapragmatic speech” (Rambukkana 2013: 1). Specific hashtags such as “#qldfloods” (Bruns et al. 2012) and “#Egypt” (Meraz and Papacharissi 2013; Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira 2012) have been utilized to identify event-related discussions on social media. However, studies regarding hashtags as framing devices are just emerging.

Hemphill et al.’s (2013) research is among this emerging body of studies regarding Twitter hashtags as framing devices. The authors performed an algorithmic approach to detect how politicians use hashtags to frame what issues and identified forty topics based on 10,546 hashtags. For example, users added hashtags like “#ACA” and “#Obamacare” in their tweets when they talked about health care issues. Hashtags like “#JOBS” and “#4jobs” appeared in the tweets discussing employment issues. An interesting finding is that Republicans and Democrats had different preference toward hashtags. Republicans prefer hashtags concerning macro-level issues while Democrats prefer micro-level issues, as the authors quoted the Republican National Committee’s saying, “while Democrats tend to talk about people, Republicans tend to talk about policy” (Hemphill et al. 2013: 15).

Hemphill et al.’s study touched an important character of hashtags, that is, multiple hashtags may emerge regarding a complex issue. However, they just stopped at identifying partisan preferences on hashtags and did not go further into the connections between various hashtags on the same issues. In fact, when Koenig (2004) developed the idea of routinizing frame analysis with computer-aided tools, he mentioned two key steps. First, we need to identify the keywords in the texts. Second, we need to build up a word net based on the co-occurrence of these keywords to map the connections among them. The word net is actually a semantic network that will be discussed next.

Semantic Network Analysis

Semantic network analysis is a technique to map the associations among concepts. In the network, the nodes are words or phrases, and the edges are the co-occurrences or various associations among the nodes. For example, Doerfel and Barnett (1999) utilized this technique to study the structure of International Communication Association (ICA). They extracted words from titles of the papers presented to ICA to draw the semantic networks. In addition, they built up an affiliation network based on ICA memberships. They found the two networks were significantly correlated, which suggested scholars in the same division spoke the same language. Another up-to-date project of Yuan et al. (2013) used semantic network analysis to capture the privacy issue on Chinese social media. They found that the full semantic network was constituted of eleven concept clusters, which yielded diverse interpretations of privacy issues in China.

As a bottom-up approach, the foremost merit of semantic network analysis is it lets frames emerge by themselves. This is what greatly differentiates semantic network analysis from the top-down scholar-centered approach. In addition, it also has many advantages. First, the processing capacity leaps from kilobyte level to terabyte level. According to Daly (2009), the smallest ePub book is 1.6 kilobytes, the largest is 233 megabytes, and the total size of 35,854 books is 20 gigabytes. The largest dataset by far is located in NSA Data Center, which is reported to have 5 zettabytes of data (Herridge 2013). This is far beyond the processing capacity of traditional content analysis, but a normal size for semantic network analysis. Second, semantic network analysis expands the research scope from single frame to the associations among multiple frames. In traditional framing analysis, the definition of event boundary is quite arbitrary, and associations among frames are absent due to limited processing capacity. What a semantic network reveals is a natural situation of public opinion, where events connect with events by associations. Third, it brings down the costs and improves efficiency. Content analysis is labor-intensive; recruiting coders and coding processes take time and money. On the contrary, computed-aided semantic network analysis is a technology-intensive task, requiring computers and software, which I believe is affordable (or even zero-cost) for researchers.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This section begins with a very brief review of the incident of Edward Snowden, a 30-year-old American citizen, who revealed the classified documents on PRISM, a surveillance program of NSA in the United States. It is reported that Snowden flew to Hong Kong in May 2013, and contacted media outlets including the *Guardian*, the *Washington Post*, and Hong Kong local press *South China Morning Post*. On June 7th, Snowden's story went public. Before Snowden left Hong Kong for Russia on June 23rd, Snowden leaked more and more documents that the U.S. government had the least interest of seeing in print. The world got to know that the U.S. government not only collected phone calls and online records of its citizens, but also intercepted foreign embassies and hacked the backbone networks in Hong Kong and mainland China. Public opinions on the incident were divided. In the United States, the White House felt "extremely disappointed" (Associated Press 2013b), but a petition on www.Whitehouse.gov had attracted more than 100,000 signatures to support Snowden, who, as the petition put it, was a "national hero" (Associated Press 2013a).

How do legacy news frame whistle-blowers? According to Wahl-Jorgensen and Hunt (2012: 399–407), legacy news in the United Kingdom "mostly cover whistle-blowers in neutral or positive ways," since "within the UK national newspaper cultures, blowing the whistle on corruption and malpractice is constructed as a brave act in the public interest," consistent with British's supportive public opinion on whistle-blowers. In the United States, Gallup polls found 53 percent Americans disapproved of the government surveillance programs (Newport 2013), while legacy news seemed to be taking an opposite direction. According to Grey (2013), "the American media has lined up

squarely behind the Obama administration, the NSA and the military in defense of the massive spying operations exposed by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden.”

Why do the legacy news in the United States take the position against public opinion and in chorus with the Governments? In fact, as Zhang (2013) recalled Daniel Ellsberg’s releasing of the Pentagon Papers to *New York Times* in 1971, legacy news praised Ellsberg as a hero ending the Vietnam War. However, as Hewitt and Lucas (2009) observed, the ways that legacy news cover intelligence issues have been shifting. After the September 11 attacks, “national security” or “the War on Terror” became the dominant frame in media coverage of intelligence issues (Hewitt and Lucas 2009: 107). So, it is rational to assume that legacy news in the United States will cover Snowden incident with the frame of “national security” or “the War on Terror,” which portrays Snowden a traitor.

Little research has been done on how social media frame whistle-blowers and the difference between social media and legacy news in covering the same issue, although it has been widely accepted that legacy news and social media are two different institutions in terms of actors, logics, routines, structure, and so on (Bennett and Segerberg 2012; Dijck and Poell 2013; Dutton 2009). To fill the gaps, the present study aims to address the following research question:

Research Question 1: In what ways do frames on social media and legacy news differ in covering the incident of Edward Snowden?

Zhang (2013) has made a good summary on four frames on the incident of Edward Snowden: the frame of employee loyalty, the frame of freedom of speech, the frame of international relations, and the frame of citizen privacy. In the frame of employee loyalty, Edward Snowden is a disloyal employee. As his employer Booz Allen Hamilton (2013) put in its statement: “this action represents a grave violation of the code of conduct and core values of our firm.” In the frame of freedom of speech, Snowden has the freedom to express himself. In the frame of international relations, Snowden turns out to be a traitor who brings disgrace on his home country. In the frame of citizen privacy, Snowden is a hero who sacrifices himself to protect the people all over the world.

As discussed in previous section, the central mechanism of framing process includes two elements: selection and salience. If we regard the above four frames as four networks, the framing devices such as keywords that are involved in each network and the most salient keyword in each network are very likely to be different. Here, I propose two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Regarding the selection process, frames on social media and legacy news differ in selecting framing devices.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Regarding the salience process, frames on social media and legacy news differ in making certain framing devices more salient than other framing devices.

Table 1. Summary of Data Collection.

To Get the Semantic Network	Tool	Sample	Approach
On Twitter	http://hashtagify.me/	1% sample offered by Twitter Streaming API	Snowball sampling
On Legacy News	http://www.sensebot.net/	Samples collected by SenseBot	Snowball sampling

Research Method

Data Collection

How can the researcher build up a semantic network based on the texts that are collected? The general procedure includes three steps: text segmentation, identifying word co-occurrence, and retrieving the semantic network. Text segmentation is the process of cutting passages and sentences into smaller units such as phrases and words. Co-occurrence refers to that two words appear in one sentence. A network is composed of two elements: nodes and links. The nodes in a semantic network are the words yielded from the process of text segmentation. The links indicate the connected two words co-occur in one sentence.

In this study, multiple tools and approaches were employed as reported in Table 1. The semantic network of Snowden incident on Twitter was retrieved from <http://hashtagify.me/> in June 2013. It is a Twitter hashtag search engine. The database of this search engine is based on the 1 percent sample from Twitter Streaming Application Programming Interface (API) (CyBranding 2013). It offers the semantic network for each hashtag as illustrated in Figure 1. In other words, the tool has completed the first two steps in the general procedure as mentioned before. The third step—to retrieve the semantic network—needs to be done manually. In the study, snowball sampling was used to retrieve the semantic network.

The semantic network of the incident of Edward Snowden on legacy news was retrieved from <http://www.sensebot.net/> in June 2013. It is a semantic search engine. The users can choose one from two databases to do the search: SenseBot or Google, and refine the search in news only by ticking “Search news only,” as well as refine the search in English/French/German/Spanish. For example, I searched “Snowden” using the database of SenseBot, ticking “Search news only” and selecting “English” as the language of the query. Then, I got many words that co-occur with “Snowden” in English news reports. Next, I used snowball sampling to map the whole semantic network. I used the words co-occurring with “Snowden” as seeds and searched each of them. Each seed recalled more words. Then I searched the new words one by one to find more words. I evaluated the face validity of the results after each wave. After three waves, the new words were apparently unrelated with Snowden incident, so I stopped. In addition, I used both of the databases of SenseBot and Google to cross-validate the results.

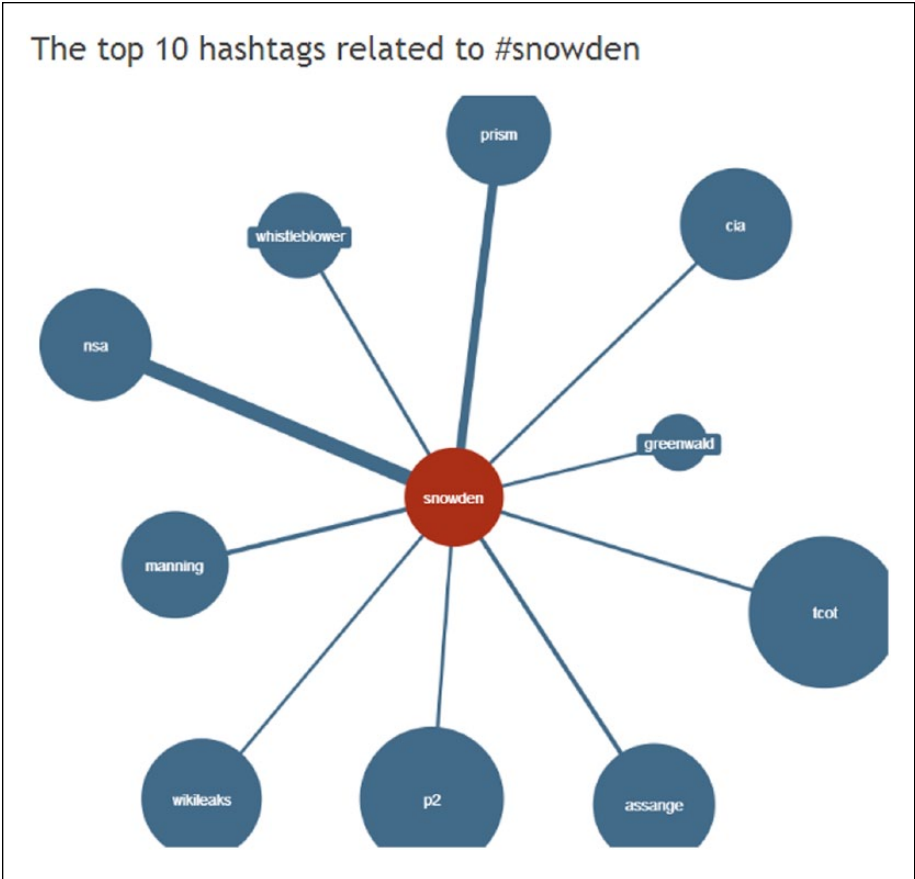


Figure 1. A snapshot of the semantic network of the hashtag “Snowden” generated by <http://hashtagify.me/>.

Measures

Word selection. H1 argues that frames on social media and legacy news differ in selecting framing devices. In the semantic network of Snowden incident on Twitter, hashtags were employed as framing devices. In the semantic network of Snowden incident on legacy news, keywords were employed as framing devices. Word selection measures the extent to which the hashtags that were involved in the semantic network on Twitter overlap with the keywords that were involved in the semantic network on legacy news.

Word salience. H2 argues that frames on social media and legacy news differ in making certain framing devices more salient than other framing devices. In the semantic network, the degree of centrality of a word suggests the importance of the word in the

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of Two Semantic Networks.

Semantic network	Number of unique words	Number of ties among words	Network centralization	Top ten words with largest values of out-degree centrality	Top ten words with largest values of in-degree centrality
On Twitter	81	170	2.14	#snowden #greenwald #nsa #p2 #assange #prism #tcot #wikileaks #manning #irs	#tcot #p2 #teaparty #obama #tlot #gop #ocra #sgp #nsa #wikileaks
On Legacy News	462	699	1.11	NSA Hong Kong Intelligence Committee Terrorists Supporters High School Obama Internet Cheney Washington	Government Internet Facebook House President National Security Congress NSA Terrorists Surveillance

network. In other words, the more central the position is, the more important the word is in the semantic network. In the study, two measures were used to measure word salience: in-degree centrality and out-degree centrality of the framing device.

Results

As reported in Table 2, in the semantic network of Snowden incident on Twitter, there are eighty-one unique hashtags with 170 edges. Based on the top ten words with the largest out-degrees and in-degrees, we can see that when social media users mentioned Edward Snowden on Twitter, they were also talking about other whistle-blowers such as Glenn Greenwald, Julian Assange, and Bradley Manning, as well as the NSA and its PRISM project. Several unexpected words also appear like “#p2,” “#tcot,” and “#irs.” Meanings of more hashtags are listed in Table 3. The semantic network of Snowden incident on legacy news contains 462 unique words and 699 edges as reported in Table 2. As mentioned before, I used both of the databases, SenseBot and Google, to cross-validate the results. It turns out the results yielded from the two databases are quite different in terms of recall and precision. The results from Google

Table 3. Meanings of Selected Hashtags in the Semantic Network of Snowden Incident on Twitter.

Hashtag	Meaning
#tcot	Top conservatives on Twitter—a coalition of conservatives on the Internet.
#inyhbt	Let not your heart be troubled—created by the supporters of Sean Hannity, Fox News Personality, and national Conservative radio talk host.
#gop	Grand Old Party—the U.S. Republican Party.
#sgp	Smart Girl Politics—A Conservative Women’s Movement.
#teaparty	Tax protests held nation-wide against the spending for TARP, stimulus, and big-budget government.
#ocra	Organized Conservative Resistance Alliance.
#p2	Progressives On Twitter.
#irs	Internal Revenue Service.
#nsa	NSA.
#prsim	NSA’s PRISM program.
#snowden	Edward Snowden.
#assange	Julian Paul Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks.
#wikileaks	It is a website which publishes secret information, news leaks, and classified media from anonymous sources.
#manning	Bradley Edward Manning.

Note. TARP = Troubled Asset Relief Program; NSA = National Security Agency.

contained more noise like “album,” since there is a rock band called “Snowden.” SenseBot recalled more words and had better precision. So I used the semantic network based on the database of SenseBot to do following comparison with that on Twitter. Google Fusion Tables was used to visualize the networks (see Figure 2).

Hypothesis 1 argues that frames on social media and legacy news differ in selecting framing devices. In the semantic network of Snowden incident on Twitter, hashtags were employed as framing devices. In the semantic network of Snowden incident on legacy news, keywords were employed as framing devices. Word selection measures the extent to which the hashtags that were involved in the semantic network on Twitter overlap with the keywords that were involved in the semantic network on legacy news. It is supported. There are only fifteen words that were found both in the two semantic networks. The fifteen words include Benghazi, CIA, Facebook, Google, GOP, Internet, IRS, NSA, Obama, security, Snowden, spy, surveillance, tax, and whistle-blower. It turns out that frames on social media and legacy news select different framing devices in covering the Snowden incident.

Hypothesis 2 argues that frames on social media and legacy news differ in making certain framing devices more salient than other framing devices. It is supported. As reported in Table 2, the top ten words in the two frames that have the largest in-degrees or out-degrees are quite different. The most important words on Twitter are individual

names (e.g., #snowden, #greenwald, #manning, etc.) and partisan entities (e.g., #tcot, #p2, #teaparty, etc.). The most important words on legacy news are geographical locations (e.g., Hong Kong, Washington, etc.) and governmental entities (e.g., government, NSA, house, etc.).

Conclusion and Discussion

The study started with Kirn's (2013) interesting and insightful assumption that Edward Snowden would be a hero on Twitter but a traitor on newspapers or magazines, since social media and legacy news are distinct institutions with different logics. The study has proved that social media and legacy news have built different frames on Snowden incident. Frames on social media and legacy news differ in two ways: word selection and word salience. Word selection refers to the different framing devices that are selected in the two networks. Word salience refers to that frames on social media and legacy news differ in making certain framing devices more salient than other framing devices.

Three clusters of hashtags can be identified by visualization in Figure 2. The first cluster is the whistle-blower frame, including hashtags such as "#assange," "#wikileaks," "#greenwald," "#manning," and so on. The second cluster is the bipartisan frame. This cluster is led by two flagship hashtags: "#p2" and "#tcot." The former is the symbol of "Progressives on Twitter," and the latter represents the "Top Conservatives on Twitter." The two flagships associated with issues such as Tea Party movement and supporting organizations such as "#sgp" (Smart Girl Politics). The third cluster is the privacy frame. It includes major hashtags such as "#nsa," "#prism," and "#privacy."

To get a clearer view, twenty most important words were kept in each network (see Figure 3). We can still see the three frames of whistle-blower, bipartisan, and privacy on Twitter. On legacy news, two specific frames can be identified: The national security frame, which includes words like "national security" and "terrorists," and the international relations frame, which includes words like "Washington," "China," and "Hong Kong." It is noteworthy that "High School" is also a keyword on legacy news. In fact, Edward Snowden himself did criticize the U.S. media coverage that "the mainstream media now seems far more interested in what I said when I was 17 or what my girlfriend looks like rather than, say, the largest program of suspicionless surveillance in human history" (Mirkinson 2013). This gives more credits to the validity of this approach.

As a conclusion, social media users associated Snowden's case with other whistle-blowers, bipartisan issues, and personal privacy issues. The three frames are independent but loosely connected. On legacy news, which appeared a more unified discourse, professional journalists connected the Snowden incident with issues of national security and international relations. In addition, all the three frames on Twitter are in favor of Snowden, while the frames in news reports make him a traitor.

Next, I would like to discuss the challenges and opportunities of framing analysis in the context of social media. As discussed in previous section, the conceptualization of frames, the mechanism of framing process, and the operationalization of

framing analysis need to be reconsidered in the context of social media. Regarding the conceptualization of frames, the challenge is that whether the frames in social media are media frames or individual frames in nature, given the fact that social media are a mixture of institutional accounts and individual accounts? Regarding the mechanism of framing process, the challenge is how to measure the process of selection and salience, given the massive amounts of contents in social media, which are beyond the processing capacity of traditional content analysis? Regarding the operationalization of framing analysis, the challenges are twofold. First, the framing devices identified in legacy news are either absent or transformed in social media. The second challenge is the scholar-centered approach that involves subjective frame identification, given that fact that tweets are usually too short to carry sufficient contextual cues.

As responses to the above challenges, the contributions of the current study are threefold. First, regarding the conceptualization, the study used a network perspective to conceptualize social media frames. Social media frames are conceptualized as the networks that are composed of various framing devices, such as hashtags, keywords, and so on. Compared with existing dualistic conceptualization, the new conceptualization is innovative in two aspects. On one hand, it involves a bottom-up perspective, in contrast with the top-down perspective in existing dualistic conceptualization of media/individual frame. On the other hand, it sheds light on the connections between different framing devices, which has been overlooked in extant studies. Second, regarding the mechanism of framing process, the study proposed two new measures based on the network perspective. Word selection refers to the framing devices that are included in a network, and word salience is measured by the degrees of centrality of each framing device in the network. Third, regarding the operationalization, hashtags were introduced in the study as a new framing device on social media. The study also proposed a bottom-up approach as the alternative to the scholar-centered approach to minimize the risk of over-interpretation.

Meanwhile, new opportunities for framing analysis in the context of social media exist. First, future study is suggested to look into social media routines. Routines of legacy news refer to the journalist-centered daily practices that have been routinized and institutionalized as what Gans (1979) called “organizational routines.” In contrast, I define social media routines as the user-centered daily practices that have been routinized and institutionalized by technological features of social media and the collective influence or the “mutual shaping” (Dijck and Poell 2013: 8) among social media users. Based on the comparison of the two semantic networks, I came up with the following three fundamental social media routines, which call for further empirical tests. First, social media are user-centered rather than journalist-centered. Thus, social media produce personalized contents unlike news products, which are constrained by professional journalistic standards and code of ethics. Personalized contents do not necessarily seek reliable sources, news neutralism, and so on. Second, social media tend to interpret the event in micro-level frames, while legacy news prefer macro-level frames. Third, social media create a loosely connected semantic network with several frames, while legacy news make a unified entity with strongly connected interpretive packages.

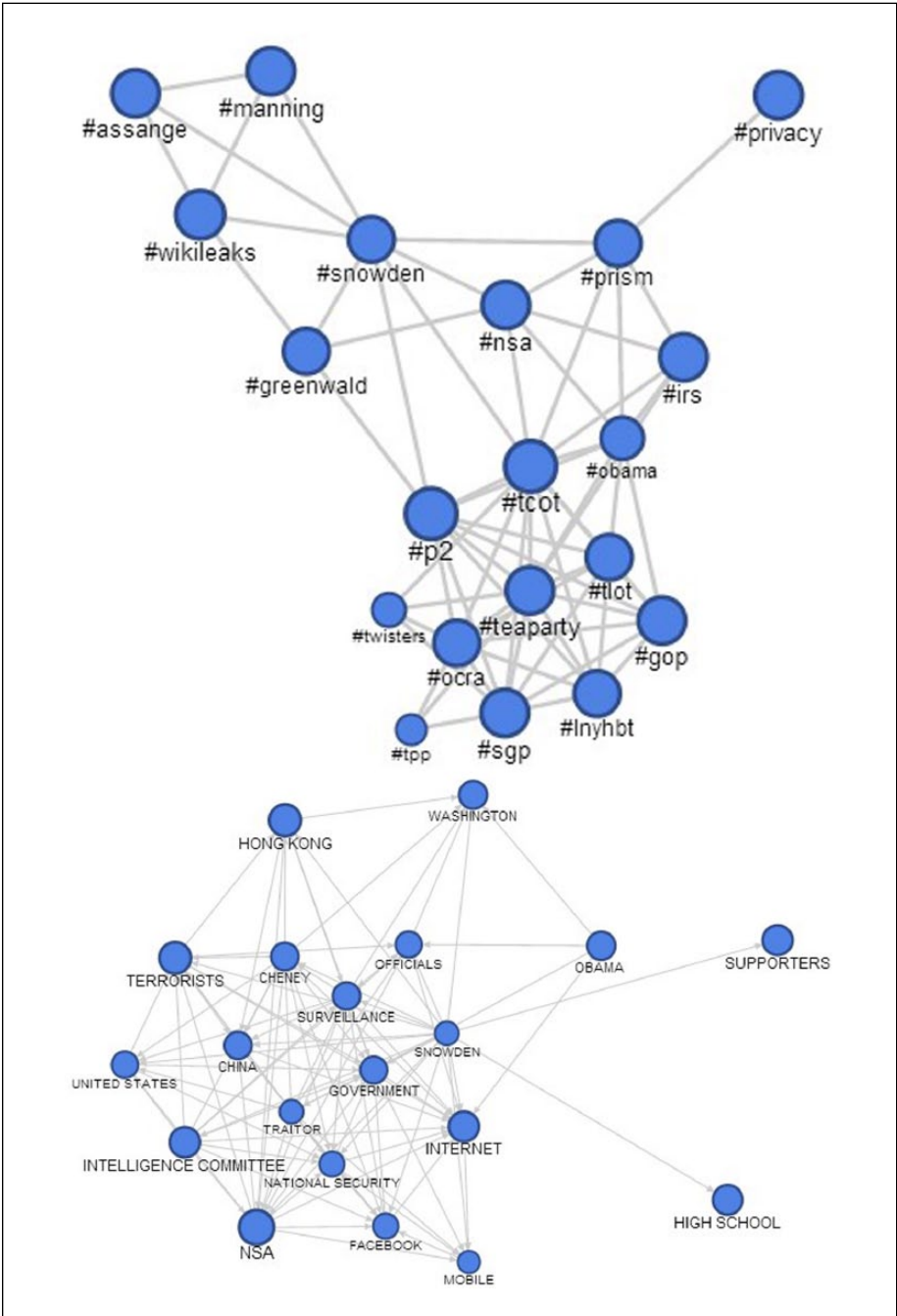


Figure 3. The simplified semantic networks of Snowden incident on social media (above) and legacy news (below).

The second direction for future exploration is social media manipulation. In China, the gray economy of manipulating public opinion on social media is in full swing (Wu et al. 2013). In fact, the Chinese government now plays a vital role in breeding such manipulation. Take the “50 Cent Party” in China as an example. As the name implies, each member of the party will get 50 cents for each comment that is in favor of the government. A line in the latest WikiLeaks movie *The Fifth Estate* goes, “Give a man a mask, and he will tell you the truth.” However, the anonymity of the Internet is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it facilitates whistle-blowing. On the other hand, it makes the attempts to identify such manipulations unfeasible, as it is almost impossible to tell a regular comment from a paid comment. However, I doubt the government has the ability to bribe millions of Internet users. But we should be aware that there are entities like the “50 Cent Party” interfering the online opinion climate and whose impact is probably grossly underestimated.

The third direction is semantic network analysis as a new approach of framing analysis. The foremost merit of semantic network analysis is it lets frames emerge by themselves. If the task of content analysis is to confirm the “known knowns” (Rumsfeld 2002), the greatest strength of semantic network analysis is to piece together the “unknown unknowns” (Rumsfeld 2002), and the anomalies, which are exactly the prime agenda-building activities of intelligence agencies. When doing content analysis, we come up with several frames and then fit the texts in. However, we are at risk of overlooking some elementary mechanisms, over-manipulation, and even misinterpretation. Compared with content analysis, of which the research objects are largely the institutionalized and relatively small amount of media contents, semantic network analysis seems more suitable for dealing with large-scale personalized contents on the Internet. The sizes of the digital texts are usually far beyond the processing capacity of content analysis, but an easy task for semantic analysis with the assistance of computers. In addition, it offers an unobtrusive alternative other than interviews or experiments to detect individual frames.

However, I have no intention to encourage uncritical acceptance of the new approach, given the existence of some problems. Two very likely challenges are that whether the dataset of SenseBot is big enough to cover all the news reports, and whether the one percent tweets is a representative sample of Twitter? In fact, this is a problem that all the Big Data researchers have to face. Big Data enthusiasts may argue that it is not necessary to do sampling as we are equipped to analyze the whole population. However, the fact is the big-data-owners will not share the “whole population” with researchers but a sample. Take Twitter for instance. The 1 percent sample offered by Twitter Streaming API is the only publicly available dataset. The 100 percent public tweets offered by Twitter Firehose are not available for most of researchers. Morstatter et al. (2013) compared the two datasets and found the 1 percent sample covers top hashtags for a large sample size well, which supports the present study, but most results “depend strongly on the coverage and the type of analysis that the researcher wishes to perform.” Future studies are encouraged to perform validity tests of this approach and explore more utilities.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The research was supported by the Department of Media and Communication, City University of Hong Kong.

Note

1. Full lists of words in the two semantic networks are available upon request.

References

- ABC News*. 2010. "The Conversation: Understanding 'Hashtag Politics.'" <http://abcnews.go.com/WN/tcot-drives-tea-party-republican-message-social-media/story?id=11682222>.
- Associated Press. 2013a. "Snowden 'National Hero' Petition On White House Website Passes 100,000 Signatures."
- Associated Press. 2013b. "U.S. 'Extremely Disappointed' after Russia Defies American Wishes, Grants Asylum to NSA Leaker Edward Snowden: White House." <http://news.nationalpost.com/2013/08/01/edward-snowden-has-left-moscow-airport-and-entered-russia-lawyer/>.
- Bennett, W. Lance, and Alexandra Segerberg. 2012. "The Logic of Connective Action." *Information, Communication & Society* 15 (5): 739–68. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661.
- Booz Allen Hamilton. 2013. "Booz Allen Statement on Reports of Leaked Information." *boozallen.com*. <http://www.boozallen.com/media-center/press-releases/48399320/statement-reports-leaked-information-060913>.
- Bruns, Axel, Jean Burgess, Kate Crawford, and Frances Shaw. 2012. # *Oldfloods And@ QPSMedia: Crisis Communication on Twitter in the 2011 South East Queensland Floods*. <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/48241>.
- CyBranding. 2013. "Branding Savvy Social Media Analytics." *cybranding.com*. <http://www.cybranding.com/home/about>.
- Daly, Liza. 2009. "How Big Is the Average ePub Book?" <http://blog.threepress.org/2009/11/16/how-big-is-the-average-epub-book/>.
- Dijck, José Van, and Thomas Poell. 2013. "Understanding Social Media Logic." *Media and Communication* 1 (1): 2–14. <http://www.librelloph.com/ojs/index.php/mediaandcommunication/article/view/37>.
- Doerfel, Marya L., and George A. Barnett. 1999. "A Semantic Network Analysis of the International Communication Association." *Human Communication Research* 25 (4): 589–603. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.1999.tb00463.x.
- Dorning, Mike, and Chris Strohm. 2013. "Obama Defends Data Spying as Modest Privacy Encroachment." *Bloomberg*. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-06-07/obama-defends-data-spying-as-modest-privacy-encroachment.html>.
- Dutton, William H. 2009. "The Fifth Estate Emerging through the Network of Networks." *Prometheus* 27 (1): 1–15. doi:10.1080/08109020802657453.
- Entman, Robert M. 1993. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43 (4): 51–58. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x.

- Gamson, William A, and Andre Modigliani. 1989. "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach." *American Journal of Sociology* 95 (1): 1–37.
- Gans, Herbert J. 1979. *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Goffman, Erving. 1974. *Frame Analysis*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Grey, Barry. 2013. "The US Media and the Case of Edward Snowden." <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2013/07/02/snow-j02.html?view=mobilearticle>.
- Hemphill, Libby, Aron Culotta, and Matthew Heston. 2013. "Framing in Social Media: How the US Congress Uses Twitter Hashtags to Frame Political Issues." http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2317335.
- Herridge, Catherine. 2013. "NSA Data Center Front and Center in Debate over Liberty, Security and Privacy." *FoxNews.com*. <http://www.foxnews.com/tech/2013/04/12/nsa-data-center-front-and-center-in-debate-over-liberty-security-and-privacy/>.
- Hewitt, Steve, and Scott Lucas. 2009. "All the Secrets That Are Fit to Print? The Media and US Intelligence Agencies Before and After 9/11." In *Spinning Intelligence: Why Intelligence Needs the Media, Why the Media Needs Intelligence*, ed. R. Dover and M. S. Goodman, 103–16. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Kinder, Donald R., and Lynn M. Sanders. 1990. "Mimicking Political Debate with Survey Questions: The Case of White Opinion on Affirmative Action for Blacks." *Social Cognition* 8 (1): 73–103.
- Kim, Walter. 2013. "Why Edward Snowden Wins on Twitter." *The New Republic*. <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/113457/why-edward-snowden-wins-twitter>.
- Koenig, Thomas. 2004. "Routinizing Frame Analysis through the Use of CAQDAS." Paper presented at the *RC33 Conference*, Amsterdam.
- Meraz, Sharon, and Zizi Papacharissi. 2013. "Networked Gatekeeping and Networked Framing on #Egypt." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 18 (2): 138–66. <http://hij.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/1940161212474472>.
- Mirkinson, Jack. 2013. "Edward Snowden Criticizes Media's Coverage of Him." *The Huffington Post*. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/17/edward-snowden-media-coverage_n_3454892.html.
- Morstatter, Fred, Jürgen Pfeffer, Huan Liu, and Kathleen M. Carley. 2013. "Is the Sample Good Enough? Comparing Data from Twitter's Streaming Api with Twitter's Firehose." *CoRR*. <http://arxiv.org/abs/1306.5204>.
- Newport, Frank. 2013. *Americans Disapprove of Government Surveillance Programs*. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/163043/americans-disapprove-government-surveillance-programs.aspx>.
- Pan, Zhongdang, and Gerald M. Kosicki. 1993. "Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse." *Political Communication* 10(1): 55–75. doi:10.1080/10584609.1993.9962963.
- Papacharissi, Zizi, and Maria de Fatima Oliveira. 2012. "Affective News and Networked Publics: The Rhythms of News Storytelling on #Egypt." *Journal of Communication* 62 (2): 266–82. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01630.x.
- Parmelee, John H. 2013. "The Agenda-Building Function of Political Tweets." *New Media & Society* (May): 1–17. <http://nms.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/1461444813487955>.
- Piaget, Jean. 1929. *The Child's Conception of the World*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Rambukkana, Nathan. 2013. "CFP-Hashtag Publics: The Power and Politics of Networked Discourse Communities." http://complexsingularities.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Hashtag-Publics_CFP_new-deadline.pdf.

- Rumsfeld, Donald H. 2002. "DoD News Briefing—Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen. Myers." *defense.gov*. <http://www.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=2636>.
- Scheufele, D. A. 1999. "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects." *Journal of Communication* 49(1): 103–22. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1999.tb02784.x.
- Semetko, H. A., and P. M. Valkenburg. 2000. "Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News." *Journal of Communication* 50 (2): 93–109. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2000.tb02843.x.
- Sukosd, Miklos, and King-wa Fu. 2013. "How Chinese Netizens Discuss Environmental Conflicts? Framing and Functions on Sina Weibo." <http://com.cityu.edu.hk/COMDOC/Seminar/paper/2013/seminarPaper-2013-09-16-1.pdf>.
- Tankard, J. W. 2001. "The Empirical Approach to the Study of Media Framing." In *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*, ed. S. D. Reese, O. H. Gandy, and A. E. Grant, 95–106. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Twitter. 2014. "Using Hashtags on Twitter." <https://support.twitter.com/entries/49309#>.
- Wahl-Jorgensen, Karin, and Joanne Hunt. 2012. "Journalism, Accountability and the Possibilities for Structural Critique: A Case Study of Coverage of Whistleblowing." *Journalism* 13 (4): 399–416.
- Walsh, Kenneth T. 2013. "Ron Paul: Edward Snowden a Hero." *U.S. News*. <http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/ken-walshs-washington/2013/06/11/ron-paul-edward-snowden-a-hero>.
- Wu, Mei, Peter Jakobowicz, and Chengyu Cao. 2013. *Internet Mercenaries and Viral Marketing: The Case of Chinese Social Media*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
- Wu, Shaomei, Jake M. Hofman, Winter A. Mason, and Duncan J. Watts. 2011. "Who Says What to Whom on Twitter." *Proceedings of the 20th international conference on World wide web - WWW '11*: 705. doi:10.1145/1963405.1963504.
- Yuan, Elaine J., Miao Feng, and James A. Danowski. 2013. "'Privacy' in Semantic Networks on Chinese Social Media: The Case of Sina Weibo." *Journal of Communication* 63:1011–31.
- Zhang, Xinzhi. 2013. "Four Interpretive Frames to Make Sense of Snowden Incident." *Media Digest* 07:4–5. http://rthk.hk/mediadigest/20130715_76_123002.html. [In Chinese].

Author Biography

Jie Qin got her Ph.D. from the Department of Media and Communication, City University of Hong Kong, and now is the Professor of Communications at the Hong Kong campus of Savannah College of Art and Design. Her research interests are in areas of social media, nonprofit organizations' use of ICTs, and social network analysis.

Secrets, Lies, and Journalist-Spies: The Contemporary Moral Dilemma for Bulgarian Media Professionals

The International Journal of Press/Politics
2015, Vol. 20(2) 185–203
© The Author(s) 2014
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1940161214555554
ijpp.sagepub.com



Lada Trifonova Price¹

Abstract

The subject of this article is the issue of journalist-spies in the Bulgarian media before and after the fall of communism in 1989. The focus is on the perceptions of Bulgarian journalists on the role alleged secret service collaborators played, and continue to play, in the postcommunist society and media landscape. Role perceptions are explored through semi-structured interviews with practicing journalists from the capital city, Sofia. The findings suggest that Bulgarian journalists continue to be concerned with, and affected by, the influence of former communist spies on the Bulgarian media, a controversy that has largely been ignored by media scholars.

Keywords

journalists, informers, spies, media, lustration, postcommunism

Introduction

The past, and its influence on the future, has intrigued scholars from the start of the transition to democracy in the former communist countries of Eastern Europe. Questions remain about the complex and hybrid nature of the ongoing transformation process and the factors that affect it. One of those factors, largely overlooked by researchers, is the impact of those “in positions of trust” (Horne 2009)—such as journalists, editors, and media owners with suspected links to the former communist secret service—on the development of the postcommunist Bulgarian media system. Welsh (1996: 413) argues that coming to terms with the legacy of communism is a

¹University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

Corresponding Author:

Lada Trifonova Price, Department of Journalism Studies, University of Sheffield, 9 Mappin Street, Sheffield S1 4DT, UK.

Email: lada.price@sheffield.ac.uk

complicated process because it involves figuring out the effect of the communist past on current political culture. The process includes pursuing historical justice while evaluating the problematic role that the former *nomenklatura*¹ and collaborators with the secret services are alleged to play in the postcommunist political, economic, and media landscape. This paper will address the following question: how do journalists perceive the role informers have played during and after communism? However, the focus is not so much on what journalist-spies did in the past but on whether these actions have influenced their professional behavior since the beginning of democratization in Bulgaria.

A wealth of comparative literature exists on transitional justice in postcommunist states. Several scholars have proposed frameworks to explain why and how countries in the region have adopted or failed to adopt effective justice measures (e.g., Horne 2009; Moran 1994; Welsh 1996). Yet, with very few exceptions, their focus is mainly on dealing with the communist past in relation to political and public life, largely excluding the media sphere. However, this lack of scholarly attention does not mean that the issue of the former informers/spies in the media is not relevant or important. This article will aim to show that in many ways the paradox of the journalist-spy has become even more salient and urgent to understand since the end of communism in 1989. It will demonstrate that despite two decades of transition, interest in the topic has not diminished. On the contrary, journalists express a strong desire to know more about the legacy of the past in relation to the present media sphere in Bulgaria.

To address the question this article will introduce the context of informers in the Bulgarian media pre- and postcommunism. It provides an insight into the broader process of “decommunization” taking place across countries in Eastern Europe by examining society’s treatment of secret services collaborators. It then focuses on the significance of the introduction and implementation of transitional justice measures in the former Soviet bloc devised to deal with former Communist party functionaries and agents. The article will then outline the methodology of the research, including the design, sample, and method of collecting the data. Finally, it will present and discuss findings in regard to journalist-informers in the employ of the former communist secret service.

“Decommunization” and Transitional Justice in Bulgaria

The process of dismantling the structures of the previous regime and replacing them with new democratic institutions is known in Eastern Europe as decommunization. This process in Bulgaria began shortly after the end of the regime and included two types of procedures: initially, criminal proceedings such as the trial and conviction of high-level communists such as the former party leader Todor Zhivkov and, later, screening procedures conducted on former collaborators with the security apparatus, eventually leading to the declassification of secret files for public inspection. “Decommunization” in most countries has included the adoption of various forms of transitional justice, with Czechoslovakia ratifying a first-of-its-kind lustration law in 1991.

Welsh (1996) notes the existence of two opposing scholarly views on the subject of transitional justice: the first strongly in favor of legislative measures such as lustration

to address injustices and conduct a comprehensive investigation of the past and the second favoring a more lenient approach of reconciliation, with an emphasis on tolerance as a foundation of democratic society. Scholars generally define lustration as the legislative process consisting of excluding, vetting, or purging former communist party leaders (or senior members of the *nomenklatura*) and agents with links to the secret services or state security from positions of state authority (David 2004; Horne 2009; Letki 2002; Szczerbiak 2002; Welsh 1996; Williams 2003; Williams et al. 2005; Zake 2010). Therefore, an important phase of lustration has been establishing meaningful disqualification procedures, namely, legal measures to prevent discredited actors from the old party elite, and members of the former security apparatus, from taking key public and administrative positions in newly formed democratic institutions. However, Horne (2009) states that the legitimacy and legality of lustration have been severely contested, not only in the region but also internationally. Among the common issues that have fueled controversy, according to Horne (2009: 345), are “mismanagement of secret police files, salacious accusations about political leaders, illegally publicized personal information contained in the files, questions about the veracity of information, and the proliferation of rumors about wide-scale bureaucratic vetting in many countries in CEE.” She claims that all of these factors have stoked fears in most countries across Eastern Europe that lustration was a new form of purging, or witch-hunt, disguised as transitional justice, that could ultimately harm democratization. Those concerns have been especially pronounced in Bulgaria, which is described by scholars as “insufficiently” or “non-lustrated” (Letki 2002: 548) in comparison with countries such as former Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

In 1992, shortly after the end of communism, the Bulgarian parliament passed a screening law—the Panev law, named after its author. The law banned former agents and senior party members from taking leadership posts in academia. However, as Welsh (1996) and Letki (2002) note, before the law was annulled for being unconstitutional in 1995, it was heavily criticized by the Council of Europe and human rights organizations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for its approach. ILO was opposed to the treatment of individuals based on their past associations per se, with insufficient regard to mitigating circumstances and their present activity (Williams et al. 2005). The consequent 1998 Bulgarian lustration act (the Administration Act) was annulled by the Bulgarian Constitutional Court and was again evaluated as largely “unsuccessful” by scholars (e.g., Letki 2002; Sadurski 2005). By then there had been only twenty-five disclosures of the identities of former agents, none of which resulted in major disqualifications of actors, either in politics or in other public positions of trust such as those in the media. According to some scholars, the reason for this lies partly in the unreliable files of the secret services.

Untrustworthy Files

Moran (1994: 108) points out that, like its communist peers in Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic (GRD), the Bulgarian Security Service kept comprehensive files on all informers. However, several authors have argued that the full

extent and specific nature of the collaboration with the former state security apparatus will never be established due to missing or destroyed files in most dossiers. Welsh (1996: 417) states, "It is well established that many of the files were destroyed after the fall of communism." Bulgaria was no exception; a great deal of the hard evidence had been removed or purposefully destroyed (Letki 2002).

What are the implications of unreliable files? The literature pinpoints three major issues arising from untrustworthiness of the files that are common in all postcommunist countries.

First, scholars note widespread fears of manipulation. Welsh (1996: 417), for example, states that in Romania the files of the security police were used against the democratic opposition. Similarly Hall (1996) notes major concerns in Romania, where those with access and not the "revolutionaries" were suspected of removing files from the Secret Service (*Securitate*). They were suspected of making copies of files that, it was commonly assumed, were used when needed. Accusations like this were plentiful in neighboring Bulgaria.

Second, there have been concerns of possible blackmail of public figures and well-timed media leaks. Williams et al. (2005: 28) observe that because so many documents were destroyed or removed in late 1989 in all former communist countries, there was no way of being certain who might use them to learn the identities of police collaborators. Therefore those in favor of lustration argued that individuals with past associations with the security services who later held important public offices were open to blackmail. Welsh (1996: 423) recognized this as a significant problem. In Hungary, for example, lustration was not so much "an issue of historical justice but of present accountability and transparency—of not allowing people subject to blackmail to be given power." The issue of potential blackmail applies not only to politicians but also to those working in positions of trust. Journalists who had been the subject of dossiers could be manipulated and were assumed vulnerable to blackmail by the former reorganized secret services.

Third, there has been ambiguous legal and ethical interpretation of the information in the remaining secret service files. An important question has intrigued scholars: just because names appear in the informers' rolls, does it mean that people were automatically guilty of spying? According to Letki (2002: 542), lustration presents a problem in "that screening is based on evidence prepared by the secret service: the files are simultaneously 'over-inclusive', as not all people listed as agents or informers really collaborated, and 'under-inclusive', as the major agents were probably not listed." The difficulty in identifying specific acts that journalist-spies had committed so far back in time makes the job of distinguishing between perpetrators and victims all but impossible. In addition, many of the journalists from the region who were listed as informers have strongly disputed their involvement with the secret services and claim that they been subjected to politically motivated witch-hunts aimed solely at destroying their credibility and ultimately their careers. To better understand the moral and ethical dilemmas related to transitional justice for those in positions of public trust, it is important to examine the role that media employees played during communism in Bulgaria.

Journalist-Spies' Role in the Media before 1989

A number of authors have observed that the communist regime was harsh and allowed little scope for dissent (Hall 1996; Williams et al. 2005) or involvement from the public in political decision making. Ognianova (1993) notes that Bulgaria was one the USSR's most loyal allies. This loyalty often saw policies from the Soviet Union directly transplanted in Bulgaria, including directives about the role of the media as an ideological propaganda tool in the hands of the communist party. Ognianova (1993: 158) also states that most journalists in Bulgaria were members of the communist party. During communism, journalism was perceived as highly ideological work that actively propagated the ideas and values of the party; most journalists were trained to follow this method during their education in the only existing journalism department at Sofia University. Hall (1996) argues that in Romania the political sensitivity of a media position and the relatively small number of people who were employed in the media meant that many media employees were probably among the *Securitate's* large network of seven hundred thousand collaborators. Hall also claims that due to the highly totalitarian character of Ceausescu's regime, the very act of working in the media apparatus in that era required complicit behavior. According to Zake (2010: 407) it is well known that during communism the intellectual class (*intelligentsia*), which included journalists, was a vital instrument of political propaganda and therefore it was deeply involved in the workings of the communist system. This class played a valuable role in the maintenance of the previous regime.

Ognianova (1993: 159) asserts that there were "fringe benefits" from becoming a collaborator or spy, which included material rewards and promotions to top positions. This was especially visible in the group of selected individuals who had proven their wholehearted commitment to the party by attaining the rank of foreign correspondent. Their duties included practicing ideological journalism as well as gathering intelligence for the state and the party. In other words, it was well known that if you were a foreign correspondent, you were also a spy. This position, according to Ognianova, involved a moral dilemma for those journalists: if you accepted, you would potentially go on to have a successful and influential career, but if you refused, your chances of advancing or even staying in the profession were minimal to none. She argues that they had several choices in this situation: accept and live with their double role as a journalist and spy or choose to quit the profession. Among the choices available to those journalists, Ognianova includes seeking political asylum in the West once there, repenting for their mistakes, or rebelling against the system and going to prison while retaining their moral authority. However, it can be argued that those were hardly "choices" given the severity of punishment or persecution the secret services could bestow on the individuals involved or on their families. The tragic fate of the Bulgarian dissident and BBC journalist Georgi Markov, who was assassinated by the Bulgarian secret services in London, illustrates this point (see Hristov 2006). The severity of repression by the communist regime is still a subject of intense debate in Bulgaria. Nevertheless, even if we assume that Ognianova is

right that all journalist-spies were morally compromised, this still leaves open the question of the role of former informers after communism.

Spies and Informers after 1989

The ethical right of the journalists who were exposed as spies (or officially “agents,” “collaborators,” and “informers”) to continue to work in the media after 1989 is highly controversial due to the nature of the allegations against them. On one hand, they are asserted to have been instrumental throughout communism in serving the party. On the other, their special and privileged status allowed most to make a smooth transition to the new postcommunist media landscape. Ibroscheva (2012: 12) states that it was their unique position as former spies that gave them “access to media resources, such as printing facilities, publication houses, broadcasting technology, as well as access to capital and financial means unavailable to ordinary Bulgarian citizens.” Such claims are strongly related to the idea about the influence of “bad” social capital (Letki 2002: 540) inherited from communism. By “bad” social capital, Letki implies clandestine networks of former members of the *nomenklatura* whose main goal was not only to preserve their high social status but also their material wealth gained under the old regime. The Czech Republic, Romania, and Poland are given as an example of the *nomenklatura* dominating the newly emerging free market. Horne (2009: 349) states that economically, informal networks of former secret police officials continue to dominate economic activities. In Romania, for instance, the biggest factor predicting membership in the postcommunist business elite was past membership in the communist elite. Bulgaria is another illustration of the destructive influence of *nomenklatura* social capital: “the lack of a ban on *nomenklatura* members and secret service collaborators holding positions in the banking system resulted in its breakdown” (Letki 2002: 540). Williams et al. (2005: 28) report fears resonating throughout Eastern Europe of the covert reactivation of old *nomenklatura* networks after communism with the goal of profiteering from the privatization of former state-owned enterprises. David (2004: 789) asserts that it was precisely the lack of lustration laws, or their poor application, that allowed people who were closely connected to the old regime to continue exercising influence upon new democracies and to capitalize on their social capital. Horne (2009: 358) summarizes this view well: there is a collective sense that the past actively affects the political and economic reality of the present. Scholars have argued that this point is entirely applicable to the Bulgarian media landscape. According to Ibroscheva (2012: 12), the still secret past of the leading political, business, cultural, and media elite in Bulgaria places serious doubt not only over their credibility as agents of democratic change but consequently over their “ability to advocate and promote a fundamental shift away from the corrupt practices of the communist elite into a new, untainted and therefore, entirely trustworthy leadership of democratic civil society.” Moreover, as the perceptions of journalists highlight, it brings to the fore the role they are alleged to play postcommunism as a powerful and valued tool in the hands of the postcommunist political and business elites to fulfill personal agendas.

Journalists' Dossiers

The “insufficient” lustration process (Letki 2002) and the absence of a united approach to dealing with its communist legacy contributed to a twenty-year gap in allowing the public access to what remained of the previously secret archives of the former state security and the Bulgarian People’s Army. In 2008, the Dossier Commission² in the Bulgarian parliament released the files of journalists who held, or had held, senior and managerial positions in the former state broadcasters (Bulgarian National Radio [BNR] and Bulgarian National Television [BNT]) and the national news agency, Bulgarian Telegraph Agency (BTA), since 1989. Of the 484 journalists born before 1973 whose files were checked by the Committee for Dossiers, 37 were exposed as communist-era secret agents. The press was quick to point out that the list of dossiers was incomplete, with a noticeable gap for the period from 1989 to 2006 (Antonova 2009). The partial information was due to a highly controversial amendment to the Dossier Act passed by the parliament in 2006, which allowed the records of those journalists who worked in the media prior to 2006 to remain classified. In 2009, the Dossier Commission exposed a further 101 journalists from 273 private media outlets as communist-era secret agents. Those journalists were still working in the media after 2006 (Antonova 2009).

The lists of names on the informers’ rolls, published along with informer pseudonyms, showed that many journalists still held or had held prominent positions in the media. Prominent examples were the former editor-in-chief of *24 Chasa*, Valeri Naydenov (under the secret pseudonym “Sasho”) and Tosho Toshev, the former editor-in-chief of *Trud* (under the agent name “Bor”). Crucially, they were in charge of the two highest circulated and most popular daily newspapers in the country for several years. Famous television (TV) presenters, such as Kevork Kevorkian, Ivan Garelov, and Dmitri Ivanov, who had been much liked and respected by audiences prior to and post 1989, were revealed by the Dossier Commission as high-ranking agents.

Despite disputes over their accuracy, what the files and information released to the public clearly demonstrated was that most journalists who were listed as spies and were known for their privileged status in the previous regime, far from sinking into oblivion or leaving the profession, had developed thriving careers postcommunism. They were often in leadership positions as editors and deputy editors-in-chief, program presenters and commentators, and TV executives in charge of a much younger generation of journalists.³ In the former state broadcasters, for example, the best known TV personalities in Bulgaria, including Kevork Kevorkian and Ivan Garelov, continued to draw large audiences after 1989. TV programs such as *Panorama*, presented by Garelov, became the main platforms for political TV debate in the early years of transformation. As Ibroscheva (2012: 20) notes, the long list of secret agents “reads like a ‘who’s who’ of the Bulgarian media market today.”

Since the end of communism, the role of media institutions across the former Soviet bloc has become increasingly important in the process of democratization while journalists have seen a dramatic change in their status, rights, and responsibilities. The status of the media and media professionals perceived by scholars (see Jebril et al.

Table 1. Sample of Interviewees.

Broadcasting		Press			Web/Online	Freelance/Former/ Semi-retired
Radio	TV	Dailies	Weeklies	Magazine		
6	6	6	5	1	2	5 ^a

Note. TV = television.

a. One interviewee was in a managerial position (media group) but is a former senior journalist at Bulgarian National TV (BNT), as well as working freelance.

2013) as influential factors in the postcommunist social, political, and media landscape underlines further the importance of understanding the paradox of journalist-spies. Elite and privileged journalists easily transferred to top positions in newly formed private media outlets, as well as public broadcasters, despite their suspected links with the secret service. In other words, they successfully preserved or re-established their place in society and in journalism as influential public figures. Yet this transition was facilitated by the new political elite, which ensured that the dossiers of journalists and others in positions of trust remained classified, and therefore clouded in secrecy and speculation, for nearly twenty years after the end of the communist regime. While the names of some journalist-spies were finally revealed in 2008/2009, questions relating to their role, status, and responsibilities in the process of transformation of the Bulgarian postcommunist media system are still being asked. The perceptions of a cohort of working journalists contribute to our understanding of this issue.

A Study of Views and Perceptions

A larger study (Trifonova Price 2013) on which this article is based explored the beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and interpretations of different generations of Bulgarian journalists with respect to changes in the media system after communism. Anonymous semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirty-one Bulgarian journalists, most of whom are key figures in the Bulgarian media field. The interviews were conducted in 2009 (a pilot of six interviews) and 2010 (the remaining twenty-five interviews; see Table 1 for a breakdown of sample).

Of the journalists interviewed for this research, twenty-seven had worked in the media prior to the overthrow of communism in Bulgaria in late 1989. The length of time they had worked during communism varies, but five journalists had experience of working in the media during communism as far back as the 1950s and 1960s. Four started in the 1970s, but the majority—eighteen—began their careers in the 1980s. Four of the interviewees grew up during the communist regime while being exposed to and reading, listening, and watching communist media, but were not old enough to work in the media at that time. Three were just embarking on a journalistic career in the early 1990s, while one started working as a reporter after 2000 (see Figures 1 and 2 for age groups).

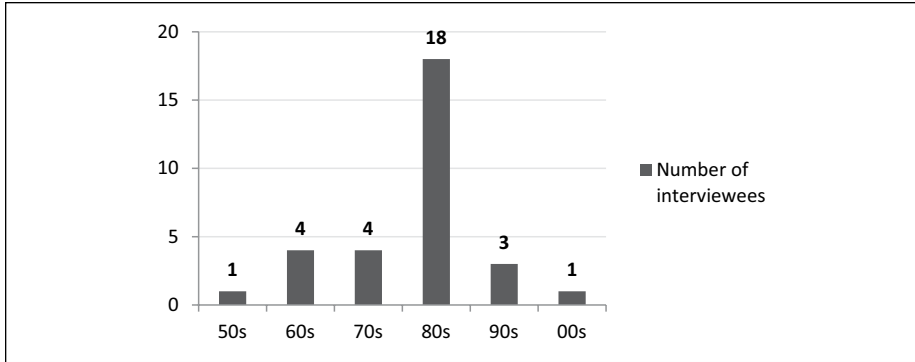


Figure 1. Decade in which interviewees began their careers.

Of the journalists interviewed for this study, the majority (twenty-seven) have worked since 1989. Those twenty-seven participants were full-time journalists in various positions, from reporter to editor-in-chief.

As the academic literature is sparse on the topic of informers/spies in the Bulgarian media, the author had not anticipated this would appear as a salient issue in interviews. For that reason, a specific question on the topic was not included in the interview schedule. However, the analysis of pilot interviews showed that the subject of dealing, or not dealing, with the communist past emerged in answers to other questions. None of the journalists were asked whether they had been collaborators during the previous regime and only one openly stated that they had been, prior to the end of communism. The author was aware of only one other interviewee whose name had been revealed in the informers' lists but this participant did not state this fact during the interview and was not asked directly to talk about their involvement. The author felt at the time that this could jeopardize the interview. Considering the senior positions of some of the interviewees, it was of utmost importance that their identities were protected and anonymity was reiterated throughout the interviews. The semi-structured interviews incorporated a set of twenty-two questions with the objective of exploring journalists' reactions to and interpretations of issues that the literature suggests have represented common limitations to journalism since the collapse of the communist regime in 1989. The main goal was for the subject to talk about their experiences without any fear of being identified, which could harm them. For example, identifying a journalist who was very critical of their media owner or their editor-in-chief could have an adverse effect on their careers. It should also be noted that all but one of the participants still work in the Bulgarian media.

As well as gathering responses to the formulated questions, choosing semi-structured interviews permitted flexibility and openness to reflect and explore any other relevant issues and angles that came up in discussion. This is how the issue of journalist-spies emerged. Another important advantage of using semi-structured interviews as the technique for collecting data was the depth of the information gathered,

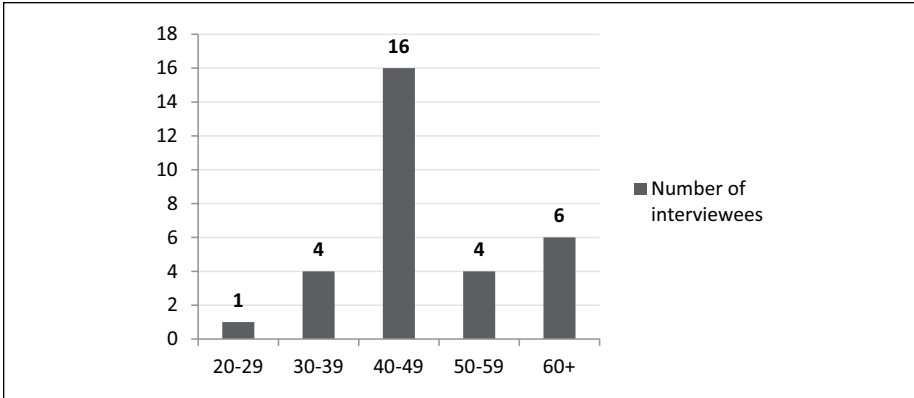


Figure 2. Age groups.

which in this study was provided by a number of well-known Bulgarian journalists. Among them, fourteen were men and seventeen women.

Findings and Discussion

There was some disagreement among interviewees when they reflected upon the role of informers in the media before and after the end of communism.

Many of the participants in the sixty plus and fifty to fifty-nine age group, whose professional careers spanned several decades, argued that during the communist regime journalists in senior positions, or those trusted with access to classified or so-called “sensitive” information, had very little choice but to be Communist party members as this was almost obligatory for the profession. Many journalists suspected that there were secret service collaborators among their ranks, as there were in all workplaces, but they did not know the full extent of this collaboration. The dominant perception was that those who did not cooperate were immediately dismissed from the state media and faced hefty consequences. Only one participant openly stated that their function as an agent was reporting on senior foreign visitors to the news agency, describing in detail what the visitor said and what questions they asked. For this participant, refusing to cooperate meant going back to hard labor—reinforcing steel on a construction site. Nevertheless, the interviewee expressed strong frustration with the inability, felt at that time, to desist becoming an informer. Other possible consequences of refusals included imprisonment, a minimal chance of finding any work in the media, as well as the risk of exposing family members to a similar level of punishment and restrictions. In other words, those who had witnessed what the regime was capable of pointed out that it was inevitable that some journalists would choose to cooperate fully with the demands of the secret service or their personal and professional lives would be severely affected. This perception is illustrated by Journalist 11,⁴ who explained an

elaborate process of coercion and a feeling of having absolutely no choice but to become an agent for the secret service:

I was an agent too. How could I not be? [. . .] You had to do it. And all this is still in the archives, but the point is, there was no choice, no choice in this matter. (J11, former journalist from the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency)

Most participants, across all age groups, highlighted the repressive nature of the communist regime in Bulgaria which, as the literature also suggests, coerced and put journalists under substantial pressure to cooperate. A few journalists recall regular mass dismissals of journalists: the so-called *chistka*, translated roughly as “clearance,” which took place every two to three years. The newspaper *Narodna Mladez* (People’s Youth), for example, had its entire editorial team replaced for a mistake that was published in one article: “That’s why people didn’t dare do anything,” explains J28, a former senior editor in a news agency.

Perceptions such as this indicate at least two possibilities. First, those who agreed to spy deliberately chose to ignore the moral issue of becoming spies to preserve and advance their careers. Second, due to the repressive nature of the regime, it is also possible that journalists who decided to collaborate genuinely believed that they would suffer personally if they did not. Scholars have argued that a significant value of the collaboration with the secret services lay in the person’s complicity, which placed bounds on potential dissident behavior (see Hall 1996). In other words, forcing people to be agents was another way to control media employees and ensure they followed the party line. Ognianova (1993: 159) briefly mentions a group of journalists that dealt with the demands of the intelligence services through “passive resistance.” They avoided certain sensitive topics and chose safer beats that did not compromise directly their personal, moral, and ethical values. J18 states that it was common for many journalists to look for alternative ways to work within the strict boundaries of the ideological frame:

Of course we always knew which issues were subject to more special restrictions or were taboo. And everyone, according to their own conscience, either avoided them or used moderate language when commenting. [. . .] But within the knowledge, conviction and practice that we had I can say that we tried to be ultimately honest with ourselves and our listeners. (J18, senior radio journalist)

What this participant recalls is another difficult personal dilemma that many journalists faced: what to do with the sensitive information they had and whether or not to practice self-censorship. For example, those who worked on international news and spoke foreign languages knew what was happening abroad in much more detail than the rest of their colleagues. Some, such as J18, knew before the Soviet news agency—TASS—officially released details about major international crises in the 1980s such as the martial law in Poland and the Chernobyl nuclear reactor meltdown. Releasing all foreign-sourced news, regardless of its perceived magnitude, to the wider public

before the official TASS confirmation was, according to several participants, an act with significant ramifications—not only for the journalist personally but also for the whole media organization. This is where the conflict between their personal, citizen, and professional conscience lay; to dare say something or not, as described by this interviewee:

In radio there was the advantage that no one was physically standing between you and the microphone but at the same time the consequences of any action were very clear. (J18)

Many chose to toe the line, motivated partly by fear, due to the highly sensitive nature of the information, especially anything that concerned state and national security. In those cases, following the rules to the dot was of utmost importance. For instance, some commentaries had to receive up to ten signatures of approval before they were broadcast. However, J18 remembers an interesting paradox. During the complicated period of change in the late 1980s—the *Perestroika*—Bulgaria and the Soviet Union were perceived to have “a very particular relationship.” The Bulgarian party leader Todor Zhivkov was not a favorite of the then-Soviet-leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and Zhivkov had contrasting views on Bulgaria’s place and participation in the process. For this reason, the BNR, for example, was allowed to air some controversial views and information that could not be heard in any other countries of the Eastern Bloc.

It should also be noted that not all journalists who worked during communism were spies and informers. While most were communist party members, it did not stop them from taking pleasure in small acts of rebellion and finding ways to outwit the system. This was highlighted by several participants. Among the most common was the popular method of using the language of Aesop’s fables. As an example of such tales about animals some interviewees gave the texts of the prominent Bulgarian author and satirist Radoi Ralin, who criticized the communist regime in his famous book of epigrams *Luti Chushki* (Hot Peppers) and also in his poems and novels. Ralin’s epigrams became infamous for their rebellious content and most people who lived during communism learned them by heart, especially this one: “Silent but still heard! You’ll have a full gut if you keep your mouth shut,” which was published beneath a cartoon of a pig, whose tail looked very much like the signature of the Communist party leader Zhivkov.

For many the key issue, however, was not so much about what a journalist collaborator did in the past, but establishing whether or not what a person did affected their professional actions postcommunism.

Old Habits Die Hard

Cepl (1997: 231) states that habits are very hard to break, especially if they have become so deeply ingrained in society due to the length of time the previous rules were in effect. This argument epitomizes the perception of many journalists that their colleagues who worked during communism found it hard, if impossible, to unlearn old habits. Just as they had served the party and the regime in the past, it was assumed logical for them to

do the same after the end of communism. The old guard, several of whom were the subject of dossiers, were also thought to carry on serving the re-structured secret service. Among the most commonly cited characterizations of collaborators in the interviews was “compromised,” a word used by several participants to demonstrate their adverse attitude toward journalist-spies. Other descriptions of those who had collaborated include “infected with the virus of the previous journalism,” “opponents of change,” and “saboteurs of Bulgaria’s democratization efforts.” This indicates a belief that what people did during communism has affected their actions afterward. For example, former agents were blamed for negative trends in the Bulgarian postcommunism media landscape, such as the absence of a journalists’ guild, as this quote shows:

There isn’t a journalism guild because there were so many policemen, servicemen, agents of secret services in the guild, whose only mission was to destroy or to prevent the creation of such a guild. Even in the newspaper *Demokratsia*,⁵ which was published by the Union of Democratic Forces, there were at least twenty agents of the Secret Services, including the deputy editors-in-chief. They made sure a guild does not exist up to this day. (J14, editor-in-chief of daily newspaper)

In a similar example, some journalists expressed opinions that *Demokratsia* employed journalists who were informers and suggest that they were “inserted” there on purpose by the secret service, as this opinion demonstrates:

When we look at who were editors-in-chief of *Demokratsia* then⁶ and their now-known connections to the secret service, we could start thinking about the possibility that those people were infiltrated there on purpose. What kind of content they allowed, how they channelled opinions, what was their task exactly? Those are philosophical questions that one day we will need an answer for. (J5, director of private TV channel)

However, despite several similar accusations, no one specified who the guilty journalists were and what exactly they were guilty of. Labels such as “compromised” carry the danger of ignoring different individual circumstances and more importantly do not recognize the documented existence of different levels of involvement with the secret services. As noted previously, journalists were aware of several types of collaboration, some more serious than others. As the literature demonstrates, it has been extremely difficult to formally establish the exact level of personal involvement due to the untrustworthiness of the files. It can be argued that participants’ assertions that many journalists who were on the informer rolls took on senior positions after the change in the system is accurate. However, there is no specific evidence to support the claims that journalists have intentionally sabotaged the democratization process in Bulgaria since 1989, nor that they had been infiltrated/inserted on purpose by the former secret service to continue serving as agents. It is possible nonetheless that the perceptions of journalists are based on the revelations that in the early 1990s the functions of the journalist-spy remained the same: to spy on any activities and people that might be seen as a threat to the state (see Dermenzieva 2014). While those claims may be authentic, they need further investigation.

The perception that all informers were “opponents of change” can to some extent be explained by the well-documented fact that during communism, journalists were an essential part of the old communist elite with close ties to the *nomenklatura*. As scholars emphasize, in all postcommunist countries, including Bulgaria, former re-organized *nomenklatura* networks have prospered since the end of communism.

Carefully Orchestrated Change

Several participants directly stated that changes in the Bulgarian society and the media immediately after 1989 were “orchestrated,” “directed,” and “commandeered” by members of the former Communist Party *nomenklatura* and the secret service. Journalist-spies were implicated in facilitating this change. The following quote illustrates this view:

It was an orchestrated change and those who did it [. . .] prepared everything in advance. One of the main decisions was to let the media “go,” no matter what, so that people could vent steam through the media and not on the streets. This is absolutely certain because nowhere else in society could such freedom could be found, even anarchy. But simply, the journalists remained the same; they didn’t change overnight. All editors-in-chief were “signed off” i.e., the State Security and all other leadership approved them. (J28, former editor in the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency)

Several journalists also suggested that the events of 1989 were under the direction of people and factions within the Communist party, who saw in the process of *perestroika* a good opportunity to transform and expand political power into economic power. Thus, the “secret laboratories” of the Secret Service, according to Journalist 26, created the unique and ultimately flawed model of Bulgaria’s orchestrated transition. Those views coincide with scholars’ observations that networks of former *nomenklatura* have had a strong impact on the process of democratization in several Eastern European countries. The lack of effective historical justice measures have seen, as Huntington (1991: 228) states, “the discredited groups associated with the authoritarian regime re-establish their legitimacy and influence.”

One of the most problematic aspects of the postcommunist media landscape in Bulgaria is believed by participants to stem from the unclear origin of capital that has supported the mushrooming of new media outlets since the start of democratization. Journalist 8 sums up this view:

Up to this day, everything connected with the origin of capital with which the media were launched, the personal biographies of the people that manage them and their links to State Security, is unclear. (J8, TV producer)

While there is widespread cynicism and doubt that this will ever become clear, many journalists express a strong desire for transparency and accountability.

In many former communist countries, including Bulgaria, the process of adopting transitional justice measures lost momentum and the records of journalists were not

opened for nearly twenty years after the end of the communist regime. Journalist 6 expressed disappointment, in this example:

It's a shame that the records were opened 20 years later. It should have happened much earlier. It should have happened in 1990 because if at that time we knew that the most popular journalists were connected to the secret service then we could have explained their strange behavior much more easily. (J6, radio producer)

The “strange” or unexplained behavior related to being “extremely biased” and “openly taking sides,” acting as a mouthpiece of political parties and their ideologies. This perception can be explained by society’s well-documented fears that public figures could be subjected to blackmail by those who had access to their files. Some interviewees expressed the view that while the secret service records of all journalist-spies were kept closed for the general public, the political elites in power since 1989 have had access to what remains in the confidential files in the archives, as well as to the files that were deliberately removed. There is a belief among interviewees that politicians and their close business associates had the opportunity and the means to selectively blackmail and manipulate journalists to fulfill their personal agendas by threatening to reveal their past involvement with a repressive apparatus. This quote illustrates the view well:

In the 90s there were organisations for influence on the media, the so called “brain trusts,” which were simply people who gathered compromising facts about journalists and then went to bribe them. [. . .] Some of them work for the secret service. They put pressure on reporters and you can't understand why they're behaving in such strange way. (J29, journalist from daily newspaper)

The perception that certain journalists were “inserted” on purpose, or allegedly “infiltrated” by a repressive and clandestine organization such as the secret service, points directly to the perceived significant influence of informal political and economic networks, often with the participation of the former *nomenklatura* suggested by the literature.

Forgive and Forget?

Looking back, most representatives of the generation of journalists who started in the late 1980s and early 1990s—those in the age groups forty to forty-nine and thirty to thirty-nine—perceive continuity in the media sphere as highly problematic. First, despite strong suspicions over the years, the professional reputation and status of several of their superiors, including editors-in-chief, deputies, directors, editorial board members, top presenters, and owners, remained unharmed. Second, for the majority of participants, it was problematic that the postcommunist elite was either unable or unwilling to deal with, to borrow from Huntington (1991), the “torturer problem”—namely, devising and implementing a transparent, consistent, and effective process of

transitional justice measures with participation from the public to close the books on the past.

Very early in the transformation process of postcommunist countries, Huntington (1991: 228) concluded that

the popular support and indignation necessary to make justice a political reality fade; the discredited groups associated with the authoritarian regime re-establish their legitimacy and influence. In new democratic regimes, justice comes quickly or it does not come at all.

His words resonate strongly in the perceptions of most participants. For them, despite early hopes for openness, constructive debate, and accountability, justice came either too late or still has not come, which in practice confirms Huntington's hypothesis. The attitude of "forgive and forget" appears to have taken firm hold on Bulgarian society.

Conclusion

According to Znepolski (2008), the legacy of communism in Bulgaria is very much present and unresolved more than two decades after the collapse of the regime. His claim can easily be applied to the alleged role of informers in the media. First, their precise and individual, rather than collective, involvement needs to be accounted for to try to understand the impact of certain journalists, media owners, and publishers on the current media landscape in Bulgaria. However, as stated, unreliable evidence may never allow this to happen. The lack of political will to deal with the past is even more problematic. Some scholars have argued (see Ognianova 1993) that emerging democracies should not rely on journalists with a past and present record of deceiving audiences. The concerns of interviewees about the perceived ambiguous role of journalist-spies after communism stem from the fact that several of those journalists successfully remained in the ranks of the media and cultural elites that has shaped Bulgaria's process of democratization.

Many journalists and scholars still believe it is extremely important for society to find a resolution to the issue of informers and spies because it is fundamental to the way Bulgaria has been governed since 1989 and to the mechanisms of power. The media in postcommunist countries have played a central and pivotal role in establishing and representing the new power elites responsible for political governance as well as media policy after the collapse of communism (e.g., Cheterian 2009; Dyczok 2009; Gaman-Golutvina 2009). This in turn relates to the argument that the media, postcommunism, have become as equally important a force as politicians. As Jebril et al. (2013: 7) note, "during the transition period, the media may set the agenda for political debate, offer alternative interpretations of the ongoing events, and create support for emerging political parties." If, as Ibroscheva (2012: 22) argues, the people who had been part of the structures of the secret service enjoyed privileged "access to information, state infrastructure, and in many cases, a large influx of money, which incidentally served

as initial capital to start many of the current media outlets,” then the media’s role in the process of democratic transformation can indeed be viewed as “compromised.” Instead of being resolved in the public consciousness a long time ago, this issue—and several others related to the influence of *nomenklatura* networks—is still hanging in the air. This serves as solid proof for many journalists that the media is not really free or willing to discuss the past when it has so many implications for the present and more specifically for the current political, business, and media elite. However, the findings indicate that many journalists are outspoken about the mistakes of others, but they are reluctant to reflect on their own activities postcommunism.

In February 2014, in a call to the nation, the Bulgarian President stated that “continuously and tenaciously, reasons and means are sought for the files of the communist service to remain unread, so that the truth can be manipulated, as this is convenient for some.”⁷ He calls for the archives of the secret service to be accessible for the public directly so that there are no more speculations surrounding state security in society and its role in society can be understood. The President described the lack of unambiguous assessment of the crimes committed by the communist regime as the “biggest failure” (ibid.) of the Bulgarian transition.

The perceptions of journalists summarized in this article illustrate that the issue of former and alleged current agents in the media sphere is not going to go away as long as those who had profited from the system remain unidentified and unpunished. Their continuous presence in the Bulgarian public sphere has bred nothing but speculation, rumor, and disillusion among those who work in the media. Despite the fact that dossiers of journalists were eventually opened to the public, journalists believe this was done too late and was not accompanied by a constructive debate in Bulgarian society, precisely along the lines that Huntington outlined in the early 1990s: should there be punishment or should society attempt to find means for reconciliation? It appears that the majority of the new political, business, and cultural elite of postcommunist Bulgaria had decided from the start that society should forget. A debate and resolution, according to most, still needs to happen to fully understand the present process of democratization in Bulgaria.

Acknowledgment

I thank John Steel, Jackie Harrison, Vian Bakir, Silvio Waisbord, and the three anonymous referees of the *International Journal of Press/Politics* for their constructive and detailed comments on the first version of this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. The term is defined by scholars as the members of the communist political elite (see Szczerbiak 2002).
2. The Law for Access and Disclosure of the Documents of Affiliation of Bulgarian Citizens to the State Security and the Intelligence Services of the Bulgarian National Army, known as the Dossier Act, was adopted in December 2006. The Dossier Commission was established in April 2008, following the Dossiers Act.
3. According to Olivier Basille, author of the report *Bulgaria: Resignation or Resistance, Bulgaria's Embattled Press Hesitates*, issued by the organization Reporters without Borders (2009), it was not uncommon to find former high-level security officials or former intelligence officers managing media outlets in Bulgaria. http://en.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/rsf_rep_bulgaria_en.pdf (accessed October 1, 2014).
4. For the purposes of this article, and to preserve their anonymity, all journalists are identified by a number from 1 to 31. Quotes from interviews with journalists correspond to the same number, that is, Journalist 11 = J11.
5. Demokratsia translates as Democracy.
6. The interviewee is making a reference to the early 1990s.
7. According to editorial, "Плевнелиев призова документите на бившата ДС да станат публични" (translated from Bulgarian: "Plevneliev Calls for the Documents of the Former State Security to Become Public"). http://www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2014/02/01/2232681_plevneliev_prizova_dokumentite_na_bivshata_ds_da/ (accessed February 1, 2014)

References

- Antonova, Vesislava. 2009. *С микрофон и пагон: Записки по българските медийни досиета* [With a Microphone and an Epaulet: Notes on the Bulgarian Media Dossiers]. http://www.capital.bg/biznes/media_i_reklama/2009/08/07/767346_s_mikrofon_i_pagon/ (accessed February 10, 2014).
- Cepl, Vojtěch. 1997. "The Transformation of Hearts and Minds in Eastern Europe." *Cato Journal* 17 (20): 229–34.
- Cheterian, Vicken. 2009. "Colour Revolutions and the Media: Where Is the Scoop?" In *Media, Democracy and Freedom: The Post-communist Experience*, ed. Martha Dyczok and Oxana Gaman-Golutvina, 205–30. Bern: Peter Lang.
- David, Roman. 2004. "Transitional Injustice? Criteria for Conformity of Lustration to the Right to Political Expression." *Europe-Asia Studies* 56 (6): 789–812.
- Dermenzieva, Maria. 2014. *От ДС до ДАНС: реорганизации вместо реформи (и все с политически цели)* [From DS to DANS: Reorganisations Instead of Reforms (Always with a Political Agenda)]. http://www.dnevnik.bg/analizi/2014/02/16/2238500_ot_ds_do_dans_reorganizacii_vmesto_reformi_i_vse_s/ (accessed February 18, 2014).
- Dyczok, Martha. 2009. "Introduction." In *Media, Democracy and Freedom: The Post-communist Experience*, ed. Martha Dyczok and Oxana Gaman-Golutvina, 9–16. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Gaman-Golutvina, Oxana. 2009. "Conclusions. Media and Democracy in Transformation Design." In *Media, Democracy and Freedom: The Post-communist Experience*, ed. Martha Dyczok and Oxana Gaman-Golutvina, 231–42. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Hall, Richard A. 1996. "The Dynamics of Media Independence in Post-Ceaușescu Romania." *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 12 (4): 102–23.
- Horne, Cynthia M. 2009. "Late Lustration Programmes in Romania and Poland: Supporting or Undermining Democratic Transitions?" *Democratization* 16 (2): 344–76.

- Hristov, Hristo. 2006. *Убийте “Скитник”* [Kill “Wonderer”]. Sofia, Bulgaria: Ciela.
- Huntington, Samuel P. 1991. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Ibroscheva, Elza. 2012. “Spies Like Us: Media, Politics and the Communist Past in Bulgaria.” *Central European Journal of Communication* 5 (1): 11–24.
- Jebriil, Nael, Václav Stetka, and Matthew Loveless. 2013. *Media and Democratisation: What is Known about the Role of Mass Media in Transitions to Democracy*. Oxford: The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Media%20and%20Democratisation.pdf>.
- Letki, Natalia. 2002. “Lustration and Democratisation in East-Central Europe.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 54 (4): 529–52.
- Moran, John P. 1994. “The Communist Torturers of Eastern Europe: Prosecute or Punish or Forgive and Forget?” *Communist and Post-communist Studies* 27 (1): 95–109.
- Ognianova, Ekaterina. 1993. “On Forgiving Bulgarian Journalists/Spies.” *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* 8 (3): 156–67.
- Sadurski, Wojciech. 2005. *Rights before Courts: A Study of Constitutional Courts in Postcommunist States of Central and Eastern Europe*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Szczerbiak, Aleks. 2002. “Dealing with the Communist Past or the Politics of the Present? Lustration in Post-communist Poland.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 54 (4): 553–72.
- Trifonova Price, Lada. 2013. “Bulgarian Journalists and Change (1989-2007): Perceptions of Transformation of the Bulgarian Media System.” Master’s Thesis, University of Sheffield, UK.
- Welsh, Helga A. 1996. “Dealing with the Communist Past: Central and East European Experiences after 1990.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 48 (3): 413–28.
- Williams, Kieran. 2003. “Lustration as the Securitization of Democracy in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic.” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 19 (4): 1–24.
- Williams, Kieran, Brigid Fowler, and Aleks Szczerbiak. 2005. “Explaining Lustration in Central Europe: A ‘Post-communist Politics’ Approach.” *Democratization* 12 (1): 22–43.
- Zake, Ieva. 2010. “Politicians versus Intellectuals in the Lustration Debates in Transitional Latvia.” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 26 (3): 389–412.
- Znepolski, Ivailo. 2008. *Bulgarian Communism. Socio-cultural Traits and Power Trajectory*. Sofia, Bulgaria: Open Society Institute.

Author Biography

Lada Trifonova Price has recently been awarded a PhD from Sheffield University. She is a lecturer and a postdoctoral scholar at the Centre for Freedom of the Media (CFOM) at the Department of Journalism Studies, Sheffield University. Her work has examined journalists’ perceptions and understanding of postcommunist media change in Bulgaria. Her current research interests are focused on the effect of political interference, censorship, violence, and impunity on journalistic practice in postcommunist countries.

“Russia Accuses Fleet Street”: Journalists and MI6 during the Cold War

The International Journal of Press/Politics
2015, Vol. 20(2) 204–227
© The Author(s) 2014
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1940161214560268
ijpp.sagepub.com



Stephen Dorril¹

Abstract

An interesting but under-researched area of journalism studies is the relationship between journalists, particularly foreign correspondents, and the intelligence services during the cold war. The aim of this paper is to consider whether there is any evidence to back up specific allegations made in the Soviet era press in December 1968 that in the post–Second World War period named leading British journalists working for the national newspapers had a covert relationship with the British Secret Intelligence Service that involved their recruitment as agents and the use of intelligence-derived material in their articles in the press. The paper raises questions about the methods of researching such alleged activities. Is it possible in the absence of files from the secret intelligence services to undertake a serious study of such activities? Does the development of digital sources and archives open new fields of detailed study? It also reveals the potential historical significance of the role journalists played in the reporting of key events and policy issues during the cold war.

Keywords

Izvestiya, cold war, MI6, intelligence, journalist agents, foreign correspondents

Background

On December 18, 1968, the Soviet news agency, TASS, revealed to foreign correspondents in Moscow, including those from the *Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, and Reuters, that the official newspaper of the Soviet Union, *Izvestiya*, and its weekly review, *Nedelya*, would publish articles and documents detailing the “carefully masked connections”

¹University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield, UK

Corresponding Author:

Stephen Dorril, University of Huddersfield, Queensgate, Huddersfield HD1 3DH, UK.
Email: s.dorril@hud.ac.uk

(Lyadov and Rozin 1969) between the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, also known as MI6) and a number of leading British journalists. The *Times* on December 20, under the headline "Russia accuses Fleet Street," reported that the aim was to demonstrate "the existence of sinister links between Fleet Street and the British secret service," and that Britain's free press was "a myth."

One journalist accused by *Izvestiya* of being an MI6 agent was *Sunday Times* correspondent Henry Brandon, who responded in the *Times* on December 20 that the claims signified "a deterioration of Anglo-Soviet relations and a fading of the East West détente." The context was the conflict between the British government and the Soviet Union over the presence of their diplomatic representatives in each other's country, which eventually led in 1971 to Operation Foot and the expulsion of 105 Soviet officials from Britain (Andrew 2010; Hughes 2006). From the mid-sixties, the Security Service (MI5) had warned Whitehall about the threat posed by the presence of the many KGB officers operating under "light" diplomatic cover from their London embassy (Andrew 2010). In contrast, MI6 feared that expelling Soviet officials would create problems for its own officers operating under tighter restrictions out of the Moscow embassy (Hughes 2006).

With the freezing of relations between the two countries following the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, on September 27, 1968, British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, raised the issue of Soviet diplomatic presence in the United Kingdom with Prime Minister Harold Wilson, who agreed to keep numbers to current levels (PREM 1968). The Soviet government countered that this "unfriendly gesture" reflected "a general hostility" to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR; Andrew 2010: 566), a view reinforced by the British announcement on December 11 that visas for Soviet diplomats would be denied until the embassy reduced the number of staff. In response, on December 19, *Pravda* attacked the "anti-Soviet campaign . . . dictated by the millionaire proprietors of Fleet Street," who were "a syndicate of ideological gangsters." This provided the context for the *Izvestiya* articles on MI6 and journalist agents.

On December 22, *Nedelya* claimed that British foreign correspondents had been recruited as "agents" and "contacts" by MI6 and published a "Special Operational" list of journalist agents classed as to their "personal qualities," "professional possibilities," and "places of work." Each agent was "designated by a code symbol, alongside which was an identified MI6 officer, who was responsible for maintaining contact with the agent. Each agent is characterised in detail and how they might be used by the Service." *Nedelya* noted (Lyadov and Rozin 1969: 13) that MI6 had "its people in newspapers with circulations of the millions, as well as in technical magazines dealing with construction and electronics. British intelligence agents nestle in both the *Sunday Times* and the shoddy *People*." The documents, which included additional material on MI6's relationship with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), were reproduced in the February 1969 edition of the East German magazine *Horizont*.¹

The *Telegraph* reported on December 18, 1968, that its proprietor, Lord Hartwell (Michael Berry), managing editor, S. R. "Roy" Pawley, and two correspondents were on the list. Pawley, who "felt flattered," issued a denial two days later to the *Times* and

claimed that his intelligence contacts had ended in 1945. The *Observer's* editor, David Astor, wrote on the 22nd: "It is hard to believe that Russians themselves take their own stories seriously. They should know that the only spy we have had working on the *Observer*—and that without our knowledge—was one of theirs—Kim Philby." Former MI6 officer Philby had been employed by the newspaper as a "stringer" from the mid-fifties until his defection to Moscow in 1963. One *Observer* journalist named in the Russian article, Edward Crankshaw, dismissed it all as a "big joke" whereas former *Economist* journalist Brian Crozier said that it was "completely untrue." The *Guardian* reported on December 21 that the "absurd story" had "caused a great deal of amusement in Fleet Street and the Foreign Office," particularly "the reference to Lord Arran" of the *Daily Mail*. Listed as agent "BIN-946," he was said to be in contact with MI6 officer Count Frederick Vanden Heuvel codenamed "Z-1." Arran, according to *Izvestiya*, had helped "BIN" in "the solution of operative problems that arise and furnishes general information on questions connected with newspapers" (Lyadov and Rozin 1969: 13).

Dismissed by the British press as Soviet propaganda, the *Izvestiya* story soon disappeared from the news. BBC's Chief External Services Publicity Officer, anxious that the story might develop into a wider investigation, was able to report on January 17, 1969, to senior officials in the BBC that newspapers had responded to the Arran claim with "cartoons and humorous comment" (BBC File 1969b). Deputy Head of the East European Services, Alexander Lieven, was informed on February 13 that the Chief Editor at the *Daily Mirror*, Edward Pickering, considered the Soviet documents to be "profoundly uninteresting" and was "determined not to spend good money on stuff containing no possible story." When the Soviet press made further revelations in the New Year, the BBC External Services noted that "only one newspaper reported it" (BBC File 1969a).

Lieven accepted that those documents dealing with the BBC were "probably genuine" but wondered whether the lists of MI6 journalist agents were "fake." The BBC made efforts to obtain a set of the *Izvestiya* documents as they thought they "might be useful one day," and on April 24, 1969, approached Mrs. Josephine O'Connor Howe, the External Services' contact with the Foreign Office's propaganda unit, the Information Research Department (IRD). She, however, thought that the attempt to obtain the documents was "wrong and inadvisable," as "any documents likely to implicate the corporation were already available to it," thus confirming that the BBC-related documents were genuine. She added that she felt "some sympathy with IRD's friends"—that is, MI6—for the way its activities were being exposed (BBC File 1969a).

This had been a KGB propaganda exercise but, if we ignore the ideological rhetoric, was there substance to the allegations or was the *Izvestiya* list a fake? This paper analyzes the list and its provenance. It scrutinizes the relationship during the cold war between MI6 and certain newspapers, and traces the intelligence ties of individual journalists and their reporting of key historical events and involvement in propaganda activities. It also identifies a number of journalists who were active players in helping to shape and frame perceptions of some of the major debates of the cold war. Robert Dover and Michael S. Goodman (2009: 58) in 'Spooks and Hacks' believe that

this menage a trois of spooks, hacks and the public is worthy of serious attention, because it is a relationship of great dependencies, synergies and feedback loops. Intelligence and the media—blood brothers separated at birth—operate within the realities established by the societies from which they spring. They can shape the nature and form of these societies.

Method

What has become more apparent with the opening up of archives in Russia, Britain, and the United States is that many “factual” claims in Soviet cold war propaganda publications often turn out to be accurate. Paul Maddrell (2005: 238-40), in a study of the East German publisher, Julius Mader, points out that many of the propagandist’s exposes of Western espionage in the 1950s and 1960s were “indeed true, and his works, though obviously products of an ideology, represent a valuable resource for the historians of today.” This is borne out by a study of propaganda books on the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) put together in the 1950s and early 1960s by the KGB’s Department D (Deception), which handled intelligence contacts with Western newspapers. They were a mixture of diligent research of open source articles in the press and the addition of material derived from defectors (Aldrich 2013). The material took the U.S. and U.K. intelligence agencies by surprise. As Maddrell suggests, they were “telling us much that our own governments did not want us to hear” and we “surely have a right to know what secret activities the Western governments undertook during” during the cold war.

From the late 1940s to the 1960s, the KGB published *Facts Accuse*-type propaganda booklets throughout the Eastern Bloc detailing alleged covert activities by Western intelligence agencies against the Soviet regime. Much of our knowledge of the postwar Polish anticommunist underground known as the Freedom and Independence Movement (Wolnosc I Niepodleglosc, WIN), which was backed by the CIA and MI6, was derived from Soviet documents published in 1952 that disclosed that WIN had been from its beginning a controlled KGB operation (Grose 2000; Rositzke 1977). Similarly, accounts of CIA and MI6 exile operations in the Baltics in the late 1940s have largely been based on publications from Soviet propaganda outlets released in the 1950s and 1960s.² In both instances, the confirmation of the Soviet versions came from CIA and MI6 officers, and from participants in these operations (Bower 1989; Dorril 2000). In referring to the Soviet publication of details of the guerrilla operation in Lithuania with which he was involved as an MI6 agent, Thomas Remeikis (1962: 32) wrote that “it is reasonable to believe that the Soviet versions are correct as far as facts, dates, names and places are concerned.”

The KGB had a history of propaganda publishing exercises but also emphasized the deployment of “dezinformatsiya” as a useful “active measure” (covert action). It employed news agencies, sympathetic newspapers abroad, courted journalists as sources, and used journalism as “cover” for intelligence officers (Andrew and Mitrokhin 2000, 2005; Bittman 1985; Rommerstein 2001; Shultz 1984). Much publicity was given in the Western press in the 1980s to these activities—though less to CIA

similar operations (see Chanan 2009)—but KGB efforts in the disinformation sphere were often unsophisticated and crude.³ L. John Martin (1982) in “Disinformation: An Instrumentality in the Propaganda Arsenal” defines disinformation as “a persuasive technique that is based on forgeries and staged events.” It is these two aspects that “distinguishes disinformation from run-of-the-mill propaganda.” In this case, the *Izvestiya* articles and press conference could be seen as a disinformation exercise but, I would argue, was more run-of-the-mill propaganda.

Following the escape and defection to Russia of former British MI6 officers, Kim Philby and George Blake, the KGB engaged in the late 1960s in a propaganda campaign centered on these two agents’ knowledge of MI6 operations against the Soviet Union. Revelations were clearly slanted and skewed in an effort to undermine relations between the United Kingdom and the United States (Kerr 1996), but the majority of published material—Philby’s (1967) autobiographical account, for instance—turned out to be largely accurate. There was little need for *Izvestiya* to create disinformation because the KGB held a treasure trove of intelligence from these agents. George Blake, who photographed all documents crossing his desk during his time with MI6, had been responsible in the late 1950s for recruiting journalist agents (Blake 1990; Hermiston 2014). The MI6 documents cited by *Izvestiya* were stamped “September 1959,” a date which fits with Blake’s role within the Service and, along with evidence cited below, indicates that they came from him. The identities of some of the MI6 officers named were not known in 1968 and were only confirmed many years later. Although a number of the journalists were well-known at the time, others are obscure and there was little propaganda worth in naming those involved with technical journals. Similarly, it was not until the 1980s that the BIN code system shown in the documents was acknowledged by MI6 officers, such as Anthony Cavendish (1987), as being genuine. It is possible that the documents are forgeries but other Blake-generated material has been shown to be accurate. In February 1970, *Izvestiya* published documents, to which Blake provided commentary, on MI6’s Y-Section bugging of foreign embassies in the fifties. An MI6 officer who served with Y-Section acknowledged that the article was correct “in virtually all details” (Davies 2004: 245).

Because of the lack of intelligence records, this is not an easy area to investigate, particularly because the archives have been, in Richard Aldrich’s phrase (Aldrich 2001), “dry-cleaned.” MI6 has never officially released any postwar documents to the National Archives, and a trawl of the records by the author and BBC’s Radio Four “Document” program, for information on the Soviet claims, drew a blank.⁴ BBC’s file “Communist attacks on the BBC 1968-1984,” which contains most of the Soviet-generated articles on MI6 journalist agents, has been weeded and contains redactions on names of government personnel. However, the deficiency in official information should not invalidate research in this area. M. L. R. Smith (1999: 40) suggests that often “the barrier to scholarly interpretation is purely a mental hurdle that has grown up in the minds of academics, fortified by three decades of established methods of thinking.” The absence of official files becomes an excuse used to rationalize the failure to study problematic subjects. Other sources of information can be used in a way

compatible with academic research and as evidence is never complete, there is a requirement for academics to assess the available material.

By using a range of sources, including research on the history of MI6, interviews with former officers, newspaper archives, and journalist memoirs, it is possible to test the validity of the *Izvestiya* allegations. Increasingly, newspaper archives, including the *Current Digest of the Soviet (Russian) Press*, are being digitalized through websites such as ProQuest's Historical Newspapers Digital Archive, News Vault, Eastview Press, and others, which makes it easier to trace particular articles and relevant stories, and, importantly for this research, follow chronologically the work of journalists. There remain problems because the digitalization process is far from complete and often goes back only a few decades, and excludes different editions of a newspaper. However, other websites such as Newspapers.com have digitalized many local American newspapers that are a valuable research tool because they often relied on British newspapers for their foreign coverage. Journalist memoirs can be dismissed as poor sources, lacking any kind of reflection, but those by foreign correspondents, which are mostly neglected by researchers, are often rich sources of material about contacts and the background to stories. The research has been helped by the fact that in recent years, a number of correspondents have admitted to having a covert relationship with MI6 and have described it in detail (Crozier 1993; Horne 2012).

There has been interest in this subject by British investigative journalists (Knightley 2006; Leigh 2000) but little in-depth research (Keeble 2010). An exception has been the coverage by the British press of Northern Ireland during the mid-1970s. The revelations of the British Army's senior information officer, Colin Wallace, concerning his involvement with the propaganda unit, Information Policy, and his relationship with journalists covering the "Troubles" have provided the most detailed account to date of how journalists can be used by intelligence agencies in psychological warfare campaigns (Curtis 1984; Foot 1990).

The relationship between state intelligence agencies and the media has become a subject of increasing interest to researchers (see Hess 2009, on Germany, and Magen on Israel, 2014) and there have been studies of recent operations (Iraq and Afghanistan, for example) where agencies have used journalists to promote specific information (Barker 2008; Hastedt 2005). There has been, however, little on the direct use and recruitment of foreign correspondents as agents and contacts. In contrast, the relationship between American journalists and the CIA has been scrutinized (Bernstein 1977; Johnson 1986; Loory 1974). Oliver Boyd-Barrett (2004: 436) accepts that there is "irrefutable evidence" of wide-scale, covert CIA penetration of the media in which journalistic collaboration ranged from "intelligence-gathering to serving as go-betweens with spies." A series of articles in the *New York Times* in December 1977 revealed that the CIA had helped to shape American foreign policy through its ownership of newspapers, news agencies, and magazines abroad as "cover" organizations. The Agency's "Propaganda Assets Inventory" included scores of journalists working as salaried operatives while employed by newspapers, with many more who received no financial reward having close intelligence ties; twelve CIA officers operated under journalist cover (Aronson 1990). James Aronson (1990: 317) in his study of the press

during the cold war suggested that American journalists who cooperated with the CIA did so out of “a myopic sense of team loyalty . . . which permitted them to discard a natural sense of scepticism about official pronouncements.” By this “guided or misguided patriotism” they had discarded their obligation to “expose all false and misleading information.”

This whole subject, however, remains a sensitive subject for the British media. Eric Downton (1987: 339), who admitted cooperating with MI6 while a *Telegraph* correspondent, claimed that there was little “honesty in any of the histories of the two British newspapers having the closest links with the intelligence community, the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Times*.” When the *Washington Post’s* London correspondent Bernard Nossiter (1978: 188) wrote that he had “observed that some British foreign correspondents are interchangeable with agents—like Philby,” he was “savaged” in the *Times* (December 22, 1974) by its foreign editor, Louis Heren, for “putting a gun at the head of British reporters working abroad.”

Although British journalists and intelligence officers have been remarkably tight-lipped in their willingness to discuss their co-relationship during the cold war, their American counter-parts have been generally more forthcoming. Part of this is down to cultural differences, notions of professionalism, and attitudes to secrecy. Richard J. Aldrich and John Kasuku (2012:1026; Robarge 2009) note that the United States has shown a remarkably open attitude to secrecy:

We have also witnessed a unique American public debate about the place of intelligence in American foreign policy, stretching over more than half a century. All this reflected the first amendment to the US constitution which, despite significant caveats, has facilitated a uniquely open approach to the discussion of intelligence in the American broadsheet press . . . It remains unusual for US journalists to face legal action for writing about intelligence, and it remains easier for most foreign journalists to cover US intelligence than to discuss the secret agencies of their own countries.

When it comes to dealing with the intelligence services, U.K. newspaper proprietors, editors, and journalists have been all too ready to cooperate with the prepublication, semi-official “censorship” of the D-Notice system (Wilkinson 2009). When this author asked a *Guardian* foreign correspondent why he did not reveal to readers that his “businessman” source on events in Iran in 1979 was a former MI6 officer once based in Tehran (Desmond Harney), he was told that the British did not do that sort of thing (Dorril 2000: 744–45).

Fortunately, attitudes are changing and Paul Lashmar (2013) has detailed some of the institutional links and the ways British journalists collaborate—or collude—with contacts in the intelligence services. He cites the example of David Rose, former home affairs editor of the *Observer* and the paper’s “accredited” intermediary with MI6. When he met his contact, Rose was instructed to pretend that the meetings had “never happened.” His attribution to a source was to be so vague that no one would realize he had talked to the Service. The penalty for breaching these conditions was to “expect instant darkness: the refusal of all future access.”²⁵ In a competitive U.K. newspaper

market, failing to get the story has major consequences for the reporter concerned. The delivering and the withholding of information puts power in the hands of MI6, particularly as it is acknowledged that the Service has been the most difficult one for media to engage with. MI6 says that it only deals with journalists who have a reputation for “discretion and professionalism” (Intelligence and Security Committee 2005: 31–32, 81). Senior American journalists are much more used to citing CIA sources and retired officers by name.

In 1985, in *Media, Culture & Society*, Morrison and Tumber wrote that academic studies of foreign correspondents were “rare.” Twenty-five years later, John Maxwell Hamilton and Regina G. Lawrence (2010: 632–33) make the point in *Journalism Studies* that “journalism historians as well as historians in general do very little work on foreign reporting.” There is even less on the intelligence–journalism relationship even though there are, as Dover and Goodman (2009b) argue, similarities between the working methods of the two groups:

The cultivation of sources and of trust, small payments to smooth passing of information, or betrayal of an asset’s employers, and surveillance and interception—these are common to both professions. The difference between the two is clearly wrapped up in questions of structure and scale.

And also regarding time, journalists are generally looking at the present; intelligence is often concerned with the long term.

There have been studies of the Foreign Office’s cold war propaganda unit, the Information Research Department (IRD), and its structural relationship with magazines and other cultural outlets (Lashmar and Oliver 1999), but a limited number dealing with its relationship with journalists and newspapers, though it is of major importance as IRD relied on the news media to push its anti-Communist agenda with anti-Soviet articles distributed overseas. Evidence of IRD political warfare operations using journalist assets and news agency “fronts” during the “Confrontation” with Indonesia in the 1960s has been published (Easter 2012). In addition, there are two pioneering works: Richard Fletcher’s (1982) study of the manipulation of the press through IRD and the intelligence-sponsored news agencies, and John Jenks’ (2006) *British Propaganda and News Media in the Cold War*, which deals with the immediate postwar period (1945–1950). There remains, however, limited research on the press and journalist relationship with MI6.

MI6 and Journalists

At the end of the Second World War, there took place a debate inside MI6 on how to gather intelligence inside the Soviet Union with officers viewing journalists as ideal agents as they had “natural cover” (West 2009b: 120–30). MI6 hoped the Soviets would become less suspicious of journalists as possible agents. The *Izvestiya* documents identified the MI6 sections that coordinated journalist recruitment. The Controller Production Research (C/PR), sources confirm, was set up in 1948 to arrange

“cover for an agent” with “a British firm or organization,” and to seek assistance from U.K. citizens traveling to the Soviet Union (Bower 1995: 159, 184). C/PR was responsible for the Z-network of journalist agents, sympathetic newspaper proprietors, and subsidized news agencies run by Count Vanden Heuvel (Jeffrey 2010; West 1998). When Anthony Cavendish (1987: 20) entered the Service in 1948, he discovered from Vanden Heuvel that “a number of MI6 agents were sent abroad as journalists. The Kemsley Press [owner of the *Sunday Times*] allowed many of its foreign correspondents to co-operate with MI6 and even took on MI6 operatives as foreign correspondents.” One Kemsley employee on the Soviet list was Andrew MacKenzie (“BIN01/B”), the London correspondent of the *Sheffield Telegraph* and author of spy and crime novels.⁶

The *Sunday Times* Foreign News Service was managed by former Naval Intelligence Department (NID) officer, Ian Fleming, who controlled a network of 80 foreign correspondents. Fleming had enjoyed a relationship with MI6 since the 1930s when a Reuters correspondent in Moscow covering the Metropolitan-Vickers trial. In 1951, he wrote to a former NID colleague that he was “engaged throughout the year in running a worldwide intelligence organisation and . . . [and] carry out a number of tasks on behalf of a department of the Foreign Office” (i.e., MI6; West 2009: xxiv, xxv).

Former MI6 officers have confirmed that C/PR controlled the London Station (codenamed BIN) that organized anti-Soviet operations run from the United Kingdom (Davies 2004). *Izvestiya* claimed (Lyadov and Rozin 1969) that a sub-unit, “BIN/CO-ORD”—headed by a veteran officer, Edward Boxshall—was involved in “the use of the British press.” Its remit was confirmed by Nicholas Elliott (Bower 1995: 184)—MI6’s contact with Fleming (West 2009a: 72)—who, in 1956, persuaded the *Observer* and the *Economist* to employ Philby as a journalist “stringer” in the Middle East.

An alleged MI6 document cited by *Izvestiya*, “Contacts with British Governmental and Other Non-Intelligence Institutions and Organizations” (Lyadov and Rozin 1969: 12), claimed that another desk, “SPA/PROP,” was responsible for “exercising political guidance over long-term planning of all propaganda operations . . . for whose conduct Her Majesty’s Government must not be accused.” The Special Political Action and Propaganda section, was created in 1953 in the aftermath of Operation BOOT and the joint CIA/MI6 overthrow of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mosaddegh, and carried out “political measures,” which included “the publication of newspapers and books,” and the “operational” use of journalists (Davies 2004: 227–28).

MI6 and Journalist Agents

George Blake (1990) revealed in his memoirs that in the late fifties, MI6, lacking sources inside the Soviet Union, transformed the Controller of Production into an “agent-running organization,” headed by Arthur Franks (“BIN-51”). As the C/PR deputy, Blake (“BIN01/A”) recruited journalists as “agents” or “contacts,” provided his own officers with “cover,” set information-gathering targets, and paid agents via secret bank accounts. Former CIA Chief William Colby made a distinction between a “controlled agent”—whose loyalty was more to the agency than the newspaper—and a

“contact”—who remained loyal to the newspaper (Johnson 1986). An alleged journalist used by MI6 as a “potential source of information and operative data about the USSR” (Lyadov and Rozin 1969) was “Henry Brandon” of the *Sunday Times*. His former editor, Harold Evans,⁷ dismissed such claims, though the paper’s intelligence specialist, Phillip Knightley,⁸ accepted that Brandon was an MI6 “asset.”

An agent may have a long-term relationship with the Service that will involve a handler or case officer who sets requirements that may involve regular payments, whereas an asset or contact is likely to be used on specific projects without any payment or, if there is, only on an occasional basis. Journalist and author, Norman Lewis, who served with the wartime Field Security Sections, was employed by the *Sunday Times*. According to his biographer, Lewis’ reporting from Cuba at the time of the revolution in the late 1950s was undertaken at the instigation of MI6’s Tim Frenken, a one-time member of the wartime Z-Organization (Evans 2009). A “stringer” used the journalist tag as cover to gather information for the Service while carrying out journalist duties. Lee Tracey was an MI6 operative during the 1950s, who was employed at the Service’s behest by the *Daily Mirror* as a photographer and journalist but filed few stories.⁹

Oscar Brandeis (Henry Brandon) moved to Britain in 1938 with the exiled Czechoslovak government and served as a war correspondent on the *Sunday Times* and as its Chief American Correspondent until 1983. Colleague Godfrey Hodgson acknowledged that Brandon was “well-equipped for social success in the Georgetown dinners where diplomats, journalists and intelligence officials mingled . . . [He] knew how to smelt the scrap of dinner-table gossip.”¹⁰ He was close to Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, who trusted the newspaperman to report fairly (Hersh 1982). However, on May 9, 1969, with Richard Nixon in a rage over damaging leaks to the press about the secret bombing of Cambodia, the President’s National Security advisor urged the FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover, to tap the telephones of four journalists, including Brandon, who “had been tapped in previous administrations” (FBI Files 1971–73; Reeves 2002: 86). Hoover briefed Nixon (State Department File 2005, June 1974) that Kissinger regularly visited the home of Brandon, who “had connections with an allied foreign intelligence service.”

Izvestiya claimed that Michael Berry (“BIN-943”), *Daily Telegraph*’s proprietor from 1954 and created a peer [Lord Hartwell] in 1968, was useful for “not only transmitting necessary information” but also for “winning support and sanction at a high level.” Another alleged MI6 document, “The Utilization of Employees of British Firms and Newspapers Abroad by British Intelligence” warned that “when actions are taken without the knowledge of the directors of newspaper in question, it is probable that valuable possibilities and intelligence information will be overlooked.” Permission had to be sought from newspaper proprietors if MI6 wanted to make use of a journalist. Other agents on the *Telegraph* included Roy Pawley, whose “services and zeal” were highly valued by MI6, and who was “entrusted with . . . the transmission of money to agents and arrangements of cover for other British intelligence agents such as former Reuter’s correspondent, Tom Harris, in Sweden, Michael Field in Bangkok” (Lyadov and Rozin 1969: 13). Pawley had worked in press censorship and postwar managed

Telegraph's foreign news with direct access to the paper's proprietor (Faulks 1997; Lycett 1995). One *Telegraph* correspondent, the Canadian, Eric Downton, employed in the wartime Naval Intelligence Division with Fleming, acknowledged his own recruitment by MI6 and witnessed in Vienna colleagues, such as Gordon Shepherd, being used as information gatherers by MI6's George Kennedy Young (Downton 1987).

Senior *Telegraph* journalist and wartime MI6 officer, Malcolm Muggeridge, admitted to journalist Alan Watkins (1982) that he worked part-time for MI6 and helped his contact, Dick Brooman-White, provide journalist cover (Bright-Holmes 1981). In 1949, Intelligence Corps captain Dennis Bloodworth was vetted by MI6 for a journalist post in Paris with the *Observer*, after Muggeridge spoke to the paper's editor, David Astor (Jenks 2001; Muggeridge 1949). Muggeridge was also "a valuable ally" to future historian Alistair Horne (2011: 108), who had no qualms about his role as an MI6 agent while a *Telegraph* journalist. In 1946, he had served under Maurice Oldfield in the Security Intelligence Middle East organization and when, in the fifties, he joined the *Telegraph*, Oldfield—now a senior MI6 officer—provided him with briefings on the Soviet Union. Horne was posted to Berlin in 1953, after Pawley had been approached by Oldfield, who thought that, because "as a journalist, you have perfect cover," he could handle MI6's German assets who were spying on their own government. Horne regarded the information he helped smuggle out as "helpfully complementary to what I was able to garner as a journalist" (Horne 2011: 139–42).

Michael Field had been recruited by Philby to the wartime Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley to analyze radio intercepts and was employed postwar as a stringer for the *Times*, covering South American "coups." The *Times* obituarist (June 17, 2003: 30) noted that "Whether Field retained his Intelligence links during the rest of his career has not been revealed, but he certainly was present in many key areas of international tension." The *Press Gazette* (June 6, 2003) pointed out that "much of what he knew went unpublished." In 1956, Field was posted by the *Telegraph* to Hanoi, whose MI6 station officer, Derek Davies, later became editor of the Hong Kong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review*, which he turned into "the window on Asia."¹¹ Posted in 1962 to Bangkok, Field developed a close friendship with the Cambodian ruler, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, and published a government-backed magazine. That same year, MI6's specialist on South-East Asian affairs, Donald Lancaster, was appointed secretary to Sihanouk.¹² The year before, Lancaster had published *The Emancipation of French Indo-China*, praised by the Saigon government for "dealing with the contemporary history of Vietnam as a whole" (Truong-Buu-Lamm 1963). Field's (1965) memoir, *The Prevailing Wind*, argued against American policy in the region and was praised by the *Journal of Southeast Asian History* (Leifer 1966: 46) for understanding the context of "the resurgence of a united China determined to remove the Western presence from what is regarded as her legitimate sphere of influence." Field later covered Latin America and reported on the Falklands War from Buenos Aires.

Izvestiya claimed (Lyadov and Rozin 1969: 13) that MI6 established a "good alliance" at the *Observer* with the Editor, David Astor ("BIN 183"), and journalist Mark Arnold-Forster ("BIN 110") and Soviet specialist Edward Crankshaw ("BIN 120"),

who had been “used during his journey to the Soviet Union [and had] a very long record of such work.” Crankshaw thought that either Philby or Blake was behind the article that was “a big joke.” In the *Times* (December 20, 1968), Astor called the report “nonsense” and Arnold-Forster described it as “rubbish.”

Astor had been turned down by MI6 for a wartime post, though he helped it establish contact with members of the German opposition with whom he had links. In 1944, he worked with a unit liaising between the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the resistance in France (Dorril 2000). In 1947, Astor was appointed editor of the *Observer*, where he employed Terence Kilmartin, who had worked for the MI6-sponsored Arab radio station, Sharq Al-Adna (Boyd 2003), to run the *Observer*'s Foreign News Service (which later received subventions from the “secret vote”).^{13,14}

Mark Arnold-Forster's uncle, Christopher, had been Assistant Director of Naval Intelligence during the war and served as MI6's Chief Staff Officer on its postwar Reorganisation Committee (West 1998). Mark commanded a flotilla of Motor Torpedo Boats (MTB) and, in 1946, joined the *Guardian* as its correspondent in Germany, where his “mentor” [Sir] Charles Wheeler had commanded the Naval Intelligence Forward Intelligence Unit, which recruited naval officers as agents in the Soviet zone (Dorril 2000: 112). Replaced by MI6's George Blake, Wheeler became BBC's European External Service liaison officer in Berlin, where Arnold-Forster stuck out, Wheeler recalled in the *Independent* (October 23, 2006: 10), “because one had the feeling . . . that the stories he was writing were not those others were chasing. He would go off to pursue a subject on his own.” Wheeler admitted that he himself had received intelligence on “cyclostyled sheets of information” about East Germany, which he forwarded to BBC's German Service. Colleagues accused him of being “a propagandist” but he denied the charge and claimed that he only gave the intelligence service information on one occasion (Nelson 1997).

In 1954, Arnold-Forster returned to MI6 to command a MTB operation infiltrating Latvian agents into the Caucasus but the operation was a disaster, as the exiles had been infiltrated by the KGB and had informed the Soviet authorities in advance of the mission.¹⁵ He joined the *Observer* in 1957, specializing in German affairs, and then the *Guardian* in 1963. A close friend of Tony Benn, the British Labour Cabinet Minister's growing suspicion of Arnold-Forster's continuing intelligence ties is strikingly revealed in successive editions of his diaries (Benn 1987–89).

Edward Crankshaw was of particular interest to the Soviets because “he is used to obtain intelligence information, and also to carry out other intelligence assignments.” An alleged MI6 document, “The Moscow Correspondent of the *Observer*,” detailed preparations to send a new correspondent to the Soviet Union (Lyadov and Rozin 1969: 13). One *Observer* correspondent posted to Moscow was Mark Frankland (1999), an MI6 officer who had rejected the world of “boyish tricks and thuggery, stealth and deceit.” His acknowledged “mentor” at the *Observer* was Crankshaw. Frankland denied being a journalist agent, though he was, in 1985, singled out for expulsion by the Soviets.

Crankshaw had wartime contacts with MI6 having served with the Y-Service as a signals intelligence officer and on assignment in 1943 to Bletchley Park as a Russian

specialist (HW 50/11; HW 61/37, 1942). In 1947, he became the *Observer's* correspondent in Moscow, where he lived with the artist T. S. Andriyevskaya, who, a year later, was accused of being a British spy, forced to confess, and sent to a labor camp, with her ultimate fate unknown (Andrew and Mitrokhin 2000). For twenty years, Crankshaw kept watch on the Soviet Union but he was not a simplistic cold war warrior; he had a genuine love of Russia—believing it had been corrupted by Stalinism—and disliked those “Kremlinologists” who viewed Soviet actions only in conspiratorial terms.

Following Stalin's death in 1953, the Foreign Office tasked MI6 with helping interpret events in the Soviet Union. This required gathering more intelligence from Russia, but MI6 had few agents in place and so asked the *Telegraph* to cooperate. The newspaper posted Eric Downton to Moscow and arranged a briefing by an MI6 officer. Downton (1987: 326–29, 342–43) was told by Roy Pawley that Lord Camrose and Michael Berry had approved his employment by MI6:

I had known that many of my colleagues, especially those with wartime intelligence experience, kept in close touch with the British embassies' intelligence personnel in the areas of their assignments. But I had not realised how extensively and systematically MI6 utilized the British news media with the knowledge and co-operation of its senior executives and proprietors.

Downton's MI6 contact was Press Attache Hubert O'Bryan Tear, a former SOE officer who had served postwar in Germany, training Ukraine exiles for anti-Soviet operations (West 2010). Through an “indiscretion” on Tear's part, Downton (1987: 343) learnt that the previous Moscow *Sunday Times* representative, Cyril Ray, had also been involved in “the journalist-agent thing.”

MI6-Journalist Operations

According to MI6's George Kennedy Young, in the mid-fifties “after a series of informal supper parties with the brightest SIS officers, a systematic study was started of the top Soviet power structure, its various personalities and cliques, and their associates in the KGB.”¹⁶ With the support of George Blake, Nigel Clive set up a group of Soviet experts, including Professor Leonard Schapiro, a wartime MI5 officer, whose book, *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy* (1955), established him as “a penetrating critic of the Soviet regime.”¹⁷ As head of Russian Studies at the London School of Economics, Schapiro enlisted Soviet studies experts to help MI6 (Reddaway 1984). “The results,” claimed Young, “changed the whole emphasis in tackling Russian targets, produced expert briefings for potential sources and for the interrogation of deserters and defectors.” (p. 16) The first fruit of Schapiro's work came in 1956 with the visit to Britain of Soviet ex-premier, Georgi Malenkov.

An article appeared in the *Daily Mail* on February 10, 1956, prior to the 20th Communist Party Congress, written by another journalist on the *Izvestiya* list (Lyadov and Rozin 1969), foreign editor Walter Farr (“BIN 943”). Based on “carefully checked

information reaching London,” Farr wrote that “the struggle between Khrushchev [the new Soviet leader] and Malenkov is flaring again” with Congress delegates “split” over the way forward for Russia. In March, the *Observer*’s Moscow correspondent, John Rettie, was approached by a Russian contact, Kostya Orlov, whom he suspected worked for the KGB. Orlov told him about Khrushchev’s denunciation of the horrors of Stalin’s rule at a secret February 25 Congress session, details of which, Rettie smuggled out to Reuters.¹⁸ Supplied with evidence of a split within the Soviet leadership, MI6, according to Robert Service, “cooked up a scheme for the *Daily Mail* to publish a false report of an internal Kremlin coup against the post-Stalin reformers.”¹⁹ Schapiro wanted to use Malenkov’s British interpreter, the academic, Harold Shukman, “to tempt Malenkov to seek asylum in London rather than return to Moscow, where he could risk arrest.” (p. 19)

On March 19, Farr wrote in the *Daily Mail* (p.1) that “a sudden change of plan yesterday by Mr Malenkov is believed to be directly connected with political upheavals in the Kremlin.” Malenkov had hurried back for talks with the Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Gromyko, about the leakage of Khrushchev’s anti-Stalin speech: “Western experts regard the speech and the timing of its leakage as striking evidence of growing ferment in the Kremlin. They believe, too, that Mr Khrushchev may have gone too far in attacking Stalin.” According to Shukman’s son, an MI6 officer gave his father a copy of a *Mail* front page, titled “Four of Malenkov’s men disappear in Moscow,” which they wanted him to read out to Malenkov but he declined to be part of the skullduggery and the planted story never appeared.²⁰ However, a *Mail* article was published on July 10, 1957, by Farr, who wrote that an offer of asylum had been made to Malenkov—now purged from the Politburo—in March of the previous year. When questioned as to the source of this claim, Farr declined to comment.²¹

The text of Khrushchev’s speech leaked out through Poland, whose communist party had received copies (Rettie 2006). Polish journalist Victor Grayevsky handed one to the Israeli Embassy, which in April forwarded it to Israeli intelligence, which then transmitted the document to the CIA’s James Angleton, the Agency’s chief liaison with Israel.²² He, in turn, provided a version to the *New York Times*. On June 7, at an *Observer* editorial meeting, Edward Crankshaw “modestly mentioned that he had obtained complete transcripts of Khrushchev’s speech.” As Rettie (2006) notes, “Exactly how he obtained it is not recorded.” Three days later, the full twenty-six thousand words were published in the paper.

It is often stated that the contemporary activities of intelligence agencies, and British intelligence in particular, cannot be studied because by their nature, they are very secretive and there is no material to study. However, this author has argued (Dorril 2000) that there is—as this paper illustrates—much more in the public domain than is realized and that intelligence agencies are heavily engaged with the press. There is, as Derek E. Miller (2010: 719) suggests, a “conversation” going on, even if it is not directly visible and is hidden behind anonymous sources.

Although MI6 was officially tasked with political intelligence gathering, it also had a propaganda role much in line with Herman and Chomsky’s (1988) five-filter model. Their model claims that the press relies heavily on official sources from government/

state agencies that are aggressive in promoting a favorable version of their activities. Such sources are journalistically “routine” but intelligence sources are, as Boyd-Barrett (2004: 445) acknowledges, a “departure” from the routine in that they are privileged because of the aura of secrecy that surrounds such material. Due to its uniqueness, journalists, editors, and newspapers often depart from the standard practice of balancing one source against another or the attempt to secure additional verification. Often there develops a cozy relationship between individual journalists and intelligence sources with a controlled trade-off between support and access to information. Some journalists go well beyond, or rather *against* the call of duty, in their collaboration. This is, suggests Boyd-Barrett, the additional sixth filter to the propaganda model—the “buying out” of journalists or their employers by intelligence agencies.

MI6 had significant involvement in “agenda setting” (Herman and Chomsky 1988) during the early stages of the Vietnam War. Through its journalist assets and the use of secret briefings which included privileged access to intelligence specialists it set about “framing” (Goffman 1986) the debate on the war, its origins, direction, and significance for the region and cold war policy generally. Drawing on the work of Richard C. Stanton (2007: 193–94), it can be seen that the use of disguised intelligence sources, which were seen as “credible” by journalists, allowed MI6 to shape, define, and “force all interpretation of issues and events into a narrow frame.” The audience was not only the British public but also American officials and politicians who took a strident line on the influence of the Soviet and Chinese communist governments in directing the war.

Crankshaw was responsible for groundbreaking articles in the *Observer* on the Moscow meeting in November 1960 of world communist parties, which witnessed a serious deterioration in Chinese/Soviet relations, and led to an intense debate within Western intelligence about the reality of the split: “There has come into our hands,” Crankshaw wrote in the *Observer* (February 12 and 19, Charles, 1961: 1), “a fully-documented report of the charges and counter charges between Peking and Moscow . . . this report, which contains detailed summaries of hitherto secret correspondence, came from a satellite source.”²³ These articles were highly regarded by Kremlin watchers (Ford 1998-99; Griffiths 1962) and were quoted in 1961 in the CIA-sponsored *China Quarterly* (Macfarquhar 1995) in an article “The Dismissal of Marshal P’eng Teh-huai,” by “David A. Charles.” The author argued that the rift developed following P’eng’s dismissal in 1959 for “intriguing” with the Soviet leader. “Charles” was, in fact, MI6 officer Frank Rendle, the central figure in a factional clash within MI6 and the CIA over the Sino-Soviet split (Dorril 2000: 713–14). Was the split real, which Rendle believed, or was it a deception to confuse Western governments, as stated by the CIA’s James Angleton?

This doctrinal dispute was played out in the press in secret briefings to select journalists. In 1963, Crankshaw produced *The New Cold War: Moscow v. Peking*. The following year, *Mao against Khrushchev: A Short History of the Sino-Soviet Conflict* by *Telegraph*’s communist specialist and one-time MI6 employee, David Floyd, and published by the CIA-backed Praeger press, argued that the “monolith solidarity” of

the past had ended and that “each Communist Party, each Communist-controlled country must be studied individually and treated individually .” (back page) The MI6 officer dealing with Rendle’s analysis, Nigel Clive, officially pronounced the split genuine and passed details on to the foreign editor of the *Economist*, Brian Crozier (1993: 55–59), identified by *Izvestiya* (Lyadov and Rozin 1969) as a journalist who “provides cover for the agents on brief assignments abroad, and furnishes intelligence information from time to time.”

Crozier’s obituary in the *Guardian* (August 11, 2012) portrayed him as “a political vigilante who unashamedly cultivated a close, mutually beneficial, relationship with MI6.” As a Reuters correspondent in Saigon, he exchanged information with MI6’s Donald Lancaster, who helped him in 1954 to obtain his position at the *Economist* (Crozier 1993). Crozier’s source for “occasional scoops,” Frank Rendle, gave him access to the Service’s analytic staff that led in 1965 to his book, *South-East Asia in Turmoil*, a pro-MI6 view of Vietnam that claimed that there was “little evidence of direct Chinese Communist involvement in the so-called ‘liberation’ movements in the area.” A year later, he wrote an MI6-sponsored “Background Book,” *The Struggle for the Third World* (Crozier 1993: 55–59).

Crankshaw was identified in KGB files brought to the West by Vasili Mitrokhin (Andrew and Mitrokhin 2000) as a particular target of the Soviets. In 1968, he had let fly with a series of anti-Soviet articles in his “Russia Today” column: “KGB Turns the Clock Back to Stalin” (February 11), “Another Nail in the Coffin of World Revolution” (May 10), “The Cold Soviet Aggression Was the Expression of a Crisis in the Soviet Union” (August 25), “The Soviet Dinosaur Is Stuck in the Swamp—and Dying” (September 1). These articles infuriated Soviet leaders and the KGB tried various methods to intimidate him, including blackmail over his sexual liaisons in Moscow, where he had been photographed engaged in “sexual frolics.” KGB head Yuri Andropov sanctioned an operation to make the photographs public but, according to Mitrokhin (Andrew and Mitrokhin 2000: 529-31), this was abandoned when it became clear that Crankshaw would not succumb to threats. In December 1968, the Soviets released the *Izvestiya* list, where Crankshaw featured prominently but, by then, he had retired from the *Observer*.

Conclusion

Oliver Boyd-Barrett (2004: 448) suggests that we need to peer into the “black box” if we are to seek confirmation of the secret operational transactions that occur for the implementation of Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model. This paper has shown that it is possible to shed light on the darkness. It has confirmed that there is in the manipulation of the public opinion and the use of propaganda, a degree of fusion between state and news media practices that goes beyond everyday dynamics, and that Boyd-Barrett’s sixth filter, the “buying out” of journalists or employers by intelligence agencies, is a necessary addition to the propaganda model.

There is sufficient evidence in the public domain from journalists’ own memoirs, archives, diaries, and intelligence-derived material to suggest that the *Izvestiya* list is

reliable and is based on MI6 files that Blake handed over to the KGB. The published names from the list (see the appendix) were a fraction of a larger list of journalist agents that was displayed at the *Izvestiya* press conference but not released. It possibly still resides in the KGB archives.

There is the question about the precise nature of the journalist ties to MI6. Were the files based on casual contacts and exaggerated in the recording (a not unknown practice)? Was there a legitimate relationship as might occur when a journalist seeks information from an intelligence service, or did they record accurately the running of a journalist as an agent? Clearly, there were journalists who would dispute the term *agent* and would class their role as that of news-gatherer, their contact being purely professional. There were, however, journalists who had an MI6 handler, and were provided with tasks and received payment. Newspaper proprietors cooperated with MI6 and allowed the use of their journalists for assignments, intelligence gathering, and for publishing very specific intelligence-related articles. As Philip Knightley wrote in the *Guardian* (May 24, 2008: 17), “All this could have been considered just a bit of James Bondish fun, but for the fact that it entitles every foreign security service to believe that all British journalists working abroad must be spies.”

The above study has touched on only a small area but, hopefully, it opens up possibilities for more wide-ranging studies of the press–intelligence relationship, including researched histories of individual journalists and newspapers, and their relationship with intelligence. It is known that the main target of MI6 recruitment was journalists covering the Middle East. In the late 1940s, Hector McNeil, a Foreign Office minister liaising with MI6, assured Cyrus Sulzberger (1969: 412, 654) of the *New York Times* that British intelligence “only hires journalists in the Middle East.” To date, there have been no studies of the journalist–intelligence relationship in Africa during the period of decolonization and little on the Far East during the cold war. Similarly, there is limited research on the precise role MI6-subsidized news agencies (see Fletcher 1982; Jenks 2001) played in key events such as the Iran coup of 1953 and Suez—an internal CIA study (Calhoun 2007) refers to “the secret British disinformation effort” against Nasser and American policy—partly because files relating to more than a dozen agencies have been held back from the National Archive (Lancaster 1961).

It is unlikely that MI6 will make available such files but if researchers venture outside of the traditional archives and dig deep into material in the public domain, particularly given the increasing availability of digital newspaper archives, then we might be able to sketch out a more precise picture of what role the press did play during the cold war, and its significance in terms of state-related propaganda activities in shaping and framing debate and policies, and also during the “War on Terror” and current conflicts in the Middle East.

Appendix

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) obtained photographic copies of parts of the lists dated “September 1959” shown to journalists in Moscow. Below is based on what is in the BBC file (Communist Attacks on BBC 1968-1984), names in the *Current*

Digest of the Russian Press (January 8 1969) and the East German magazine *Horizont* (March 1969) and those reported in the British press (*The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*, December 21 1968); more were in *Le Monde* but I have not been able to trace those.

Special Operational—BIN Press Contacts—Potential Use and Limitations

Z.1. F. Vanden Heuvel (BIN 1153)—case officer to Lord Arran, *Daily Mail*, (BIN 946) and Butterworth (scientific publications), a director of which, John Whitlock (BIN 952), “provides cover for Ossian Goulding” (*Daily Telegraph* wartime special correspondent).

BIN CO-ORD Edward G. Boxshall

BIN 01 Rex Bosley—case officer for R. A. Watson, Scientific Managing Editor of *Research*.

01/A (Guy Bratt) George Blake

01/B Owen—case officer to Paulton (London correspondent of *Arbeiter Zeitung*, Vienna, and freelance for the *Observer*)—“accepts briefs for interviewing travellers from SOV BLOC”; and Andrew Mackenzie, London correspondent of the *Sheffield Telegraph* (Kemsley newspapers).

01/B.1 Ehrenberg

01/C Mackay—case officer to Paul Richey, freelance with *Daily Express*, (BIN 192) “retains good relationship with Editor.”

01/D Harley—case officer for John Gammie, Managing Director of Odhams Group, and W. K. Fitch, Manager and Editor of the *Pharmaceutical Journal*.

01/M P. Morgan, Editor *British Plastic*, Iliffe & Sons.

02 Morris

04 de Lazlo

06 Clunas

07 Cumming

51 Arthur Franks—case officer to Stuart Mclean (Vice Chairman Associated Newspapers) who provides “facilities”; David Astor, Editor *The Observer* (BIN183); Francis Gray (BIN 128).

085 Wayland Hilton-Young (Lord Kennet) *The Observer*. “He is very fond of money and miserly.”

110 Mark Arnold-Forster (*The Observer*).

120 Edward Crankshaw (*The Observer*)—“he is used to obtain intelligence information, and also to carry out other intelligence assignments.”

943 Michael Berry (Lord Hartwell) and W. I. Farr (*Mail/Daily Telegraph*).

Cited without BIN numbers are Tom Harris, Michael Field, Roy Pawley (*Telegraph*); Henry Brandon (*Sunday Times*); Brian Crozier (*Economist*) and Leonard Smith (BBC).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Copies of the Russian and East German newspaper articles are in the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) File. BBC Written Archives, Caversham. Communist Attacks on BBC 1968–1984. File One. E40/388 XS Registry D345-008. References to British newspapers are for hard copies.
2. *Katktai Kaltina (Facts Accuse)*, Vilnius, 1962–70, ran to ten volumes with witness testimony and transcripts of interrogations of guerrillas.
3. A KGB disinformation exercise was uncovered by the author (Dorril, S. 1983. “Permindex: The International Trade in Disinformation.” *Lobster*, 3). Declassified Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) documents confirm the substance of the article; see Holland (2001 & 2006).
4. Email exchange (2013) with presenter of BBC Radio Four program “Document,” Jeremy Dunn. January 21 to April 15.
5. Rose, D. 2007. “Spies and their lies.” *New Statesman*, September 27.
6. On MacKenzie: <http://www.existentialennui.com/2013/09/crime-and-spy-author-andrew-mackenzies.html>
7. *The Times*, April 25, 1993.
8. *The Guardian*, May 24, 2008.
9. Tracey, L. 2013. Interview by S. Dorril, November 20–21.
10. Henry Brandon obituaries, *The Independent*, April 23, 1993; *The Times*, April 25, 1993.
11. Derek Davies obituary, *The Times*, September 20, 2002.
12. Donald Lancaster obituary, *Daily Telegraph*, January 23, 1992.
13. David Astor obituary, *Daily Telegraph*, December 8, 2001.
14. Information given to the author by two senior journalists on the *Observer*.
15. Arnold-Forster’s account of the operation in one edition of the *Guardian* (February 2, 1980).
16. “The Last Testimony of George Kennedy Young.” 1990. *Lobster*, 19.
17. Nigel Clive obituary, *The Independent*, May 9, 2001.
18. John Rettie recalled the episode in the *Observer*, February 26 and June 22, 2006.
19. *The Guardian*, August 21, 2012. Robert Service email, August 23, 2012.
20. David Shukman email, September 18, 2012.
21. “Malenkov’s Secret Out: Twice refused asylum in Britian offer,” *Daily Mail*, July 10, 1957: 1.
22. Victor Grayevsky obituary, *The Independent*, November 17, 2007.
23. Edward Crankshaw’s *Observer* articles accessed using ProQuest Historical Newspapers digital archive: the *Guardian* (1821–2003) and the *Observer* (1791–2003).

References

- Aldrich, R. J. 2001. “Liberation: Rolling back the Frontiers of Cold War History.” *Cold War History* 1 (2): 122–34.

- Aldrich, R. J. 2013. "The Forgotten First Waves of Agency Narratives." In *Intelligence Studies in Britain and the US: Historiography since 1945*, ed. C. R. Moran and C. J. Murphy, 19–46. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Aldrich, R. J., and J. Kasuku. 2012. "Escaping from American Intelligence: Culture, Ethnocentrism and the Anglosphere." *International Affairs* 88 (5): 1009–28.
- Andrew, C. 2010. *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5*. London: Penguin.
- Andrew, C., and V. Mitrokhin. 2000. *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West*. London: Penguin.
- Andrew, C., and V. Mitrokhin. 2005. *Mitrokhin Archives II: The KGB and the World*. London: Allen Lane.
- Aronson, J. 1990. *The Press and the Cold War*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Barker, M. J. 2008. "Democracy or Polyarchy? US-Funded Media Developments in Afghanistan and Iraq post 9/11." *Media, Culture & Society* 30 (1): 109–30.
- Benn, T. 1987–1988. *Out of the Wilderness (1963-67). Office without Power (1968-1972)*. London: Arrow.
- Bernstein, C. 1977. The CIA and the Media. *Rolling Stone*, October 20. http://www.carlberstein.com/magazine_cia_and_media.php.
- Bittman, L. 1985. *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation: An Insider's View*. London: Pergamon Press.
- Blake, G. 1990. *No Other Choice*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Bower, T. 1989. *Red Web: MI6 and the KGB Master Coup*. London: Aurum Press.
- Bower, T. 1995. *The Perfect Spy: Sir Dick White and the Secret War 1935-1990*. London: St Martin's Press.
- Boyd, D. A. 2003. "Sharq Al-Adna/The Voice of Britain: The UK's 'Secret' Arabic Radio Station and Suez War Propaganda Disaster." *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies* 65 (6): 443–55.
- Boyd-Barrett, O. 2004. "Judith Miller, The *New York Times*, and the Propaganda Model." *Journalism Studies* 5 (4): 435–49.
- Bright-Holmes, J., ed. 1981. *Like It Was: The Diaries of Malcolm Muggeridge*. London: HarperCollins.
- British Broadcasting Corporation File. 1968–1984. BBC Written Archives, Caversham. Communist Attacks on BBC. File One: E40/388 XS Registry D345-008. BBC Written Archives, Caversham.
- British Broadcasting Corporation File. 1968-1984. 1969a. BBC Written Archives, Caversham. ACX35. Procurement of "Documents" published by Izvestiya. Alexander Lieven memo. April 4.
- British Broadcasting Corporation File. 1968-1984. 1969b. BBC Written Archives, Caversham. M.D.X3. Memo Chief External Services Publicity Officer. January 17.
- British Broadcasting Corporation—Radio Four. 2013. "Document." March 4. London BBC.
- Calhoun, R-D. 2007. "The Musketeer's Cloak: Strategic Deception during the Suez Crisis of 1956." *Center for the Study of Intelligence* 51 (2): 47–58.
- Cavendish, A. 1987. *Inside Intelligence*. London: HarperCollins.
- Chan, M. 2009. "Reporting from El Salvador: A Case Study of Participant Observation." *Journal of Intelligence History* 9 (1–2): 53–73.
- Charles, D. A. 1961. "The Dismissal of Marshal P'eng Teh-huai." *The China Quarterly* 8 (December): 63–78.
- Crozier, B. 1993. *Free Agent: The Unseen War 1941-1991*. London: HarperCollins.

- Curtis, L. 1984. *Ireland: The Propaganda War*. London: Pluto.
- Davies, P. H. J. 2004. *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying*. London: Frank Cass.
- Dorril, S. 2000. *MI6: Fifty Years of Special Operations*. London: Fourth Estate.
- Dover, R., and M. S. Goodman. 2009. "Spooks and Hacks: Blood Brothers." *British Journalism Review* 20 (4): 55–61.
- Downton, E. 1987. *Wars without End*. Toronto, ON: Stoddart.
- Easter, D. 2012. *Britain and the Confrontation with Indonesia, 1960-66*. London: Tauris Academic Studies.
- Evans, J. 2009. *Semi Invisible Man: The Life of Norman Lewis*. London: Picador.
- Faulks, S. 1997. *The Fatal Englishman: Three Short Lives*. London: Vintage.
- FBI Files. 1971–1973. "Investigation of Nixon Administration Ordering of Wiretapping of Newspapermen and Others." Serial: 65-HQ-75085. October–May. Washington.
- Field, M. 1965. *The Prevailing Wind*. London: Methuen.
- Fletcher, R. 1982. "British Propaganda since World War II: A Case Study." *Media, Culture & Society* 2 (April): 97–109.
- Foot, P. 1990. *Who Framed Colin Wallace?* London: Pan.
- Ford, H. P. 1998-99. "Calling the Sino-Soviet Split." *Studies in Intelligence*. Winter (1-2): 57–71.
- Frankland, M. 1999. *Child of My Time: An Englishman's Journey in a Divided World*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Gittings, J. 1995. "The Years of Great Struggle." *The China Quarterly* 143 (September): 685–88.
- Goffman, E. 1986. *Frame Analysis: An Essay in the Organization of Experience*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Griffiths, W. E. 1962. "The November 1960 Moscow Meetings: A Preliminary Reconstruction." *The China Quarterly* 11 (September): 38–57.
- Grose, P. 2001. *Operation Rollback: America's Secret War behind the Iron Curtain*. London: Mariner.
- Hamilton, J. M., and G. L. Lawrence. 2010. "Introduction: Foreign Correspondence." *Journalism Studies* 11 (5): 630–33.
- Hastedt, G. 2005. "Public Intelligence: Leaks as Policy Instruments—The Case of the Iraq War." *Intelligence and National Security* 27 (45): 689–706.
- Herman, E., and N. Chomsky. 1998. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Hermiston, R. 2014. *The Greatest Traitor: The Secret Lives of Agent George Blake*. London: Aurum Press.
- Hersh, S. M. 1982. "Kissinger and Nixon in the White House." *The Atlantic Monthly*, May: 35–68.
- Hess, S. 2009. "German Intelligence Organizations and the Media." *Journal of Intelligence History* 9 (1–2): 75–87.
- Holland, M. 2006. "The Propagation and Power of Communist Security Services Dezinformatsiya." *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 19 (1): 1–31.
- Holland, M. 2001. "The Lie That Linked CIA to the Kennedy Assassination." *Studies in Intelligence*. (Fall-Winter). Center for Study of Intelligence.
- Horne, A. 2011. *"But What Do You Actually Do?" A Literary Vagabondage*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

- Hughes, G. 2006. "'Giving the Russians a Bloody Nose': Operation Foot and Soviet Espionage in the United Kingdom, 1964-71." *Cold War History* 6 (2): 229-49.
- HW 50/11. June 1, 1941-February 10, 1945. Dossier on Russian Liaison (Crankshaw's mission to Moscow). Kew: National Archives.
- HW 61/37. 1942. *Appointment and Terms of Reference for Lieutenant Colonel Crankshaw*. Kew: National Archives.
- Intelligence and Security Committee. 1985. Annual Report 2004-5. London: HMSO.
- Jeffrey, K. 2010. *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service 1909-1949*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Jenks, J. 2001. "'London Calling?' Covert British Propaganda and News Distribution, 1948-1953." Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, DC, August 5-8.
- Jenks, J. 2006. *British Propaganda and New Media in the Cold War*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Johnson, L. K. 1986. "The CIA and the Media." *Intelligence and National Security* 1 (2): 143-69.
- Keeble, R. L. 2010. "Hacks and Spooks: A Critical History of the Links between Journalists and the Intelligence Services in the UK." In *The Political Economy of Media and Power*, ed. J. Klaehn, 87-111. London: Peter Lang.
- Kerr, S. 1996. "KGB Sources on the Cambridge Network of Soviet Agents: True or false?" *Intelligence and National Security* 11 (3): 561-85.
- Knightley, P. 2006. "Journalists and Spies: An Unhealthy Relationship." *Ethical Space: The International Journal of Communication Ethics* 13 (2-3): 7-11.
- Lancaster, D. 1961. *The Emancipation of French Indo-China*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lashmar, P. 2013. "Urinal or Conduit? Institutional Flow between UK Intelligence Services and the News Media." *Journalism* 14 (98): 1024-44.
- Lashmar, P., and J. Oliver. 1999. *Britain's Secret Propaganda War: Foreign Office and the Cold War, 1948-1977*. Stroud, UK: Sutton.
- Leifer, M. 1966. Review 'The Prevailing Wind'. *Journal of South East Asian History*. 7 (1): 145-47.
- Leigh, D. 2000. "Britain's Security Services and Journalism: The Secret Story." *British Journalism Review* 11 (2): 21-26.
- Loory, S. H. 1974. "The CIA's Use of the Press: A Mighty Wurlitzer." *Columbia Journalism Review*. September-October: 10.
- Lyadov, V., and V. Rozin. 1969. "Secrets of the Service: The Intelligence Service, The BBC." *Current Digest of the Russian Press* 51 (20): 9-13. www.eastviewpress.com/Journals/CurrentDigest.aspx
- Lyadov, V., and V. Rozin. 1970. "'Operation Gold' and Others—Interview with George Blake." *Izvestiya*, February 15-17: 10.
- Lycett, A. 1995. *Ian Fleming*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Macfarquhar, R. 1995. "The Founding of the China Quarterly." *The China Quarterly* 143 (September): 692-96.
- Maddrell, P. 2005. "What We Have Discovered about the Cold War Is What We Already Knew: Julius Mader and the Western Secret Services during the Cold War." *Cold War History* 5 (2): 235-58.
- Magen, C. 2014. "Mossad Directors and the Media: A Historical Perspective." *Journal of Intelligence History* 13 (2): 144-60.

- Martin, L. J. 1982. Disinformation: An instrumentality in the propaganda arsenal. *Political Communication* 2 (1): 47–64.
- Miller, D. B. 2010. “The Morality Play: Getting to the Heart of Media Influence on Foreign Policy.” *Journalism Studies* 11 (5): 718–33.
- Morrison, S. E., and H. Tumber. 1985. “The Foreign Correspondent: Date-Line London.” *Media, Culture & Society* 7 (4): 445–70.
- Muggeridge, M. 1949. “Diary. Box 1.” Muggeridge papers, Hoover Institute, Stanford University, CA.
- Nelson, M. 1997. *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War*. London: Brassey’s.
- Nossiter, B. D. 1978. *Britain: A Future That Works*. London: Andre Deutsch.
- Philby, K. 1967. *My Silent War: The Autobiography of a Spy*. London: MacGibbon & Kee.
- PREM. 1968. PREM13/20009. Stewart to Wilson, September 27; Pallister to Day, October 21. Kew: National Archives.
- Reddaway, P. 1984. “Leonard Bertram Schapiro, 1908-1983.” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 70: 515–42.
- Reeves, R. 2002. *President Nixon: Alone in the White House*. London: Simon & Schuster.
- Remeikis, T. 1962. “The Armed Struggle against Sovietisation of Lithuania after 1944.” *Lituanus* 8 (1–2): 29–40.
- Rettie, J. 2006. “How Khrushchev Leaked His Secret Speech to the World.” *History Workshop Journal* 62 (1): 187–93.
- Robarge, D. 2009. “CIA in the Spotlight: The Central Intelligence Agency and Public Accountability.” *Journal of Intelligence History* 9 (1–2): 105–26.
- Rommerstein, H. 2001. “Disinformation as a KGB Weapon in the Cold War.” *Journal of Intelligence History* 1 (1): 54–67.
- Rositzke, H. 1977. *The CIA’s Secret Operations*. London: Readers Digest Press.
- Schapiro, L. B. 1955. *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy: Political Opposition in the Soviet State, First Phase*. US: Harvard University State.
- Shultz, R. H. 1984. *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy*. London: Pergamon-Brassey’s.
- Smith, M. L. R. 1999. “The Intellectual Internment of a Conflict: The Forgotten War in Northern Ireland.” *International Affairs* 75 (1): 77–97.
- Stanton, R. C. 2007. *All Is Local: The Failure of the Media to Reflect World Events in a Globalized Age*. London: McFarland.
- State Department File. 2005. “Press Material: Kissinger.” Declassified US Department of State Record. State 124553, June 1974. Washington: National Archives.
- Sulzberger, C. L. 1969. *A Long Row of Candles: Memories and Diaries, 1934-1954*. London: Macmillan.
- Truong-Buu-Lamm. 1963. “Review of Lancaster (1961).” *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 4 (1): 233–37.
- Watkins, A. 1982. *Brief Lives*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
- West, N. 1998. *The Friends: Britain’s Post-war Secret Service Operations*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- West, N. 2009a. *Historical Dictionary of Ian Fleming’s World of Intelligence: Fact and Fiction*. Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press.
- West, N. 2009b. *Triplex*. London: Yale University Press.

Wilkinson, N. 2009. *Secrecy and the Media: The Official History of the United Kingdom's D-Notice System*. London: Routledge.

Author Biography

Dr. Stephen Dorril is a senior lecturer in Journalism at the University of Huddersfield in the UK specialising in the activities of the British security and intelligence services, and is the author of *MI6: Fifty Years of Special Operations*.

End of Story: Accountability Spectacle as “Closure” in National Security News

The International Journal of Press/Politics
2015, Vol. 20(2) 228–246
© The Author(s) 2014
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1940161214560267
ijpp.sagepub.com


Justin Schlosberg¹

Abstract

Since the alleged conspiracy by the U.S. and U.K. governments to invade Iraq in 2003, the national security state in both countries has been subjected to intense scrutiny by news organizations around the world. This scrutiny has been fueled in part by what some describe as the development of a “networked fourth estate” (Benkler 2011) involving ad hoc alliances between professional journalists, citizen journalists, hackers, and leakers. On the surface, this attention challenges radical conceptions of a “power elite” remaining in the shadows and impervious to accountability exercised through the media. Amid cultural chaos (McNair 2005) and seemingly ubiquitous displays of adversarial journalism without fear or favor, how far are powerful interests still able to control the agenda and manipulate outcomes? The article presents findings in relation to a single case study involving critical coverage of the national security state and a particular aspect of containment that emerged. It concerns how the controversies were resolved through an apparent spectacle of accountability that suggested a resolution eschewing the need for further scrutiny or sanction. The paper further contends that this element of story “closure” warrants renewed attention in the study of news framing and ideological power.

Keywords

agenda-setting, corruption, democracy, ideology, journalism, media framing

Introduction

This article presents findings in relation to one case study involving critical coverage of the national security state. Since the alleged conspiracy by the U.S. and U.K. governments to invade Iraq in 2003, the national security state in both countries has

¹Birkbeck, University of London, London, UK

Corresponding Author:

Justin Schlosberg, Department of Film, Media and Communications, School of Arts, Birkbeck, University of London, 43 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PD, UK.
Email: j.schlosberg@bbk.ac.uk

been subjected to intense scrutiny by news organizations around the world. This scrutiny has been fueled in part by what some describe as the development of a “networked fourth estate” (Benkler 2011) involving ad hoc alliances between professional journalists, citizen journalists, hackers, and leakers.

On the surface, such scrutiny challenges radical conceptions of a “power elite” remaining in the shadows and impervious to accountability exercised through the media. But amid cultural chaos (McNair 2005) and seemingly ubiquitous displays of adversarial journalism without fear or favor, how far is the national security state in Britain—taken here to encompass the shadowy world of intelligence agencies, military, and arms manufacturers still able to control the agenda and manipulate outcomes?

My overall concern is with critical coverage of the national security state precisely because it transcends scandal involving individual misdemeanor or the kind of controversies that are invoked by party politics. It involves corruption of a kind that disrupts dominant discourses that legitimize state-corporate power. And it carries an implicit challenge to radical narratives of the media that position liberal journalism as ultimately in the service of established elite interests. The core objective of the research undertaken was to interrogate the capacity of journalists to circumvent systems of information control characteristic of the national security state.

The Al Yamamah controversy was a recurring news story in the United Kingdom for the best part of twenty-five years, ever since the British and Saudi governments first signed a memorandum of understanding for the sale of U.K. fighter jets in 1985. It was not long after this that allegations began to surface in the press of secret “kick back” commissions to key agents and negotiators. However, the story acquired cross-media attention in December 2006. This followed a decision taken by the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) to terminate an investigation into British Aerospace Systems (BAe) with respect to the Al Yamamah deal. It was from that point a recurring feature on mainstream television news until February 2010.

The decision to halt the investigation pointed to apparent government interference with due process. It was said that the decision was untimely to the extent that investigators were on the verge of a breakthrough and “about to be granted access to key Saudi bank accounts.”¹ It is significant that it was this decision that elevated the long-running story on to prime-time television news. What apparently made the controversy sufficiently newsworthy for television was not so much the original sin (bribery/corruption), but what looked like determined attempts to suppress it. It was this aspect of the story that seemed to call up the media’s cadre of outraged journalists, seeking to redress accountability failure on the part of the state.

The key background context to the story as analyzed here concerns the impending renewal of the Al Yamamah arms deal, specifically with reference to the exclusive sale of Euro fighter “Typhoon” jets, formally agreed in July 2007. The aircraft were developed in partnership with other European countries that led to fierce competition for sales as contractors and governments battled for a return on their investment in an increasingly austere economic climate. With the United Kingdom’s fledgling manufacturing sector on the ropes, the largest single export deal of the century to date would inevitably be a public policy priority.

Clearly then, the story cast its spotlight on the heart of state-corporate power. The scope was systemic in the sense that it did not center on the actions of specific parties or individuals. In essence, it was a story about a foreign policy continuum that survived successive governments and prime ministers and attracted bi-partisan endorsement, at least from the front benches of Parliament.

The story was also ideologically sensitive to the degree that it conflicted sharply with dominant narratives around bribery and corruption in international trade. In November 2006, coinciding with the termination of the SFO investigation, the government released a DVD titled "Crimes of the Establishment," detailing its anti-corruption strategies on a global scale.² Distributed to diplomatic posts, governments, and media around the world, this initiative was perhaps exemplary of an attempt to square a public relations round hole. The United Kingdom is a signatory to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Convention on Bribery and Corruption that states that investigation and prosecution "shall not be influenced by considerations of national economic interest, the potential effect upon relations with another State or the identity of the natural or legal persons involved."³ Consequently the Prime Minister, along with the Attorney General and other government spokespersons, was at pains to stress the national security implications of the SFO investigation, though no evidence was provided for this. It was in any case rejected by both the High Court and OECD as inadequate grounds for halting the inquiry.

In 2010, the controversy culminated in an apparent resolution with the announcement of a package of out-of-court penalties producing a headline figure of £280 million. But the settlement made no mention of corruption (let alone alleged government sanction of corruption); incurred fines worth less than 1 percent of BAE's annual turnover; awarded BAE a "clean sheet" both in the United Kingdom and crucially in the United States, its largest growth market; and denied the public an opportunity "to discover the truth about bribery claims" through legally imposed disclosure.⁴

The article proceeds with a review of the literature focusing on radical and liberal pluralist accounts of watchdog journalism. This is followed by an overview of methodology and presentation of case study findings. The conclusion reflects on a particular aspect of containment that emerged in the analysis. It concerns how the news controversy was resolved through an apparent spectacle of accountability that suggested a resolution eschewing the need for further scrutiny or sanction. The article contends that this element of story "closure" warrants further attention in the study of news framing and ideological power.

Literature Review

According to conventional liberal accounts, professional values associated with watchdog journalism are a definitive feature of western democracies (Gans 2004; Schudson 1995). Such accounts trace their roots in part to the liberal pluralist tradition in political science that perceived power in post-war America as inherently contestable (e.g., Dahl 1961; Truman 1951; Parsons (1960) 1986). Critics, however, pointed out that liberal pluralists tended to describe a particular variant of power, and one that did

not seem to capture a reality of growing corporate concentration and U.S. military expansion after the Second World War. This meant that elite decision making and the exercise of “real” power was increasingly a closed door exercise and distinguishable from the lower level day-to-day politics of state government (Mills 1959). According to Lukes (1974) 2005, what liberal pluralists had described was a one-dimensional view of power based on instrumental action and observable conflict between its holders and subjects. They had overlooked more nuanced forms of power based on non-decision making and covert conflict, as well as inaction/latent conflict—what Lukes called the “third dimension” of power.

Within this context, radical critical accounts of the news media have highlighted the structural dependence of journalists on elites and officials as authoritative, regular, and newsworthy sources (Hall et al. 1978; Tuchman 1978). The resultant power of “primary definition” is said to provide elites with an ideological lever of influence over the news. Political economists built on these foundations to highlight the hegemonic impact of the news media’s entrenchment within the market system (e.g., Herman and Chomsky 2002).

But such critiques do not tell us much about controversies that *do* hinge on overt conflict to use Lukes’ terms. What’s more, such conflicts are not—in the contemporary mediascape at least—in any sense limited to a “middle layer” of politics as Mills suggested. Perhaps the most vivid example in recent times is the controversy that continues to surround the decision (and alleged conspiracy) by U.S. and U.K. governments to invade Iraq in 2003. And we do not have to look hard for other examples of media-led controversies that strike at the heart of government–corporate–military power, including the case discussed here.

In an attempt to explain and predict such counter-hegemonic narratives in news, a number of scholars have articulated varying accounts of what has become known as indexing theory. These accounts broadly peg the watchdog capacity of the news media to the existence and scope of dissenting elite voices in any given story (e.g., Hallin 1994; Livingston and Bennett 2003). In its most accommodating version, the “cascading model of activation” (Entman 2004) provides for a number of opportunities in which journalists and middle-ranking or non-elite sources can intervene in the definitional process of a story.

But we are still left with the problem of explaining the frequency and intensity of counter-hegemonic narratives that surface within some quarters of the professional news media, and increasingly in the context of the national security state. From secret rendition to mass surveillance, these stories can no longer be regarded as occasional anomalies, nor simply the by-products of inter-elite conflict. For the “serious” news sector at least, they have become bread and butter stories, especially in the wake of the mass leaks facilitated by WikiLeaks in 2010 and Edward Snowden in 2013.

For some, such stories reflect a weakening of elite control over the news agenda. The end of a Cold War political consensus, the collapse of cultural deference to elites, and the rapid spread of digital communication technologies are all said to have contributed to “cultural chaos” and the subsequent decline of the “control paradigm” in

media studies (McNair 2005). Non-elite sources are also said to have become increasingly adept at news making (Schlesinger and Tumber 1994), with the result that elite influence over the news is always “equivocal, transitory and unresolved” (Ericson et al. 1989: 2).

Even if primary definition still confers a structural advantage on official sources in mainstream news output, this does not necessarily apply to the plethora of alternative news and information sources that are now accessible to a critical mass of news audiences. In this regard, it is argued that the expansion of audience selectivity and choice has meant that news content is increasingly audience rather than source driven (Bennett and Iyengar 2008). According to this view, the mainstream news agenda is, in turn, no longer a determining influence over public debate.

A challenge to the “minimal effects” thesis stems from the role of framing in the construction of meaning or, more precisely, in the transfer of issue salience from a news narrative to the cognitive understanding of news audiences (McCombs 2004). Although framing analysis has long suffered from inconsistency in its application, several attempts to develop a robust framework have been oriented toward detecting and measuring political and ideological bias (e.g., Entman 2007). The significance of framing in this respect consists in the way that particular issues are presented within a given story, and the cognitive cues or prompts that follow (Price et al. 1997). From a radical perspective, elites may not be able to control *which* stories surface on the news agenda, but they can still control the way a given story develops, or—perhaps more crucially—how the story ends.

This calls our attention to so-called anomalous stories and how they may become modified or rationalized over the course of their time in the news spotlight. According to Bennett et al. (1985), such stories reflect inevitable (though occasional) lapses in the gatekeeping filter of news producers. Rather than invoking a watchdog response, they tend to induce an active role for journalists as discursive “repairers,” re-adjusting narratives to fit within dominant ideological frameworks.

For Bennett et al., this aspect of *re*-framing provides potential clues as to how counter-hegemonic stories can be reconciled with an otherwise ideologically consensual news system. Their central argument is that the surfacing of these stories impels journalists to re-construct the story in accordance with dominant norms and values. In this respect, they ascribe a more interventionist role for journalists in the performance of ideological work compared with the primary definition model, which casts them as “secondary definers” in merely reproducing structures of dominance.

But they start from the position that such stories represent unusual deviations from a paradigmatic line, as opposed to recurring staples of the serious news diet. As already noted, this does not seem to capture the frequency and prominence of such stories over recent years, especially in the national security context. However, celebratory accounts of a new pluralism age seem to miss the vital point that ideological hegemony is most stable when it is least visible. This compels us to examine critically those instances where the news media look and feel like the antithesis of hegemonic power (Lukes (1974) 2005). Stories that carry an implicit challenge to the legitimizing function of national security discourse provide ripe pickings for such an endeavor. As does a focus

on public service news because of its reputation for fairness, accuracy, and that all-important key to ideological power—credibility.

What seems clear from a cursory examination of the case study presented here is that mainstream journalists were by no means reading off an official script, nor actively seeking to “repair” the narrative in line with dominant perspectives. Yet the story’s finale—a precipitous news event that drew the narrative to an abrupt close—told of accountability resolution rather than failure. It is for this reason that the research paid special attention to this aspect of resolution. For in the midst of unprecedented exposure of institutional corruption within the national security state, the promise of accountability remains largely unfulfilled. Inquiries come and go, often ending in farce or delayed far beyond the ever shortening attention span of the rolling news media. The fundamental question that this research set out to answer concerns the role of journalism in such accountability failure.

More specifically, the study interrogated the following overarching question:

What is the scope and what are the limits of journalism’s watchdog performance in respect of national security news?

It starts from an assumption that news stories centering on the suppression of accountability by powerful interests—obstructions, whitewashes, cover-ups—tend to attract acute attention from public service media. They offer a dramatic news narrative that conforms to the values of serious news, and we might reasonably consider that uncovering, investigating, and exposing such transgressions is at the heart of journalism’s social purpose. In other words, where formal mechanisms of accountability fail, journalists step into the front line of public defense.

Not all journalists identify with this ideal type of “activist” reporting. But it captures the liberal narrative that dominates the discourse of serious news. This narrative places special emphasis on journalist autonomy as a foundation of professional credibility and a pillar of democracy (Curran 1991).

But how these stories are covered—and more crucially, how the coverage ends—can have a crucial bearing on accountability outcomes. It compels us to confront a potential paradox: that journalists can indeed play the role of watchdog while ultimately doing ideological work on behalf of the national security state.

Research Design and Method

The sampling strategy was guided by the assumption that if ideological power in the news is contingent on its *credibility*, then our inquiry ought to focus on those outlets that have the highest reputations for accuracy, impartiality, and independence. In the United Kingdom, public service regulation imposes these qualities on terrestrial broadcasters that remain the dominant sources of news and information (Ofcom 2013). They also play a powerful agenda-setting role in view of the relatively constricted nature of the television medium. While the press might be traditionally more forceful

in defining what *is* news—and thereby playing an agenda-leading role—it is television that determines which news stories really *matter* and is said to be the dominant medium of the public sphere (Born 2005; Dahlgren 1995).

With this in mind, the sampling population was restricted to the national news broadcasts at lunchtime, early evening, and late-evening time slots on BBC1, BBC2, ITV, and Channel 4. Channel 5 was excluded in view of its entertainment orientation compared with the other public service broadcasters, and its relatively low audience ratings for news. The sampling population was further restricted to midweek programs to avoid anomalies caused by variations in the weekend schedule. In any given week, this yielded approximately 1,500 minutes of news programming across forty editions, all of which were produced by the two dominant terrestrial news providers—BBC and ITN.

The sampling timeframe begins with the termination of the SFO inquiry in December 2006—an event that elevated the controversy to a prime-time television news story—and ends with the announcement of plea bargain settlements in February 2010. The actual analysis sample was derived from key term searches in wholesale clip libraries. The focus was on scripted reports as these constitute definable units of analysis, but attention was also paid to other features within the program including anchor introductions and bridges between reports, live studio interviews, and “two-ways” between anchors and reporters. This ensured that the analysis encompassed both scripted and non-scripted features of the news broadcast as well as attention to intertextual aspects.

The methodology was, accordingly, grounded in critical discourse analysis (CDA). This provided a basis for probing both the micro and macro components of the text, and both latent and manifest meanings. Textual analysis also encompassed elements of both content and framing analysis, as outlined below. But CDA extends beyond content and framing analysis insofar as it encompasses attention to intertextual components and seeks to situate a given text within broader related discourses (Machin and Mayr 2012).

With this in mind, analysis of news texts involved a number of steps as follows (though not necessarily taken in sequential order).

Step 1: Position

The selected news report was examined in its relation with other reports and features within the program. Identified attributes included whether or not the report was included in the headlines, the report’s duration and where it was positioned within the timeframe of the program, the extent and form of discursive features that enclosed the report (including anchor bridges and introductions, live studio interviews, and live “two-ways” between anchor and reporters), and other characteristics of positioning (such as inclusion in categorized items such as “business” or “news in brief”). Contextual details were also noted about the program itself such as the target audience, time of day, and so on.

Step 2: Composition and Thematic Structure

This step involved comprehensive attention to the news text, beginning with surface structures including audio-visual features, use of graphical text, and language and lexical order within the report's script. The analysis then progressed to identifying narrative features such as the main characters and the central proposition of the text which, although formally undefined, tends to be accentuated in the headline, introduction, and conclusion of reports (van Dijk 1998).

Step 3: Sources

The apparent, cited and featured sources within the report were also noted along with their relative order and position, and any supplementary evidence highlighted (such as statistics, witness statements, etc.). Attention was paid to qualitative features such as the degree of certitude and qualification of sources included in the report, how they are presented by the reporter and related to other sources, and any implied or explicit inferences made following the extract in which they are featured.

Step 4: Quantities

This step involved measuring quantitative features of the report such as volume and frequency. The duration of the report was first noted, followed by the number of sources featured in person. These sources were then coded according to voices in support of, or critical of security state positions. Any instances where opinions appeared neutral or ambiguous were disregarded. While quantitative indicators further enhanced our assessment of the report's relative framing balance, their value was fully realized after the case study was completed and inferences could be drawn in relation to the full sample. So, for instance, by looking at totals for report durations, it was possible to compare the relative coverage that the case attracted between different outlets, times of day, and so on, as well as across the timeframe of the case study. Comparisons across these categories could also be drawn on the relative proportions of critical and supportive voices featured in reports, giving us important macro insights into the balance of coverage as a whole.

Step 5: Omissions and Counterfactuals

The final step in the analysis involved attention to what was missing from the report, and how else it might have been constructed. What prior knowledge is pre-supposed on behalf of the viewer? What information and inferences are taken for granted as "common sense?" Perhaps most importantly, this step interrogated alternative propositions that *could* have been advanced by the report. How else might the headline have run? What other sources and evidence could have been included?

This final step was informed by extensive background case research, to examine the wider discursive context of the story. A core component of this involved in-depth

and semi-structured interviews with a cross-section of news agents who were active in agenda building around the case. Respondents included ten journalists, eight senior news executives, four mid-level to senior civil servants in communication roles, two senior-legal professionals, and four campaigners (most attributions are anonymized in the presentation of findings as per agreed terms with interview respondents). Interviews were also used to further interrogate specific hypotheses generated from the analysis of news texts and overcome some of the limitations associated with the interpretive paradigm in communications research (Morley 1980).

As well as paying attention to background, it was equally important to examine outcomes. Our concern is with news stories that center on allegations of corruption within the national security state and the accountability institutions that monitor them. These stories therefore have identifiable outcomes: Are the allegations formally investigated by the relevant authorities? Do investigations result in legal prosecutions? Are there consequences in terms of sanctions, resignations, or public apologies? Such questions are critical because they provide insights into whether, how, and why news stories are brought to a close and the sense of resolution or otherwise that is conveyed in narrative closure. Attention to the same or similar sources used in background research can then give us an indication of what happens *after* the media spotlight has faded.

Findings

The announcement of the plea bargain settlements in 2010 finally brought an end to prolonged journalistic scrutiny of the case. Prior to that, the story provoked recurring displays of robust and antagonistic journalism. This was especially apparent in a David and Goliath narrative that accompanied coverage of campaigners' legal battle against the government. An "unlawful" High Court ruling in April 2008 concerning the decision to halt the SFO enquiry was described by *News at Ten* as "scathing," accusing the SFO of "abject surrender."⁵ The program even made mention of alleged "dirty tricks" by BAe in the run up to the High Court ruling:

This tiny peace group [CAAT] says it was infiltrated by a spy working for Britain's biggest arms company BAe. Someone somehow managed to steal dozens of confidential emails and pass them on to BAe.⁶

The language here, pitting the "tiny peace group" against "Britain's biggest arms company," is illustrative of the willingness of journalists even on the main bulletins to go beyond impartiality codes in adopting the David and Goliath narrative. The very announcement that campaigners had won the right to challenge the decision was celebrated as a triumph of the weak—"today they won victory"—and although it was "unlikely that the investigation will be reopened," an unlawful ruling would nonetheless "send a clear message about how the government should act in the future."⁷

In general, the analysis programs within the sample (*Newsnight* and *Channel 4*) exhibited a more antagonistic approach to scrutinizing and challenging official source

Table 1. Airtime Subsumed by Protagonist and Antagonist Sources in News Reports of the Al Yamamah Controversy, December 2010 to February 2011.

	Analysis Programs	Main Bulletins
Protagonists	258 seconds	204 seconds
Antagonists	362 seconds	168 seconds

Source. National Film Archives, BBC Online.

Note. Figures are based on reports broadcast between November 2004 and February 2010. "Protagonist" sources were taken to denote those who spoke on behalf of or in support of the government and BAe Systems. "Antagonist" sources were all those who attacked government or BAe positions including elites. Equivocal statements were discounted, as were statements during interview exchanges in which sources were challenged by reporters. This was to ensure that the sample included only those excerpts of reports that gave a favorable presentation to the speakers in each case. Analysis programs refer to BBC 2's *Newsnight* and the evening edition of the *Channel 4 News*. The main bulletins cover the lunchtime, evening, and late-night news programs on BBC 1 and ITV. BAe = British Aerospace Systems.

positions. This is reflected partly in the types of sources featured in news reports, and the duration of airtime that they received. Table 1 compares the time allocated in reports to protagonist sources (who spoke on behalf or in support of the government/BAe) and antagonist sources (who offered dissenting views). These figures should be treated with a degree of caution as within any given report, the balance did not necessarily reflect the critical slant of the piece as a whole. Nevertheless, they do suggest that analysis reports did not merely cover the controversy in greater breadth and depth, but were implicitly more critical of the government and BAe compared with the main bulletins.

It was largely when it came to reporting on BAe's eventual settlements that television news outlets across the sample appeared to be complicit in an official strategy to bring closure to the story. For one thing, reporting on the settlements was relatively limited in quantitative terms. The BBC's *Newsnight* report lasted 3.2 minutes in contrast to an average of 8.1 minutes for the five other reports it ran during the life of the story.⁸ Qualitatively speaking, there was a tendency to obscure the extent of the SFO's capitulation in the plea bargaining process. This was strikingly evident in light of an earlier *Channel 4 News* edition in October 2009 that reported that "attempts to strike a bargain between [the SFO and BAe] broke down last night as the SFO asked the company to accept a fine of over a billion pounds."⁹ In exchange, BAe was offered a reduced charge, crucially avoiding the acknowledgment of corruption or bribery. But by the time the parties had reached their settlement four months later, there was no mention in the news of the fact that BAe had successfully bargained more than 97 percent off the initial offer and still only accepted the reduced charge of "accounting irregularities." What's more, this settlement was announced as a resolution to all the remaining investigations that the SFO was conducting into BAe activities around the world, including the sale of a military air traffic control system to Tanzania, a country that does not have an air force.

Another way in which television news effectively endorsed closure was evident in their failure to scrutinize the U.S. portion of the settlement (pertaining to a deal

between BAe and the U.S. Department of Justice). Although considerably larger than the SFO settlement, it was relatively small when judged against outcomes in comparable cases. As one earlier edition of *Newsnight* noted in 2008,

The German engineering giant Siemens was fined 800 million dollars in the US after admitting to its financial scandal. If BAE is found guilty the penalty is likely to be far higher. It's seen as a critical case for cleaning up international trade.¹⁰

News reports on the analysis programs did highlight the strategic implications of the reduced charge for BAe's expansion in the United States, noting that avoidance of "the c-word" meant that they could continue to bid for lucrative contracts stateside. But in tandem with the main bulletins, the analysis programs were on the whole equivocal as to whether the actual settlement was good or bad for the company. Typical of the response was a description of the outcome by one correspondent as "an expensive way to wipe the slate clean."¹¹

Framing the outcome as a defeat for BAe—or at least a partial one—implicitly suggested that both the SFO and Department of Justice deliberations were not compromised by improper influence or interference. This to some extent pre-empted the need to probe the deeper and more difficult questions that were very much the focus of earlier coverage. Documents disclosed during earlier High Court proceedings had already raised question marks over the SFO's independence. News programs had also featured testimonies that suggested that the U.S. Department of Justice might equally be vulnerable to executive pressure. For instance, as well as drawing attention to the threatening influence of BAe's U.S. competitors, earlier reports highlighted the strategic importance of BAe to the U.S. military:

If BAe Systems North America was in some way excluded from federal contracting it would immediately create problems for the US military and the intelligence community. [BAE] is engaged in some of the most secret programmes of the intelligence community, programmes the government doesn't even acknowledge exist.¹²

Some of these reports also highlighted the fact that the U.S. Justice Department was constrained by the reluctance of the White House "to antagonise their friends the Saudis."¹³ As one source put it,

The Department of Justice now has to investigate a deal between a company that makes equipment crucial to American troop safety in Iraq and one of the President's best friends.¹⁴

Indeed, throughout the coverage, improper influence had been contextualized in relation to the apparent capture of the government by BAe lobbyists, and the subsequent influence of government over the legal and investigative branches of state. So long as these questions were raised, they served to demonstrate the media's own independence from that flow of influence. Their neglect in the final analysis forces us

therefore to consider the opposite: that the news media ultimately failed in their fourth estate obligations. Part of the problem was that journalists did not adequately drill down into the details of the deals that were announced simultaneously late on a Friday afternoon. By the return of regular scheduled news programs on the following Monday, the announcement was already old news and the media momentum had been largely lost.

Another way in which reports on the settlements did little to expose accountability failure was evident in their tendency to adopt the narrative of “change.” This was achieved by giving near exclusive voice to the view that BAe is, today, “a very different beast,” with one source reiterating the dictum:

You can be really confident we’re a changed company. We’ve changed our board. We’ve changed all of the policies of the company.¹⁵

It is perhaps significant that the only appearance of a BAe representative throughout the sample occurred at this point, with the company’s chairman granting the BBC an extended and exclusive interview. But in contrast to previous recorded interviews with elite sources, this statement was neither probed nor challenged in the report. We were left wondering what the assumed change amounted to, especially in respect of policy. Had BAe stopped making payments to third parties? Were they still selling military systems to countries that did not need them “at a price they couldn’t afford?”¹⁶

News programs also neglected to highlight the fact that the government was not subject to accountability proceedings. This was in marked contrast to earlier reports, which affirmed that the alleged illegal payments were made in the full knowledge of the Ministry of Defence,¹⁷ that BAe was a mere contractor to an agreement between the Saudi and U.K. governments,¹⁸ and in essence no more than “alleged co-conspirators.”¹⁹ One earlier report had gone as far as to suggest that from a policy perspective, BAe and the government were virtually indivisible:

Any prosecution would also likely have failed once it became clear the government was part of any financial arrangement. The British government knew all the time what was going on. They were complicit. Indeed in this whole affair it’s hard to see the difference between BAE and Downing Street.²⁰

The same journalists who had amplified the concerns and outrage of campaigners over the decision to halt the inquiry offered a much more muted account of their views in relation to the settlements. But perhaps the most glaring symptom of the media’s acquiescent response was the relative silence over the legitimacy of the plea bargaining process itself. With the exception of one *Channel 4 News* report,²¹ the legitimacy and transparency of that process went unchallenged, despite the criminal nature of the charges.

Regardless of whether the fines represented by themselves a substantial sum, they were by any standard a small price when measured against the rewards of the settlements. BAe had succeeded in getting multiple investigations quashed on both sides of

the Atlantic, avoided resignations and the central charge of bribery and corruption, secured the renewal of the Al Yamamah contract, and perhaps, most significantly, the company was now free to expand and bid for lucrative new contracts in the United States. A spectacle of accountability belied a spectacular defeat for campaigners and alternative sources.

How did this happen? One recurring theme that emerged in interviews was the notion of “story fatigue.” By the time the settlements were announced, the story had been recurring as a regular television feature for over three years, and for considerably longer in the press. The need for editors to “move on” from a story was a point of consensus among respondents. It was most emphatically put forward by a government press officer:

The thing about the dynamics of the media—it can’t maintain that level of hype. Everyone almost wants the break clause for them to move on to something else and the media are quite happy if you say “right I think lets have an inquiry” and they’ll say “ok you know what, we can move on to something else now.” The editors are probably sitting there thinking “that’s quite good because I don’t think we could have kept that going.”

There was a sense of resigned acceptance among journalists that little more could be done to shed light on the controversy. According to a senior BBC reporter,

Well you kind of think once you get to a settlement actually what more can you do [. . .]
The parties had agreed to come to the end of the road.

In fact, legal proceedings continued with campaigners mounting a failed bid for a judicial review of the SFO settlement. But by then the story had lost its media legs.

What is clear is that the closure framing owed much to the dynamics of the news cycle—in particular the need to move on from stories that were perceived to have run their course. Central to that perception was the declared end to investigations and judicial scrutiny. This deprived the news media of the controversy’s primary raw material (disclosure documents) as well as the official sanction bestowed by the advancement of judicial process.

But the final act in the Al Yamamah story was not the work of journalists and official sources alone. In at least one respect, the emphasis on culpability and punishment chimed with the strategies of alternative sources as they sought to maximize publicity around the issues at the heart of their campaigns. Even a solicitor on the case conceded that there was much more to the goals of campaigners than just winning the legal battle:

Although we ultimately lost [. . .] from the client’s perspective it was all about bringing this into the public domain, making it embarrassing for the government and the SFO that this could have happened, and that was all achieved.

According to Symon Hill, press officer for Campaign Against the Arms Trade at the time of the legal battle,

The case was part of the campaign. We were doing other things so that we would raise the issue politically, we would get a lot of coverage about arms company influence in government. It was part of a wider campaign.

The point here is not that campaigners welcomed or even accepted ultimate defeat in the courts (or outside of them). But the central goal of their campaign was to draw attention to corrupt practices in the arms trade, rather than shortcomings in the legal system. This engendered a conflict that was reflected in CAAT's own nuanced press release headline on the day the settlements were announced:

BAE GUILTY BUT WILL NOT FACE COURT.

To be clear, CAAT were outspoken against the failings of the plea bargaining system. But this criticism was implicitly subdued in highlighting that the settlements had delivered a guilty verdict, however limited. It should be remembered that official sources only tacitly endorsed a guilty verdict. The lack of definitive clarity made it incumbent on campaigners to place emphasis on it. Had they not, the ambiguity of the outcome meant that there was at least a possibility that a different and much less welcome frame might have surfaced:

INVESTIGATIONS FIND BAE NOT GUILTY OF CORRUPTION AFTER ALL.

It is self-evident that this kind of headline would have been the worst media outcome from a campaigner's perspective. But there is another more compelling force that led campaigners to offer partial endorsement of the settlements. This stemmed from a perceived need to be seen as welcoming, in the words of Paul Ingram of the British American Security Information Council, "the principle of demonstrated guilt" and not to be seen as dismissing out of hand what was a long-awaited accountability resolution:

Campaigners and organisations like our own have our reputations to consider too and we don't want to be seen as continually negative and harping away and never being satisfied which is a very real potential, very real issue. BAE admit to guilt and we criticise them—the story then becomes our unwillingness to be reasonable.

In this light, we can glimpse the impact of the closure strategy, exploiting both the limitations of the news cycle and strategic disadvantages of alternative sources to maximum effect. It succeeded in outmaneuvering both campaigning journalists and campaigners themselves.

Strategic disadvantages did not of course dampen campaigners' expression of outrage or indeed inhibit their attempts to bring a judicial review of the settlements. In this respect, there was a marked difference between them and the journalists who all but went silent on the issue.

Discussion

One of the stand-out features of the coverage concerned an emphasis on scale, most notably in the coverage surrounding the joint penalty and plea bargain settlements announced in February 2010. Virtually all headlines were constructed around the total figure that this amounted to, providing a dramatic backdrop to frames that promoted a sense of accountability triumph. BAE sources were afforded a virtually unchallenged platform to emphasize the narratives of reform and redress—"we are a changed company"—cementing historical boundaries constructed around the controversy. All of this contributed to a dominant discourse of resolution centering on restorative accountability, but it was one that eclipsed compelling frames of accountability failure.

Within the sample, the analysis programs (*Newsnight* and *Channel 4*) did offer more nuanced and critical examinations of the plea bargain settlements compared with the main bulletins. But rather than exemplify pluralist diversity, this divergence ensured that even cursory questions surrounding the legitimacy of the settlements were confined to the margins of the news schedule and never reached a critical mass audience.

As we have seen, alternative sources were to some extent complicit in the dominant narrative that accompanied the settlements, inasmuch as their initial responses sought to highlight BAE's culpability rather than the limits of accountability. But adversarial journalism in the terms considered here is not dependent on sources—official or alternative—in the definitional process. Even under impartiality constraints, broadcast journalists are capable of playing a leading role in both constructing and advancing critical positions (Entman 2007).

Watchdog journalism in this sense is intimately associated with accountability *outcomes*. These outcomes are a legitimizing force both for journalists and the centers of power that they scrutinize. Accountability outcomes promote the idea that no one is above the law—including the intelligence and security state—and that concentrated power is ultimately checked by the free flow of contesting voices, views, and ideas. It is not surprising, therefore, that news organizations are drawn to the spectacle of accountability on the various stages in which it is set—public inquiries, select committee hearings, judicial reviews, and so on.

But the notion of accountability spectacle in this sense does not by itself tell us much about whether or not journalists live up to the role ascribed to them by the liberal narrative. The research undertaken here was designed to investigate this core question—how far do the news media deliver on the accountability promise of watchdog journalism?

In the case examined, this promise went unfulfilled because public service journalism, on balance, painted a picture of restorative accountability that was ultimately in tune with security state agendas, with the coverage intensity fading against a backdrop of "resolution." This is not to suggest that the news was necessarily wrong in implying resolution. But it persistently marginalized frames that implied otherwise. In this sense, journalism failed because it did not adequately consider failure of accountability at large.

The degrees and character of elite dissent observed in the case are testament to the nuanced variances that preclude an overly reductionist picture of ideological control. They speak in some degree to the models of “indexing” theory that have been advanced as explanations of both the scope and limits of journalist autonomy (e.g., Bennett et al. 2006; Entman 2004).

However, indexing theories provide a necessary but insufficient basis for explaining the ideological contours of the case study. This consisted in a crucial frame that was systematically undermined in the coverage, one that conferred both legitimacy and significance on alternative sources, while acknowledging their ultimate failure to achieve meaningful accountability. This was the one frame that directly challenged conclusions based on restorative accountability and its exclusion ultimately promoted the credibility of the state’s self-investigations conducted by the SFO. At the same time, the credibility of journalism was underlined to some extent by the existence of broader counter-hegemonic frames in the preceding coverage (though these tended to be circumscribed by limits within the news schedule that meant their reach was restricted to particular audiences).

There have been several related strands to this thesis in the media studies literature. The idea that the media function to project social stability in the aftermath of crises and moral panics has found voice in various studies (Ericson et al. 1991; Hall 1982; Tuchman 1978) and invokes a similar preservation of faith in the established order. But the notion of restorative order does not quite capture the hegemonic force of restorative *accountability*. This is because the latter does more than just discourage deviance or dissent. It creates an *impression* of transparency, contest, and accountability that is at best imbalanced, at worst fundamentally flawed.

There have certainly been plenty of other studies that have acknowledged instances in which the media align with official or elite sources in presenting institutional wrongdoing as essentially isolated and containable (e.g., Bennett 2009; Schlesinger and Tumber 1994). But these accounts do not tend to acknowledge the ideological significance of such instances or their systematic nature. According to the findings here, the systematic element comprises the routine undermining or exclusion of frames that point to accountability failure. The potential ideological quality of this is the promotion of a worldview that sees power as effectively contained by the institutions set up to monitor and control it—including the media themselves.

There are also a number of strands in the political science and media studies literature that have focused on spectacle as a legitimizing force (e.g., Davis 2002; Edelman 1988; Habermas (1962) 1989; Kellner 2003). In these accounts, the notion of spectacle is invoked to describe media and image management by political elites in the mobilization of popular support for policies, or in the projection of power.

But in this case, the spectacle was about a *humbling* of power that serves to legitimize not the powerful themselves but the procedural framework and rules that both structure and contain them. Fundamentally, it is about the restoration of faith in, and allegiance to “rational-legal authority” (Weber (1964) 2009), the primary source of state legitimation in late capitalist democracies.

Of course, no single case “can reveal the logic of an entire paradigm” (Bennett et al. 1985: 56), if such a logic exists. It seems unlikely that the news media will function

in precisely the same way in different cases involving national security news, let alone other kinds of stories that expose (or threaten to expose) the hidden workings of state-corporate power. There are a number of recent cases—such as the controversy over the Iraq War—where a “resolution” along the lines discussed here is yet to occur (at the time of writing). In other cases (such as the alleged complicity of U.K. security services in secret rendition and torture), there seems little prospect of any such resolution. Other cases still—such as the Ed Snowden revelations of mass surveillance—have prompted a reactionary response from officials in their efforts to delegitimize the source or journalism behind the story.

Yet in each of these examples, the story appears to have “peaked” when powerful figures—from prime ministers to security service heads—have been placed in the dock and subjected to public questioning and scrutiny in parliament, public inquiries, or the newsroom. In this sense at least, accountability spectacle does seem to color much of the narrative around national security news. The findings presented here suggest that such spectacle can—paradoxically—serve to close rather than open the boundaries of the news agenda and ultimately preclude meaningful public scrutiny. They call for a new direction in the study of the media’s “ideological work” that focuses on co-option of narratives around resistance, change, transparency, and accountability. It may yet provide clues as to how such narratives—which increasingly surface in national security news—can be accommodated by, and perhaps reinforce, an overall theory of dominance.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared the following potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Notes

1. *Channel 4 News*, March 15, 2007.
2. See Government News, “Ministers Launch Anti-corruption DVD at the Start of Responsible Business Month,” *Gov-news.org* (November 2006). Available at http://www.gov-news.org/gov/uk/news/ministers_launch_anti_corruption_dvd_start/64671.html (last accessed June 26, 2014).
3. See Article 5, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/4/18/38028044.pdf> (last accessed June 24, 2014).
4. *Channel 4 News*, February 6, 2010.
5. *News at Ten*, April 10, 2008.
6. *ITV Late Evening News*, November 9, 2007.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Newsnight*, February 8, 2010.
9. *Channel 4 News*, October 1, 2009.

10. Peter Marshall, *Newsnight*, May 29, 2008.
11. *Channel 4 News*, January 5, 2010.
12. Loren Thompson (CEO and defense specialist, Lexington Trust), *Channel 4 News*, June 20, 2007.
13. *Newsnight*, February 15, 2008.
14. Mark Miller (U.S. investigations lawyer), *Channel 4 News*, June 26, 2007.
15. Dick Olver (BAe Chairman), *Newsnight*, February 8, 2010.
16. *Newsnight*, February 8, 2010.
17. *ITV Early Evening News*, June 7, 2007.
18. *BBC 10 O'Clock News*, June 26, 2007.
19. *Newsnight*, February 14, 2007.
20. *Newsnight*, February 15, 2008.
21. *Channel 4 News*, February 6, 2010.

References

- Benkler, Yochai. 2011. "A Free Irresponsible Press: Wikileaks and the Battle Over the Soul of the Networked Fourth Estate." *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* 46:311–97.
- Bennett, William L. 2009. *News: The Politics of Illusion*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Bennett, William L., Lynne A. Gressett, and William Haltom. 1985. "Repairing the News: A Case Study of the News Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 35 (2): 50–68.
- Bennett, William L., and Shanto Iyengar. 2008. "A New Era of Minimal Effects? The Changing Foundations of Political Communication." *Journal of Communication* 58 (4): 707–31.
- Bennett, William L., Regina G. Lawrence, and Steven Livingston. 2006. "None Dare Call it Torture: Indexing and the Limits of Press Independence in the Abu Ghraib Scandal." *Journal of Communication* 56 (3): 467–85.
- Born, Georgina. 2005. *Uncertain Vision: Birt, Dyke and the Reinvention of the BBC*. London: Vintage.
- Curran, James. 1991. "Rethinking the Media as a Public Sphere." In *Communication and Citizenship*, ed. Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks. London: Routledge.
- Dahl, Robert A. 1961. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Dahlgren, Peter. 1995. *Television and the Public Sphere: Citizenship, Democracy and the Media*. London: Sage.
- Davis, Aeron. 2002. *Public Relations Democracy: Politics, Public Relations and the Mass Media in Britain*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Edelman, Murray. 1988. *Constructing the Political Spectacle*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Entman, Robert M. 2004. *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Entman, Robert M. 2007. "Framing Bias: Media in the Distribution of Power." *Journal of Communication* 57: 163–73.
- Ericson, Richard V., Patricia M. Baranek, and Janet B. L. Chan. 1989. *Negotiating Control: A Study of News Sources*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Ericson, Richard V., Patricia M. Baranek, and Janet B. L. Chan. 1991. *Representing Order: Crime, Law and Justice in the News Media*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Gans, Herbert J. 2004. *Democracy and the News*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Habermas, Jürgen. (1962) 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Hall, Stuart. 1982. "The Rediscovery of Ideology: Return of the Repressed in Media Studies." In *Culture, Society and the Media*, ed. Tony Bennett, James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, and Janet Wollacott. London: Routledge. pp. 52-86.
- Hall, Stuart, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts. 1978. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London: Macmillan.
- Hallin, Daniel. C. 1994. *We keep America on Top of the World: Journalism and the Public Sphere*. London: Routledge.
- Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. 2002. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Kellner, Douglas. 2003. *Media Spectacle*. London: Routledge.
- Livingston, Steven, and William L. Bennett. 2003. "Gatekeeping, Indexing, and Live-Event News: Is Technology Altering the Construction of News?" *Political Communication* 20:363-80.
- Lukes, Stephen. (1974) 2005. *Power: A Radical View*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Machin, David, and Andrea Mayr. 2012. *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis: A Multimodal Approach*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- McCombs, Maxwell E. 2004. *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion*. Oxford: Polity.
- McNair, Brian. 2005. *Cultural Chaos: Journalism, News and Power in a Globalised World*. London: Routledge.
- Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Power Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Morley, David. 1980. *The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding*. London: British Film Institute.
- Ofcom. 2013. *Communications Market Report*. London: Ofcom.
- Parsons, Talcott. (1960) 1986. "Power and the Social System." In *Power*, ed. Stephen Lukes. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. pp. 94-143.
- Price, Vincent, David Tewsbury, and Elizabeth Powers. 1997. "Switching Trains of Thought." *Communication Research* 24 (5): 481-506.
- Schlesinger, Phillip, and Howard Tumber. 1994. *Reporting Crime: The Media Politics of Criminal Justice*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Schudson, Michael. 1995. *The Power of News*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Truman, David B. 1951. *The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion*. New York: Knopf.
- Tuchman, Gaye. 1978. *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: Free Press.
- van Dijk, Teun A. 1998. "Opinions and Ideologies in the Press." In *Approaches to Media Discourse*, ed. Alan Bell and Peter Garrett. Oxford: Blackwell. pp. 21-63.
- Weber, Max. (1964) 2009. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York: Free Press.

Author Biography

Justin Schlosberg is lecturer in Journalism and Media at Birkbeck, University of London and Edmund J. Safra Network Fellow at Harvard University for 2014-15. He is the author of *Power Beyond Scrutiny: Media, Justice and Accountability* (Pluto 2013) and a founding member of the Media Reform Coalition (mediareform.org.uk)

Media Strategies and Manipulations of Intelligence Services: The Case of Israel

The International Journal of Press/Politics
2015, Vol. 20(2) 247–265
© The Author(s) 2014
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1940161214556514
ijpp.sagepub.com



Clila Magen¹

Abstract

Existing research on the relationship between Israeli intelligence services and the media is limited and fragmented. This work attempts to fill in the gaps by shedding light on four main strategies that have been commonly implemented by the Israeli intelligence community: ambiguity and concealment of media relations, the “if you would only know” strategy, exploiting patriotism and cooptation, and information manipulations and psychological warfare. These strategies were utilized frequently by Israel’s intelligence services, and thus have had an impact on the intelligence services’ accountability. However, significant changes in Israel’s society and media have created new challenges to the intelligence services in the public sphere. This study examines these changes and differentiates between the organizations within the intelligence community, domestic and foreign, which, facing differing challenges, tailor different methods for addressing the media as a result. This paper is based on several years of research and a large database of literature, media coverage, and in-depth interviews with key figures in Israel’s intelligence community (former Mossad and Israeli Security Authority directors), senior journalists, and politicians.

Keywords

agenda-setting, censorship, media scandals, state-media relations, media ethics

Introduction

In the past decade, the relationship between the media and the intelligence services has increasingly become a subject of considerable debate and controversy in the West.

¹Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel

Corresponding Author:

Clila Magen, School of Communication, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 5290002, Israel.
Email: clila.magen@biu.ac.il

This is a result of several heavily publicized incidents that exposed the public to the intelligence community's methods of pulling the strings in the public sphere while remaining behind the scenes (Diamond 2008; Hastedt 2005; Lowenthal 2011). The American and British intelligence services were severely criticized for distorting intelligence data to justify the decision to invade Iraq (Kessler 2003; Tenet and Harlow 2007). The media were also criticized for having too easily taken government declarations at face value.¹ The WikiLeaks affair and Edward Snowden's revelations of mass surveillance programs of journalists and e-mails in the United States also demonstrated the problematic nature of the rather loose intelligence accountability mechanism and the difficulty of the media to hold the clandestine sector to account for its activities due to their unique secretive nature.²

One of the most substantial roles of the media in liberal democracies is their fourth estate function, serving as guardians and watchdogs of the public interest and as investigators who disclose wrongdoings of actors in society (Davis 2010; Hampton 2010; Schultz 1998). In this sense, the media-intelligence relationship is inherently tense because two major principles frequently collide: the public's right to know versus the government's duty to protect its nation's security. Reconciling these two principles becomes exceedingly complex when, on the one hand, both the media and the public demand to know what is happening and why, while on the other hand, the intelligence services, in an effort to protect vital secrets or conceal failures, offer limited and often incomplete information. To obtain an in-depth grasp of the complexity of the relationship and better understand its limitations, it is essential to conceptualize the media strategies applied by intelligence services. The following study is based on several years of extensive research and a large database, including interviews with key figures who for the first time contribute their perspective to this fascinating dimension of intelligence services. The case of Israel may prove particularly illuminating, as several recent incidents, which were attributed to the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence service, have drawn a great deal of media attention (Bar-Zohar and Mishal 2012).

Literature Review

Research on the media-intelligence relationship is sparse because of the difficulty of obtaining objective, reliable evidence on such a highly sensitive issue and the tendency of the services to automatically block any request for information. Nevertheless, several studies do analyze this unique relationship. Some demonstrate how the professions of a journalist and an intelligence officer are similar in various aspects, including their main objectives of gathering information, stimulating sources to cooperate and protecting them, among others (Holt 1994; Omand 2009). Others focus on the gradual process of releasing classified information as part of a changing approach of intelligence services toward the public sphere (Bennett 2002; Thurlow 2000). Dover and Goodman's (2009) edited book, *Spinning Intelligence*, focuses on how intelligence services and the media use each other for their own interests and objectives. Hulnick (1999) deals with the media strategies of the American intelligence community and asserts that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) can afford to open itself up more to

the public and the media. He concludes his essay with concrete recommendations for improvement, including extending the scope of public appearances of CIA officials and collaborating with producers of films and TV series. Several of his suggestions are now applied by the Agency (Jenkins 2009). Johnson (1986) discusses the dilemmas and ethical issues related to the use of journalists for gathering intelligence information, and Wilkinson (2009) contributes an important essay on the history of the British D-notice system in which freedom of the press and national security frequently collide. Katz (2006) and Eisin (2009) discuss the significant changes in global media and their impact on the relationship between the Israeli intelligence services and the media, which was reflected in changes such as shifts in the scope of censorship implementation and the revelation of the names of the directors of the intelligence services in the mid-1990s.

Despite the variety of subjects already studied, existing research is limited both in focus and in its disciplinary approach. First, many of the studies focus on how media cover the intelligence community and on their contribution to intelligence oversight (Gup 2004; Schlesinger 2006). Very few focus on the viewpoint of the intelligence services (Hess 2009; Kessler 1992; Robarge 2009). This may be the result of limited access and methodological barriers.

Second, there is a substantial absence of intelligence–media studies within the discipline of strategic communication. Although this theoretical framework has clear relevance to such research, it is rarely applied. The few existing studies serve to emphasize their exceptional status. In Gibson’s essay, “The Communication Dilemma of CIA,” the author discusses the objective difficulties of the CIA in opening itself to the public sphere and bases his arguments on public relations considerations (Gibson 1987). In a later study, Gibson offers a quantitative description of the FBI’s public relations over a fifty-year period, focusing on Edgar Hoover’s massive public relations methods applied in magazines, newspapers, books, movies, and so on. In the study, Gibson demonstrates how the FBI maintained a positive and strong reputation through aggressive public relations managed mainly by its director (Gibson 1997). Shpiro (2001) distinguished between German and Israeli models of media strategies communication. The German services developed a relatively open approach to the media, primarily to regain legitimacy lost during the Nazi era. According to Shpiro, the Israeli model of controlled exclusion entailed suppressing operational revelations, threatening or punishing uncooperative media outlets, and using the media to create deterrence.

A new framework for analysis offered by Magen (2013) and based on strategic communication and crisis communication literature proposes an analytical approach to the media–intelligence relationship using two basic clusters of challenges and corresponding responses. The lack of research from a strategic communication perspective creates a lacuna wherein issues that primarily involve strategic communications are analyzed without the relevant context. This significantly narrows scholars’ understanding of the methods applied by intelligence services, thus leaving an essential piece of the research puzzle rather neglected.

The work of Hillebrand (2012) does give attention to both sides of the issue. The author discusses three roles of the news media in intelligence oversight and describes limitations, such as regulatory frameworks or intelligence media strategies, which influence the ability of the news media to hold the clandestine community to account. This current study, developing the rationale behind Hillebrand's study, addresses two questions: What are the main media strategies applied by Israel's intelligence community, and how do they influence intelligence oversight by the Israeli media?

Method

The study is based on comparative qualitative content analysis of seven case studies of essentially negative publicity regarding the organizations. The database includes full coverage of the events in the three largest newspapers in Israel at the time (approximately four thousand items retrieved from *Yediot Aharonot*, *Maariv*, and *Haaretz*), literature on Israeli intelligence, biographies, and autobiographies. Newspaper items were coded according to recurrent themes of strategies, which assisted in understanding how the media covered the organizations in crisis situations, but primarily served to identify evidence of strategies and tactics applied by the organizations. However, as an independent method, this was of course not sufficient.

For the purpose of triangulation (Richards 2009), data were collected from face-to-face, in-depth interviews with twenty-five figures connected to the topic. Among them were nine former Mossad and Israeli Security Authority (ISA) directors, seven senior journalists who cover intelligence, other senior figures from Israel's intelligence services, and politicians.³ The former Chief Censor, Yitzhak Shani, who for many years played a central role in the interface between the intelligence services and the media was also interviewed. The interviewees were asked general questions on the unique relationship between the two sectors and specific questions regarding the cases and other events in which they played key roles.

Using the interview method poses some risks. As human beings by nature tend to be subjective and want to be appreciated by their friends or colleagues, they may tend to depict their experiences in a biased fashion (Lindlof and Taylor 2010). This already complicated situation may become even more problematic when the subject is the intelligence realm. Because many of the figures involved in this field frequently use tools of manipulation, scholars may find it difficult to manage the information properly and identify bias, which can damage the research's credibility. Despite these risks, it is clear that to significantly contribute to the understanding of the intelligence community's strategic communication, it is necessary to conduct interviews, notwithstanding their disadvantages. Previous studies attest to the profound contribution of interviews in intelligence research (Jenkins 2009; Lucas 2003; Tulloch 2007).

To minimize the problem of bias, this study refers to a broad scope and variety of interviewees, and data that were suspiciously biased were cross-checked with as many sources as possible. The written material supplemented the interviews and vice versa. All these elements together created an extremely large database and enabled a broad overview.

Strategies

Before discussing the media strategies of the Israel intelligence services, it is essential to explore the news production process in general and with respect to intelligence services in particular. Numerous studies revealing the layers of power structures concealed behind the news processing procedures assert that the production of news in modern society is frequently led by elites (Manning 2001). Becker (1970) coined the term “hierarchy of credibility” which refers to the likelihood that those in high status positions in society will determine the definitions of controversial topics, due to the fact that they are viewed as enjoying better access to accurate information than the majority of the population. As a result, these parties become the primary definers of the debated topics, which can serve as an extremely powerful social and political tool (Hall et al. 1978). National security institutions undoubtedly fall into the category of actors with better access to accurate information (McLaughlin 2002; Tumber and Palmer 2004), and their intelligence services are perceived as sources with even more access to exclusive information (Jamieson and Campbell 2006). This creates a built-in advantage for intelligence sources as primary definers on controversial issues (Lashmar 2013).

According to a ten-year survey of trust, the intelligence services in Israel consistently receive high scores from Israel’s citizens.⁴ Their high legitimacy among Israeli citizens creates extra leverage enabling the services to embrace the role of primary definers and maneuver the media according to their interests. It is within this context of source–media relationship that Israel’s intelligence services choose their methods and media strategies.

Ambiguity and Concealment of Media Relations

In the context of the clandestine environment, frequent usage of the cloak of secrecy may not be surprising. Indeed, since their founding and to this day, the Israeli intelligence services have adopted this as their most dominant and key strategy, even in absurd and preposterous situations when the connection between the organizations and the exposed events were visible and clear.⁵ Although several aspects of the Mossad and the Israel ISA’s approach toward the media were shaped and designed by a specific director at a certain time, the method of ambiguity was applied by all directors and became an integral part of the organizations’ communication culture.

Following the massacre of eleven athletes from the Israeli Olympic team in Munich in 1972, the Israeli government authorized a series of Mossad operations aimed at capturing all the terrorists directly or indirectly involved in the massacre. A mistaken identification of Ali Hassan Salameh, a key terrorist, led to the tragic assassination of a Moroccan waiter named Ahmed Bouchiki in Lillehammer, Norway, after which six Mossad agents were caught and arrested. To date, the incident in Lillehammer is considered one of the most serious crises the Mossad has ever confronted. For a period of twenty-three years, the Mossad and the State of Israel did not confirm nor deny any connection to the tragic incident, even though the linkage was acknowledged and

publicized all over the world.⁶ Only in 1996 was it published that Israel had decided to compensate the victim's family.⁷ Nonetheless, there was no formal admission that the Mossad had been involved in the actions leading to the death of Bouchiki, although the compensation clearly indicated that this was the case (Palmor 2000). Even years later, the Mossad director at the time, Zvi Zamir, refuses to discuss the specific case of Lillehammer, but is willing to state that in his point of view, invoking the halo of ambiguity, silence, and mystery served as the best method for the secretive organization and still does.⁸ His successor, Yitzhak Hofi, reinforced Zamir's claim, asserting that the Mossad's image depended on the organization's inscrutability:

The mystery in which we are shrouded serves a very important security function. No one knew precisely what we were capable of doing. They attributed to us things that we could never have done even if we had wanted to. On the other hand, we pulled off things that, had they known about, would have astonished them. From our perspective, our inscrutability played an extremely significant role.⁹

This strategy is apparent in many past and recent events attributed to the Mossad. The ambiguity strategy was manifested in the New Zealand affair in 2004 when two Mossad agents were caught trying to obtain New Zealand passports.¹⁰ The press reported the official Israeli response, distributed from the Prime Minister's Office as, "The two arrested are suspected of criminal activity, but the claim that they were in the service of the Mossad or any other official Israeli body can neither be confirmed nor denied."¹¹ Such a laconic statement was the standard policy in this type of event. With no admission of responsibility or apology having been offered, the case remained vague and enigmatic. The same pattern was followed in other cases as well such as the case of the assassination of a top Hezbollah official Imad Mughniyah in Damascus or the Stuxnet computer worm that penetrated the Iranian nuclear reactor control system, both actions that were attributed to the Mossad.¹²

One of the interesting findings of this study is that despite their propensity to employ the vagueness strategy, the Mossad and the ISA almost always had connections with the press to some extent. However, the existence of these connections was staunchly concealed from the public, as both organizations considered it important to maintain a secretive façade.

For example, both organizations engaged in confidential consultations with media advisors, usually, albeit not only, in crisis situations. It is quite rare to locate evidence about this from open sources, and the directors tended to deny or minimize the impact of such consultations when asked about them (Gillon 2000).¹³ For many years, the Mossad and ISA responded to different events and situations only through the Prime Minister's Office, avoiding the appointment of a formal spokesperson for several reasons.¹⁴ This served as a comfortable shield from direct media criticism and preserved an aura of mystery and secrecy. Today, both organizations have a functioning point of contact to the media, but this arrangement remains informal and behind the scenes. Off-the-record briefings with the directors are allowed occasionally and according to the circumstances, but on condition that the existence of the briefings will not be publicized.¹⁵

Another way to juggle between the objective of influencing public opinion via the media and the need for reserving a secretive façade is the tactic of sending indirect advocates, such as former directors or politicians, to speak in favor of the organizations.¹⁶ Following the failure of the attempt to assassinate a Hamas leader Khaled Mashal, in Aman, Mossad director Danny Yatom (1996–97) asked former directors of the Mossad to speak out and give interviews on TV to balance the media coverage of the events.¹⁷ Former ISA director Avi Dichter (2000–05) recalls a case when Mossad director Meir Dagan (2002–11) asked Dichter to serve as Dagan's indirect messenger and help with a negative report that was about to be published in an Israeli newspaper. Dichter instead convinced Dagan to contact the journalist directly and Dagan reluctantly agreed to do so.¹⁸

Another notable instance of concealment of the intelligence services' media relations occurred in the mid-1950s. In an effort to punish an uncooperative magazine, *Haolam Haze*, which refused to join the patriotic chorus voiced by the Israeli press toward the intelligence services, Mossad director Isser Harel tried to break the magazine financially. The Mossad established a competing journal named *Rimon* whose content and form were very similar to that of *Haolam Haze*. The public was not aware that *Rimon* was sponsored by the Mossad and, thus, indirectly financed from the public's money. Ultimately, the Mossad's attempt was unsuccessful, as *Rimon* closed two years after its establishment, while *Haolam Haze* continued to exist for many more years (Bar-Zohar 1972; Cohen 1972; Shpiro 2001).

If You Would Only Know

Every organization seeks legitimacy and support from its different stakeholders, which it achieves by constantly providing substantial information about its actions and activities and by putting efforts into restoring its reputation whenever a crisis occurs (Benoit 1997; Coombs 2012). However, for intelligence services, any expectation that they reveal their actions and activities is inconsistent with their very existence (Holt 1994; Hulnick 1999). This is obviously not unique to the Israeli case, but rather is generically the most basic characteristic of any intelligence service. However, due to the high legitimacy conferred upon the Israeli intelligence services by Israeli citizens, Israel's secretive organizations are frequently immune from public demands for transparency (Crystal 2013). Such attitudes can create a tempting and convenient foundation for troublesome unethical actions, as was the case in the mid-1980s. Following a rescue operation of a hijacked Israeli bus, line 300, in 1984, two of the terrorists involved were killed after having been captured by the ISA. Their deaths were revealed from pictures taken by journalists during the arrests. Denials, lies, cover-ups, and shifting the blame to other parties involved were the dominant strategies and tactics of the ISA. One newspaper was even shut down for four days as a sanction for printing the fact that a secret inquiry was being held to investigate the event (Gutman 1995). The standard position was that the ISA was not accountable to the public and therefore could be more flexible in choosing its methods and actions.¹⁹

The “if you would only know” strategy was frequently applied as a response to challenging questions regarding the services’ methods and operations. It clearly relates to the primary definers’ role. Following the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) disclosure of the arrest and suicide of Prisoner X, Ben Zeiger who, according to media reports, had been recruited by the Mossad, the organization refused to provide any details, claiming that any piece of information could severely risk vital intelligence assets.²⁰ The media and the public have no way of determining whether this assertion is accurate. Thus the intelligence services have a clear superiority in managing or manipulating information, with only limited methods available to journalists and the public to cross-check the official version of events and circumstances.

The justification for maintaining silence, which relies on the basic assumption that intelligence services require secrecy to be effective, is very convenient as it cannot always be challenged. In numerous situations where publications sought to write about the Israeli intelligence services, the services pursued their strategy of silence by using the two major legal tools of censorship and gag orders. Although Israeli journalists frequently raised objections to these limitations, in most cases, they obeyed the law.

In the examples of a Soviet spy in the 1960s, the Lillehammer affair, the assassination attempt of Hamas leader Khaled Mashal, as well as other numerous instances, censorship and gag orders played leading roles in managing information. Journalists were limited in their ability to examine whether the classifications and censorship were justified (Goren 1976). Following the bus line 300 affair, a senior journalist wrote,

It is difficult to explain the security considerations to inexperienced people. They rush to immediately raise the banner of freedom of the press against “bureaucracy of the blue pen.”²¹ Sure, we all long for the moment when we will not need emergency regulations under which censorship operates, but this is the law of the country, and it binds us all equally. To conclude, we should depend on the experts. *They know better.*²²

An important event that demonstrates an attempt to avoid providing information to the public on the basis of the “if you would only know” strategy occurred in the late-1980s. A Tel Aviv newspaper, Ha’ir (*The City*), sought to publish a critical piece about the director of the Mossad, Nahum Admoni, without mentioning his name.²³ The censor rejected the article for publication, claiming it would cause harm to Israel’s security assets. Ha’ir’s editor and the journalist involved petitioned the High Court to allow the publication of the article, claiming principally that criticism of the director of the Mossad does not fall within the definition of direct or immediate harm to security interests. The newspaper won the case in court and the article was published. This decision marked an important point in the complex relationship between the intelligence services and the media, demonstrating that intelligence services were no longer immune from media and public scrutiny.

Exploiting Patriotism and Co-optation

At a press conference during an emergency situation in the United States, a senior official addressed a reporter, asking him, “Whose side are you on?” (Longley-Babb 1976: 72). This comment illustrates the complexity of covering national security, when, in fact, journalists are caught between their professional duty to inform the public about what is happening and the need not to jeopardize the security of their own country. Expectations not to publish sensitive topics are held not only by the government, but by the general public as well (Carruthers 2000). Due to Israel’s position in a fragile security situation from its inception, for many years, it was a rather easy task to demand patriotism from the media. This was the standard in many situations, even when the services did not require it.²⁴

The Israeli intelligence services also applied a carrot-and-stick approach toward the media. To balance the threat of sticks such as censorship, prohibitions or cutting off intractable reporters, the intelligence services used the Editors’ Committee as an effective carrot over a long period of time. The mechanism of the Editors’ Committee was based on a give-and-take patriotic relationship. A senior figure in the government administration or security forces would brief the editors, providing them with exclusive information on condition that the editors agreed not to publish what they had heard, even if they received the information from another source. This platform created a unique situation in which the elite of the Israeli press entered a prestigious club of those holding sensitive information in the country, keeping the information confidential and away from the public (Negbi 1992).²⁵ Meir Amit, Mossad director in the 1960s, described how he used the tool of the Editors’ Committee when a Kurdish leader visited Israel:

During that period we were in close contact with the Kurds and helped them fight the Iraqis. We brought the Kurd’s leader Mustafa Barzani to Israel . . . I introduced him to the Editors’ Committee . . . Nothing leaked out from this meeting.²⁶

The logic guiding the security system employing such a mechanism is obvious. However, from the media’s point of view, this arrangement clearly undermines the basic obligations of journalists to report to the public on what is happening. In addition, the question arises as to how both sides can ensure that such an agreement is used only to protect extremely sensitive information and is not exploited simply to avoid public criticism. Due to changes in the Israeli society and media, the mechanism of the Editors’ Committee began to be phased out in the mid-1990s, and today, it does not exist.²⁷ However, the strategy of exploiting patriotism remains relevant. During recent events, Israeli journalists described how they are still struggling with the delicate balance between their role as citizens and their commitment to the public as reporters, although it is clear that the Israeli media nowadays are much more critical toward the intelligence community than in the past.²⁸

Information Manipulations and Psychological Warfare

One of the most sensitive realms of intelligence services is the domain of psychological warfare, deliberate leaks, disinformation, and using media coverage for deterrence (Goldman 2004; Nincic 2004; Shumate and Borum 2006). Although it is an extremely complicated task for scholars to identify traces of psychological warfare, some evidence of these methods may be found, particularly with respect to the past. The strategy of managing information, true, half-true, or false, is a powerful method enabling intelligence services to set the agenda for the general public and policymakers. This study indicates that this method was applied in several variations by the Mossad and the ISA. In the 1970s, the Mossad fed journalists stories about Palestinians setting up terrorist networks in Germany. Shortly after the Munich Olympics massacre, an Israeli source briefed the German journal *Quick* about Fatah and Black September's widespread operations in Germany. Publication of this article led to the arrest of one thousand Palestinians suspected of having terrorist ties (Payne 1991).²⁹

The ISA also used psychological warfare methods. For many years, the ISA was deeply concerned that the country had been penetrated by spies who had arrived among the numerous immigrants to Israel from the Soviet Union. Journalists were enlisted to assist the ISA by creating fictitious stories based on details provided by the ISA's psychological warfare department. These stories, which were published in the newspapers, portrayed Soviet spies who turned themselves into the police, confessing to having been briefed by Eastern Bloc services and recruited as spies prior to immigrating to Israel. This tactic was meant to encourage Soviet agents to turn themselves in to the Israeli authorities.³⁰

The strategy of psychological warfare is also used to deter terrorists and hostile actors. Although intelligence organizations generally prefer to remain in the shadows, they occasionally want information about their clandestine activities to be revealed. These messages are clearly targeted to active or potential terrorists, in the hope that they will reconsider involvement in terrorism against Israel due to the risk and consequences of such activities (Shapiro 2001). Following the 1995 assassination in Malta of Fathi Shqaqi, founder of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement, the source of the leak regarding the affair and the report on Channel 1, Israel's national Israeli TV channel, was, according to a journalist, the Mossad itself, using indirect governmental channels:

The essential difference from earlier operations was the report. In the past, publication of such assassination attempts had only been made via the international media and the local police and investigative bodies. Officially, Israel has never claimed responsibility for the events. On this occasion forty-eight hours passed, and the assassination in Malta did not gain international press attention.³¹

The Mossad understood that without media coverage of Shqaqi's assassination, even of the most minor kind, the efficacy of the operation would be undermined. The affair had to be made public to bolster the organization's reputation and deter

terrorists. The “long arm of the Mossad” became a frequently used idiom which expressed the conviction that Israel’s secretive organization could reach the terrorists wherever they were. This perception has been nurtured by media coverage throughout the Mossad’s existence (Black and Morris 1991; Steven 1982).

Former Mossad director Shabtai Shavit stated that he made use of an “army of journalists” for psychological war objectives. However, he claimed that he focused on foreign journalists, refusing to work with Israeli journalists and avoiding contact with them.³² More recent evidence of this particular aspect of the relationship between the Mossad and the media relates to the Iranian nuclear weapon program. A top-ranking journalist recounts that during Mossad director Efraim Halevy’s term of office (1998–2002), highly sophisticated use was made of the foreign media to insinuate that Iran was seeking to develop nuclear weapons. “He was familiar with these subjects, with psychological warfare, with the secret operating of manipulative publications,” noted another journalist. Today, with this issue high on the global agenda, it will be interesting to ascertain where the media ripple-effect began and who aroused the world from its disturbing slumber regarding what was happening in Iran. The Mossad department in contact with foreign media was also authorized to work with a very limited number of Israeli journalists. Halevy himself was aware that the person in the world who read the most sensitive intelligence information, the U.S. president, started his morning with *The New York Times*. As a result, Halevy understood that to influence the global agenda, he was compelled to reach the decision makers via the media:

When most of the world didn’t believe that Iran was developing nuclear weapons, the world media completely changed its attitude. That’s the Mossad. It’s so easy to see it. They contacted the papers they regularly worked with, and through them, the Mossad spread the information. They made a very impressive move. Halevy knew what had to be done. They changed world public opinion in a very smart way, by specific leaks. One story and then another. In this way they created a picture that convinced the world that Iran was developing nuclear weapons.³³

Additional versions of this strategy may be found where the Israeli intelligence services employed spin-doctoring during crises that received extensive public attention. In the early-1960s, information about former Nazi scientists developing several military projects for the Egyptian government was brought to the Mossad (Deacon 1977). Several German scientists involved in these alarming projects were put out of action by intimidations, anonymous attacks, and assassinations, and two Mossad agents were caught threatening the daughter of one of the German scientists in Switzerland (Harel 1982; Melman and Raviv 1989). Mossad director Isser Harel (1953–63) made quite an effort to shape the public agenda regarding the German scientists’ crisis (Steven 1982). He contacted prominent journalists in Israel and abroad and briefed them personally regarding the Egyptians’ missile manufacturing and its connections to German and Swiss companies, thus creating a spin in the media coverage of the incident. The journalists shifted their focus from the threatened scientist’s daughter, Heidi Goerke, to the wrongdoings of Germany and the former Nazi

scientists. Using his greatest advantage over the media—full access to intelligence information—Harel shared important tips and provided the journalists with updated data (Bar-Zohar 2003).

This method was repeated in other cases as well. Around the time of the bus line 300 affair in the 1980s, the ISA briefed reporters about the organization's success in the arrest of a member of a Jewish underground who had caused severe damage to several Arab citizens in violent attacks and explosions. As a result, only a few news items were dedicated to the death of the bus line 300 terrorists and the subsequent investigation. The majority of the media coverage focused on the ISA's appraisals rather than to the less flattering bus line 300 incident.

A third illustration of spin-doctoring took place after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in the 1990s. Proximate to the operational failure of the ISA to protect PM Rabin from his assassin, Yigal Amir, and the ensuing investigation into it, a senior terrorism figure, Yahya Ayyash, was assassinated in Gaza. The ISA supplied the media with details regarding the successful Gaza operation.³⁴ At the time, questions were raised about the timing of the Gaza operation and the possible linkage between it and the investigations into the Rabin assassination.³⁵ A journalist from *Haaretz* wrote,

It's important we remember just how great these guys [ISA] are. We have almost forgotten this, since the Prime Minister was assassinated right underneath their noses. It is important to remember this especially now, when C [ISA director Carmi Gillon] has serious problems with the Shamgar Commission of Inquiry . . . Just the other day someone claimed C needs a miracle, like the assassination of "the engineer," for example, and here comes the miracle as if to order.³⁶

Gillon fully denies the allegations of deliberate manipulations or attempts to deflect the media from covering the Commission of Inquiry to covering the successful operation of the assassination of Yahya Ayyash instead.³⁷

Shifting Circumstances, Motivations, and Limitations

Isser Harel (1981: 31), one of the key founders of the Israeli intelligence community wrote, "Do not do anything not even under full confidentiality, if eventually you will not be able to justify the act because it is not reasonable, it lacks good sense, or it is inherently disgraceful." In the past, intelligence services were not as pressured to establish the communication capabilities they provide nowadays. Today, this seems to be a major deficiency, which can result in considerable public debacles (Berkowitz and Goodman 2002; Herman 2001).

An examination of the media strategies of Israel's intelligence services raises a few issues for discussion. The first refers to dramatic transformations that occurred in Israel's society, media, and technology (Katz 2006). These significantly altered the challenges the intelligence services confront. The intelligence services' ability to control information has substantially diminished over the years, as evidenced in the

coverage of the Rabin assassination, the Khaled Mashal incident and the New Zealand affair, among others. Sensitive information very quickly becomes common knowledge and alternative sources to the primary definers are more available (Davis 2000). This sometimes occurs through unofficial leaks from within the services, which were a rare phenomenon in the past.³⁸ The shifts in the flow of information are combined with a changing Israeli society that is less collectivist, and increasingly unwilling to accept at face value official statements based on an “if you would only know” argument. Tools such as the Editors’ Committee, censorship, and gag orders have become less effective in an era of social media, blogs, and investigative journalism. Moreover, following the accumulation of several experiences with Western intelligence services, the public has become more skeptical, and trust has become a central component in the relationship between the clandestine bubble and the public sphere. In such an environment, it is also harder to apply the strategy of exploiting patriotism.

The second issue involves the need to differentiate between domestic and foreign intelligence services. The study reveals that while the ISA has gradually tailored its strategic communication to the new circumstances, the Mossad has chosen not to make similar changes. It clings to the four traditional strategies it has been using for more than sixty years. The differences between the domestic and foreign services are not at all surprising. Their divergent approaches naturally ensue from each service’s distinct characteristics. Domestic intelligence services have, to some extent, a scope of information that they can choose to release to the public. Foreign intelligence services, often operating abroad and functioning in a legal gray zone of other sovereign countries, inherently have a much more limited range of action. Maintaining silence and lowering their public profile are sometimes the only media strategy choices available to them. Hence, the Mossad’s decision to persist with its traditional media strategies is the result of mainly pragmatic considerations after having weighed the potential advantages and disadvantages in implementing a more transparent approach toward the media. However, this choice may present its own risks. In an internal document, former Mossad director Efraim Halevy wrote to the organization’s employees:

I am afraid that continuing the present policy would lead to far greater damage to the Mossad, its foundations, and agents . . . if the Mossad does not take the initiative in changing things, a danger exists that individuals will take things into their own hands and incautiously cause irreparable damage to the State’s greatest intelligence assets. The strategy of silence and total secrecy cannot be maintained.³⁹

The final issue is the importance of differentiating between good and bad secret intelligence assets. Americans reacted very differently to the revelation of the Iran-Contra case in the 1980s than to the later exposure of Valery Plame as a CIA officer (McClellan 2008; Weiner 2007). The need to keep certain information secret may be acceptable and reasonable, but the public becomes anxious and concerned if it is revealed that the intelligence services abuse the trust placed in them to use this powerful, yet potentially dangerous asset of secrecy judicially.

Conclusion

Conceptualizing intelligence media strategies within the wider context of the Israeli media–intelligence relationship is essential to reveal the barriers journalists face when attempting to function as the fourth estate. The usage of ambiguity or the “if you would only know” strategies may weaken the confidence of journalists in their coverage of intelligence issues. Exploiting patriotism may influence journalists’ professional decisions, and manipulating information may deter reporters from investigating problematic methods intelligence services apply. In this sense, Israel’s intelligence services may serve as a prototype of primary definers, as they are perceived as enjoying access to accurate information that is inaccessible by nature, and are generally held in high esteem by Israeli citizens.

There is a constant tension wherein the public’s right to know collides with the services’ vital code of secrecy. It may be pessimistic, or merely realistic, to note that the clash between these two fundamental values is inevitable and unsolvable. The dilemmas and concerns will exist so long as the intelligence services and the media exist. However, a partial solution for a healthier relationship between the services and the media in Western democracies may lie in three domains: legislation, journalism standards, and intelligence services’ awareness. In the domain of legislation, it is crucial to tighten the legislature’s methods of oversight on intelligence services. The four media strategies applied by the intelligence services in Israel were made possible partially due to relatively loose regulations and the vague accountability of the intelligence community to the Israeli parliament. This has gradually changed, especially since the approval of the ISA Act in 2002 (Shapiro 2006). This trend needs to be strengthened and broadened, as it allows closer monitoring of the intelligence services’ activities and reduces the temptation to abuse power under the veil of secrecy.

The second domain of journalism standards entails strengthening the cultural and social norms of freedom of the press in Israel. This is occasionally defined by the High Court decisions, as occurred in the *Ha’ir* case, among others.

The third domain lies within the realm of the intelligence services. Throughout its history, the Israeli intelligence community has consistently enjoyed a very high level of public legitimacy and support among Israeli citizens, enabling the services to adopt a distant approach to the media. As in the past, their main operational code has remained unchanged; they still prefer to operate in the shadows and keep secrets of all sorts, including information on their most successful operations. This is not likely to change. However, unlike in the past, the intelligence services today bear the burden of proof for justifying their activities and manipulations, which are no longer automatically approved by the public. If the intelligence services can recognize and genuinely internalize these new circumstances, democratic societies will enjoy healthier clandestine systems.

Gathering and protecting intelligence data will obviously become a harder task, due to limitations on certain methods, but this will be accompanied by a significant reduction in the risk of losing the public’s trust. It is clear today that the trust of the public

is a valuable asset that should not be taken for granted or underestimated. In the long term, this, too, must be a paramount consideration.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to thank Prof. Eytan Gilboa, director of the Center for International Communication at Bar-Ilan University, for his helpful assistance and advice.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Howard Kurtz, "New York Times Cites Defects in Its Reports on Iraq," *The Washington Post*, May 26, 2004, C1. See also Howard Kurtz, "The Press, Turning up Its Nose at Lame Duck," *The Washington Post*, February 5, 2007, C1.
2. Barton Gellman and Ashkan Soltani, "NSA Infiltrates Links to Yahoo, Google Data Centers Worldwide, Snowden Documents Say," *The Washington Post*, October 30, 2013.
3. Interviewees who were parliament members participating in the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in the Israel Parliament (the Knesset).
4. Meirav Crystal, "Decline in the Public's Trust in Governmental Institutions," *ynet*, March 19, 2013, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4357360,00.html> (accessed October 16, 2014).
5. Josef Lapid, "The Nasty Business (a); The Nasty Business (b); The Nasty Business (c)," *Maariv*, October 6, 1997, 7 (Hebrew).
6. Shmuel Segev, personal communication, December 2, 2007, Herzliya.
7. Yossi Melman, "Israel Has Expressed Regret for the Death of Ahmed Bouchiki and Will Compensate His Family with 400 Thousand Dollars," *Haaretz*, January 28, 1996, A1 (Hebrew).
8. Zvi Zamir, personal communication, October 10, 2007, Rishon Lezion.
9. Yitzhak Hofi, personal communication, November 19, 2007, Ramat Gan.
10. Itamar Eichner, "Wanted in New Zealand," *Yediot Aharonot*, April 18, 2004, 18 (Hebrew).
11. Yossi Melman, "Defense Counsel: Cancel the Procedure due to the Mossad's Publications," *Haaretz*, April 19, 2004, A7 (Hebrew).
12. Aluf Benn, "Is Mossad Responsible for Delaying Iran's Attainment of Nuclear Capability?" *Haaretz*, September 26, 2008, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/is-mossad-responsible-for-delaying-iran-s-attainment-of-nuclear-capability-1.254646> (accessed February 23, 2014, Hebrew).
13. Yatom Danny, personal communication, December 16, 2007; Hen Shalita, "An Image Piece," *Kol Ha'ir*, July 27, 2001, 50–56 (Hebrew); Osnat Cottan, "Come to the Mossad," *Maariv*, August 4, 2000, 6–7 (Hebrew).
14. Ami Ayalon, personal communication, March 31, 2008, Jerusalem; Avraham Shalom,

- personal communication, March 16, 2008, Tel Aviv; Yatom Danny, personal communication, December 16, 2007, Ramat Gan; Shabtai Shavit, personal communication, November 29, 2008, Holon.
15. Hezi Callo, personal communication, March 16, 2008, Tel Aviv; Carmi Gillon, personal communication, March 17, 2008, Jerusalem.
 16. Shlomo Nakdimon and Arye Zimuki, "Shamir: The Shin-Bet Is a Diamond: The Best in the Whole World," *Yediot Aharonot*, April 30, 1984, 1 (Hebrew).
 17. Amnon Barzilai and Yossi Melman, "Ciechanover, the Establishment, the Committee," *Haaretz*, October 8, 1997, B3 (Hebrew).
 18. Avi Dichter, personal communication, April 2, 2008, Jerusalem.
 19. Yisrael Hason, personal communication, March 6, 2008, Herzliya.
 20. Ron Ben-Yishai, "Many Questions Remain Unanswered," *Ynet*, February 14, 2013, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4344932,00.html> (accessed February 16, 2014, Hebrew).
 21. An idiom referring to the censorship system.
 22. Moshe Zack, "The Censor and the Shin-Bet," *Maariv*, July 8, 1984, 10 (Hebrew).
 23. Aluf Benn, "His Administration Cost Him His Position," *Ha'ir*, January 13, 1989, 10–12 (Hebrew).
 24. Naftali Lavi, personal communication, November 13, 2007, Jerusalem; Eytan Haber, personal communication, February 17, 2008, Ramat Gan.
 25. Dina Goren, personal communication, November 13, 2007, Jerusalem.
 26. Meir Amit, personal communication, November 28, 2007, Tel Aviv.
 27. Arna Kazin, "Channel 2 Leaves Editors' Committee: We Are No Longer Willing to Pretend," *Haaretz*, February 27, 1998, A3 (Hebrew).
 28. Alon Ben-David, personal communication, May 26, 2008, Ramat Gan; Yossi Melman, personal communication, April 10, 2008, Ramat Gan.
 29. Eytan Haber, personal communication, February 17, 2008, Ramat Gan.
 30. Yaacov Peri, personal communication, February 28, 2008, Ramat Gan.
 31. Yossi Melman, "Sometimes a Small Organization Does Not Recover," *Haaretz*, October 30, 1995, B1 (Hebrew).
 32. Shabtai Shavit, personal communication, November 29, 2008, Holon.
 33. Interview with senior journalist, May 2008. Several interviews were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement.
 34. Carmi Gillon, personal communication, March 17, 2008, Jerusalem.
 35. Avi Nir, "Arafat Condemned the Assassination," *Haaretz*, January 7, 1996, A3 (Hebrew).
 36. Ran Kislef, "Our Engineers," *Haaretz*, January 10, 1996, A4 (Hebrew).
 37. Carmi Gillon, personal communication, March 17, 2008, Jerusalem.
 38. Neomi Levitzky, "The Shin Bet Fights Itself," *Yediot Aharonot*, November 27, 1995, 8 (Hebrew); Michal Goldberg, "The Shamgar Committee Is Furious due to the Leaks from within the Committee," *Yediot Aharonot*, January 24, 1996, 7 (Hebrew).
 39. Amir Oren, "First Time: A Press Liaison for the Mossad," *Haaretz*, August 26, 1999, 1 (Hebrew).

References

- Bar-Zohar, Michael. 1972. *Spies in the Promised Land: Isser Harel and the Israeli Secret Service*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Bar-Zohar, Michael. 2003. *Ben-Gurion: A Biography*. Tel Aviv: Magal Books.

- Bar-Zohar, Michael, and Nissim Mishal. 2012. *Mossad: The Greatest Missions of the Israeli Secret Service*. New York: Ecco.
- Becker, Howard. 1970. "Whose Side Are We on?" In *The Relevance of Sociology*, ed. Jack D. Douglas, 99–111. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Bennett, Gill. 2002. "Declassification and Release Policies of the UK's Intelligence Agencies." *Intelligence & National Security* 17:21–32.
- Benoit, William L. 1997. "Image Repair Discourse and Crisis Communication." *Public Relations Review* 23:177–86.
- Berkowitz, Bruce D., and Allan E. Goodman. 2002. *Best truth: intelligence in the Information Age*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Black, Ian, and Benny Morris. 1991. *Israel's Secret Wars: A History of Israel's Intelligence Services*. London: Werner Weidenfeld.
- Carruthers, Susan L. 2000. *The Media at War: Communication and Conflict in the Twentieth Century*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Cohen, Shalom. 1972. *This World (Ha-Olam Haze)*. Tel Aviv: Tefahot Publishing (Hebrew).
- Coombs, W. Timothy. 2012. *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Davis, Aeron. 2000. "Public Relations, News Production and Changing Patterns of Source Access in the British National Media." *Media, Culture & Society* 22:39–59.
- Davis, Aeron. 2010. *Political Communication and Social Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Deacon, Richard. 1977. *The Israeli Secret Service*. London: H. Hamilton.
- Diamond, John. 2008. *The CIA and the Culture of Failure: U.S. Intelligence from the End of the Cold War to the Invasion of Iraq* (Stanford Security Series). Stanford: Stanford Security Studies.
- Dover, Robert, and Michael S. Goodman. 2009. *Spinning Intelligence: Why Intelligence Needs the Media, Why the Media Needs Intelligence*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Eisin, Miri. 2009. "The Israeli Intelligence Community and the Media." *Journal of Intelligence History* 9:11–14.
- Gibson, Dirk C. 1987. "Secrecy: The Communication Dilemma of CIA." *Public Relations Review* 13:27–38.
- Gibson, Dirk C. 1997. "A Quantitative Description of FBI Public Relations." *Public Relations Review* 23:11–30.
- Gillon, Carmi. 2000. *Shin-Beth between the Schisms*. Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot Hemed Books (Hebrew).
- Goldman, Emily O. 2004. "Introduction: Security in the Information Technology Age." In *National Security in the Information Age*, ed. Emily O. Goldman, 8–20. London: Frank Cass.
- Goren, Dina. 1976. *Secrecy, Security and Freedom of the Press*. Jerusalem: Magnes (Hebrew).
- Gup, Ted. 2004. "Covering the CIA in Times of Crisis Obstacles and Strategies." *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 9:28–39.
- Gutman, Yechiel. 1995. *Shake in the ISA*. Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot (Hebrew).
- Hall, Stuart, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John N. Clarke, and Brian Roberts. 1978. *Policing the Crisis—Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London: Macmillan.
- Hampton, Mark. (2010). "The Fourth Estate Ideal in Journalism History" In *The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism*, ed. Stuart Allan, 3–12. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Harel, Isser. 1982. *The German Scientist's Crisis*. Tel Aviv: Maariv (Hebrew).
- Harel, Isser. 1989. *Security and Democracy*. Tel Aviv: Idanim (Hebrew).

- Hastedt, Glenn. 2005. "Public Intelligence: Leaks as Policy Instruments, the Case of the Iraq War." *Intelligence and National Security* 20:419–39.
- Herman, Michael. 2001. *Intelligence services in the information age: theory and practice*. London: Frank Cass.
- Hess, Sigurd. 2009. "German Intelligence Organizations and the Media." *Journal of Intelligence History* 9:75–87.
- Hillebrand, Claudia. 2012. "The Role of News Media in Intelligence Oversight." *Intelligence and National Security* 27:689–706.
- Holt, Pat M. 1994. *Secret Intelligence and Public Policy: A Dilemma of Democracy*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Hulnick, Arthur S. 1999. "Openness: Being Public about Secret Intelligence." *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 12:463–83.
- Jamieson, Kathleen H., and Karlyn K. Campbell. 2006. *The Interplay of Influence: News, Advertising, Politics, and the Mass Media*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Jenkins, Tricia. 2009. "How the Central Intelligence Agency Works with Hollywood: An Interview with Paul Barry, the CIA's New Entertainment Industry Liaison." *Media, Culture & Society* 31:489–95.
- Johnson, Loch K. 1986. "The CIA and the Media." *Intelligence and National Security* 1:143–69.
- Katz, Yaron. 2006. "Global Media Influence on the Operational Codes of Israel's Intelligence Services." *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 19:316–34.
- Kessler, Ronald. 1992. *Inside the CIA: Revealing the Secrets of the World's Most Powerful Spy Agency*. New York: Pocket Books.
- Kessler, Ronald. 2003. *The CIA at War: Inside the Secret Campaign against Terror*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Lashmar, Paul. 2013. "Urinal or Conduit? Institutional Information Flow between the UK Intelligence Services and the News Media." *Journalism* 14:1024–40.
- Lindlof, Thomas R., and Bryan C. Taylor. 2010. *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*. 3rd Edition. London: Sage.
- Longley-Babb, Laura, ed. 1976. *Of the Press, by the Press for the Press and Others Too*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Lowenthal, Mark M. 2011. *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Lucas, W. Scott. 2003. "Revealing the Parameters of Opinion: An Interview with Frances Stonor Saunders." *Intelligence and National Security* 18:15–40.
- Magen, Clila. 2013. "The Israeli Mossad and the Media: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives." *Public Relations Review* 39:111–23.
- Manning, Paul. 2001. *News and News Sources: A Critical Introduction*. London: Sage.
- McClellan, Scott. 2008. *What Happened: Inside the Bush White House and Washington's Culture of Deception*. New York: Public Affairs.
- McLaughlin, Greg. 2002. *The War Correspondent*. London: Pluto Press.
- Meirav Crystal. 2013. "Decline in the Public's Trust in Governmental Institutions." (accessed October 16, 2014, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4357360,00.html>)
- Melman, Yossi, and Dan Raviv. 1989. *The Imperfect Spies: The History of Israeli Intelligence*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson.
- Negbi, Moshe. 1992. "The Editors' Committee: The Big Neutralizer of the Press." In *The Yearbook of the Journalist Association*, 89–93. Tel-Aviv: The Journalists Association (Hebrew).
- Nincic, Miroslav. 2004. "Information Warfare and Democratic Accountability." In *National Security in the Information Age*, ed. Emily O. Goldman, 140–60. London: Frank Cass.

- Omand, David. 2009. "Intelligence Secrets and Media Spotlights: Balancing Illumination and Dark Corners." In *Spinning Intelligence: Why Intelligence Needs the Media, Why the Media Needs Intelligence*, ed. Robert Dover and Michael S. Goodman, 37–56. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Palmor, Eliezer. 2000. *The Lillehammer Affair*. Jerusalem: Carmel (Hebrew).
- Payne, Ronald. 1991. *Mossad: Israel's Most Secret Service*. London: Corgi Books.
- Richards, Lyn. 2009. *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage.
- Robarge, David. 2009. "CIA in the Spotlight: The Central Intelligence Agency and Public Accountability." *Journal of Intelligence History* 9:105–26.
- Schlesinger, Philip. 2006. "Is There a Crisis in British Journalism?" *Media, Culture & Society* 28:299–307.
- Schultz, Julianne. 1998. *Reviving the Fourth Estate: Democracy, Accountability and the Media*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shapiro, Shlomo. 2001. "The Media Strategies of Intelligence Services." *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 14:485–502.
- Shapiro, Shlomo. 2006. "No Place to Hide: Intelligence and Civil Liberties in Israel." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19:629–48.
- Shumate, Scott, and Randy Borum. 2006. "Psychological Support to Defense Counterintelligence Operations." *Military Psychology* 18:283–96.
- Steven, Stewart. 1982. *The Spymasters of Israel*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Tenet, George, and Bill Harlow. 2007. *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Thurlow, Richard C. 2000. "The Charm Offensive: The 'Coming Out' of MI5." *Intelligence and National Security* 15:183–90.
- Tulloch, John. 2007. "Hunting Ghost Planes: An Interview with Journalist Stephen Grey." *Journalism* 8:510–16.
- Tumber, Howard, and Jerry Palmer. 2004. *Media at War—The Iraq Crisis*. London: Sage.
- Weiner, Tim. 2007. *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*. New York: Doubleday.
- Wilkinson, Nicholas J. 2009. *Secrecy and the Media: The Official History of the United Kingdom's D-Notice System*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Author Biography

Clila Magen is a lecturer in PR at the School of Communication and a research fellow at the Center for International Communication at Bar-Ilan University in Israel. Prior to joining academia, she served as a spokesperson for the Chair of the Committee of Defense and Foreign Affairs of the Knesset (Parliament). She is the author of a forthcoming book on the *Intelligence Services and the Media in Israel, 1948-2008* (Haifa: The University of Haifa Press).

Book Reviews

The International Journal of Press/Politics
2015, Vol. 20(2) 266–270
© The Author(s) 2015
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
ijpp.sagepub.com



Andrew Chadwick

The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013. 272 pp. ISBN: 978-0199759484.

Reviewed by: Philip M. Napoli, *Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, USA*

DOI: 110.1177/1940161215571207

The tensions and evolutionary dynamics between old and new media are an important point of entry for understanding the structure and functioning of media systems. As new technologies are introduced into the media system, new tensions emerge, new norms and practices evolve, and new organizational and institutional structures arise. The introduction and evolution of the Internet, and the many individual platforms contained within it, has perhaps represented media history's most complex and disruptive technology introduction, contributing to an ongoing and dramatic restructuring of contemporary media systems and how they operate.

Understanding the dynamics of these restructured media systems is the focus of Andrew Chadwick's *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*. The book is the latest in Oxford University Press's exceptional Studies in Digital Politics Series, which Chadwick edits. Focusing his analysis on the evolving dynamics of political communication in the United States and Britain, Chadwick explores, through his organizing construct of hybridity, the "complexity, interdependence, and transition" (p. 4) that increasingly characterize the media systems in these two countries. As Chadwick argues, this focus on hybridity "reveals how older and newer media logics in the field of media and politics blend, overlap, intermesh, and coevolve" (p. 4).

A key aspect of Chadwick's notion of hybridity is that it extends beyond the hybridization of media technologies and platforms. That is, hybridity is about more than the production and distribution dynamics of content across old and new media. Chadwick's notion of hybridity also incorporates the associated *media logics* noted above, which include not only technologies but also the associated "genres, norms, behaviors, and organizational forms" (p. 4). As these central concepts suggest, the hybridity demonstrated by Chadwick is not just technological but organizational and institutional as well.

Chadwick begins his analysis with a discussion of the notion of hybridity and what it has meant in practice throughout media history (delving as far back as the fifteenth century). In so doing, he provides a new interpretation of the established media history literature, one that emphasizes the intertwining and interfunctionality of technologies,

genres, norms, behaviors, and organizational forms across old and new media. Chadwick then provides a comprehensive technological, structural, and behavioral overview of the British and American media systems before delving more deeply into the dynamics of hybridity via a series of detailed case studies that range from Britain's 2010 election campaign, to the rise, impact of, and institutional response to Wikileaks, to the media and campaign dynamics surrounding Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. Chadwick then presents ethnographic research examining the intersection of media, politics, and activism in Britain, which includes interesting firsthand accounts (from many high-level professionals and government officials) of how various stakeholder groups are navigating increasingly complex and increasingly hybridized media systems.

The case studies are perhaps the book's most impressive and significant contribution. They are highly detailed, which can ordinarily become a bit ponderous, as the description-to-analysis ratio tends to get far too lopsided. But in this case, this high level of detail illustrates how much can be learned from engaging in what are essentially minute-by-minute chronicles of how a news story is created and then flows through (and impacts) an increasingly complex media system. This is the comprehensive and illuminating approach that Chadwick takes in his impressive analyses of the origins, flows, and impacts of specific news stories such as Britain's "Bullygate" scandal and the Reverend Jeremiah Wright affair that briefly destabilized the Obama campaign.

Chadwick's microanalyses of these news events illustrate that this kind of granularity is, ironically, now essential for understanding the more macrolevel, systemic interactions and interdependencies that are the focus of the book, given that we now live in a time when an individual tweet can set off a complex, multidirectional chain reaction within the larger media ecosystem, as well as within the political system that this media ecosystem monitors. Uncovering these dynamics requires extensive digging for, and sequencing of, different types of content across multiple platforms and effectively mapping their flows and impacts across these platforms. Chadwick's comprehensive dissection of these processes does much to illustrate his larger points about the increasing interconnectivity of media platforms and the migration of specific norms and behavioral patterns across platforms.

Chadwick's use of the United States and Britain as the focal points for his analysis illuminates some startling contrasts. It is amazing, for instance, to consider that the 2010 elections represented the first true "TV election" in Britain (p. 86), as this was the first time that the country held live, televised prime ministerial debates (a practice that, in the United States, dates back to the Kennedy and Nixon presidential debates). And so, in Britain, what we end up with is essentially an incredibly compressed evolutionary process in which the first televised debates are immediately interconnected with all of the online, interactive functionalities that are, for better or worse, becoming an essential part of political campaigns and coverage (live tweeting and live blogging, instant polling, social media sentiment analysis, etc.). That is certainly a tremendous amount of media innovation and disruption for a political system to absorb in a single election cycle.

At one point late in the book, Chadwick opens the complex can of worms that is the subject of how media regulators and policy makers are responding to this increasing hybridization of media systems. However, he then gives the subject roughly two pages of discussion, which really only scratches the surface of a topic rife with political, cultural, and economic implications and complex stakeholder dynamics across old and new media platforms. Consider, for instance, the massive conflict erupting in the United States in connection with the issue of network neutrality, which to some extent revolves around the question of whether regulatory models established for older media should be applied to broadband providers. The book would have perhaps been better served had Chadwick either delved more deeply into the topic or relegated it to outside of the book's scope.

The conclusion is rather brief, and Chadwick only lightly touches upon one of the central normative questions raised by his comprehensive analysis—what are the democratic pros and cons of these hybridized media systems? That is, have the power dynamics shifted in ways that fundamentally enhance or undermine the political process? These are not questions that Chadwick delves into particularly deeply, though he does go so far as to contend that the contemporary hybrid media system creates “arrangements for the conduct of political communication that are, on balance, more expansive and inclusive than those that prevailed in the 20th century” (p. 210). Although a bit more discussion of the normative implications of his analysis would have been welcome, we certainly do not need another critical or utopian polemic about the impact of the Internet on the democratic process. Indeed, Chadwick's measured analytical approach is one of the book's great strengths. He does a superb job of illustrating the ways in which our media systems are becoming increasingly hybridized, but mostly leaves us to ponder the larger questions around whether this is a good thing.

Baohui Xie

Media Transparency in China: Rethinking Rhetoric and Reality. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014. xxi + 195 pp. US\$85 (hardcover). ISBN 9780739183267

Reviewed by: Judy Polumbaum, *University of Iowa, Iowa City, USA*

DOI: 10.1177/1940161214564264

This book puts the grimmest possible cast on prospects for any sort of public-spirited journalism existing or evolving in present-day China. Based largely on an accumulation of prior studies of Chinese media, including much of the very best critical scholarship to emerge over the past two decades, it makes a couple of valuable contributions to long-standing discussions of information control. Most illuminating are sections midway through the volume that explain the labor contracting system that has turned journalists into wage-earners alienated from idealistic notions of their occupation, and that clarify how restructuring of media organizations into conglomerates has facilitated both financial flexibility and editorial rigidity. Yet much of the book is a

At one point late in the book, Chadwick opens the complex can of worms that is the subject of how media regulators and policy makers are responding to this increasing hybridization of media systems. However, he then gives the subject roughly two pages of discussion, which really only scratches the surface of a topic rife with political, cultural, and economic implications and complex stakeholder dynamics across old and new media platforms. Consider, for instance, the massive conflict erupting in the United States in connection with the issue of network neutrality, which to some extent revolves around the question of whether regulatory models established for older media should be applied to broadband providers. The book would have perhaps been better served had Chadwick either delved more deeply into the topic or relegated it to outside of the book's scope.

The conclusion is rather brief, and Chadwick only lightly touches upon one of the central normative questions raised by his comprehensive analysis—what are the democratic pros and cons of these hybridized media systems? That is, have the power dynamics shifted in ways that fundamentally enhance or undermine the political process? These are not questions that Chadwick delves into particularly deeply, though he does go so far as to contend that the contemporary hybrid media system creates “arrangements for the conduct of political communication that are, on balance, more expansive and inclusive than those that prevailed in the 20th century” (p. 210). Although a bit more discussion of the normative implications of his analysis would have been welcome, we certainly do not need another critical or utopian polemic about the impact of the Internet on the democratic process. Indeed, Chadwick's measured analytical approach is one of the book's great strengths. He does a superb job of illustrating the ways in which our media systems are becoming increasingly hybridized, but mostly leaves us to ponder the larger questions around whether this is a good thing.

Baohui Xie

Media Transparency in China: Rethinking Rhetoric and Reality. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014. xxi + 195 pp. US\$85 (hardcover). ISBN 9780739183267

Reviewed by: Judy Polumbaum, *University of Iowa, Iowa City, USA*

DOI: 10.1177/1940161214564264

This book puts the grimmest possible cast on prospects for any sort of public-spirited journalism existing or evolving in present-day China. Based largely on an accumulation of prior studies of Chinese media, including much of the very best critical scholarship to emerge over the past two decades, it makes a couple of valuable contributions to long-standing discussions of information control. Most illuminating are sections midway through the volume that explain the labor contracting system that has turned journalists into wage-earners alienated from idealistic notions of their occupation, and that clarify how restructuring of media organizations into conglomerates has facilitated both financial flexibility and editorial rigidity. Yet much of the book is a

compilation of familiar findings, repackaged, repeated, and accentuated in furtherance of an overall message about the bankruptcy of political ideology in China and the futility of hoping for anything better.

As announced in the book's title, "media transparency" is ostensibly the concept at the heart of this work. Author Baohui Xie, an associate professor at Jiangxi Normal University and a lecturer at the University of Adelaide, where he completed the doctoral thesis from which the book originates, quickly dispenses with a focus on censorship as less useful—returning later to the interesting notion of "meta-censorship," or censoring-the-fact-of-censorship, as a curious manifestation of lack of transparency. Indeed, he traces a gamut of ills afflicting journalism, from trivialization and sensationalism to inadvertent malfeasance and intentional corruption, back to the problem of transparency.

Xie spends a chapter explicating the concept of transparency as applied to both governance and media. In his view, genuine transparency requires procedures that generate "substantive openness, credibility, accountability, and relevance in the interests of the public, particularly the disenfranchised groups" (p. 17). In the case of China, he finds an unbridgeable gap between rhetoric and reality, with a proclaimed commitment to media transparency amounting to mere words without substance. His book aims to debunk the official rhetoric of media transparency in China while revealing the mechanisms behind realities of information control.

The disjuncture Xie identifies as the primary dynamic of Chinese media production rests on his broader interpretation of the Chinese polity, which readers familiar with contemporary Chinese political debate will recognize as the so-called "New Leftist" analysis. Xie acknowledges his debt to this perspective as an explanation of post-Mao China's rampant contradictions—including, in the realm of media, an illusion of increasing press freedom even as journalism is ever more in thrall to both political and economic power. To oversimplify, the approach hinges on identification of an irresolvable paradox between what China's political authorities claim to believe and what they actually do: An ideology labeled "communism" fails to justify what the New Leftists regard as a particularly retrograde form of capitalism. The result for media policy is a fundamental disconnect between what is claimed and how things actually work. In the name of the public, but in the interests of financial gain, on one hand, and political dominance, on the other, China's media are in cahoots with political elites, operating mainly to make the rich ever richer while excluding the weak and poor from benefit or even notice. The analysis essentially is one of "the emperor has no clothes"—except that the ruler remains quite adept at maintaining his throne, and the rare occasion when a little child may suggest he is naked has no impact at all.

The contention—total absence of media transparency, thorough effectiveness of political content controls along with no-holds-barred pandering to the pursuit of profit—may be extreme, but the idea does rest on solid groundwork completed by scholars who have scrutinized the complex relationships among China's political regimen, private sector and media. In this vein, Yuezhi Zhao, C.C. Lee, and others have documented and analyzed commonalities of purpose, mutually beneficial negotiations, and intricate alliances that have emerged among agents and organizations of the

Party and state, commercial interests, and the actors and institutions producing media content, including news. Xie draws liberally on such studies and cites conclusions approvingly when they concur with his. But even while attempting to reframe the discussion around the central concept of transparency, the book offers little that is truly new. With some exceptions as noted above, when the author synthesizes material in a novel manner so as to advance understanding, the analysis comes across as polemical and sometimes tautological.

The monolithic scope of the argument and its easy dismissal of human agency are troubling as well. The author does acknowledge that Chinese citizens' access to information has grown and space for discussion has expanded, especially with the rise of social media, but dismisses prospects for any truly meaningful journalism to emerge from the Chinese context. He maintains that, aside from occasional hiccups of disruption with no potential for furthering systemic change, editors, reporters, and other media producers are trapped in survival mode, political loyalty and docility being the trade-off for whatever economic benefits they can reap. Political, economic, and even psychic forces have coalesced, it seems, to create a kind of vicious circle of information control from which there is no escape. Indeed, the author goes further—having cautioned that the marketplace offers no solution in the quest for good journalism when the market and the state are working in tandem to squelch it, he suggests that democratic systems as currently constituted are no answer either, given the less visible but still insidious political and economic controls on media that persist in democracies.

After this most dispiriting rendering, the book ends with an original research project comparing use of what are known as *skylights*—blank space in newspapers indicating omitted content—by activist journalists protesting pre-1949 Kuomintang censorship with instances appearing in the post-Mao decades. The author concludes that, whereas the earlier cases are instances of true “media activism,” which he defines as political opposition at an institutional level, the recent incarnations are isolated and futile efforts by individual journalists and therefore do not represent meaningful social action—to the contrary, he suggests that editorial blank-outs nowadays might even be a marketing ploy to win readers' sympathies!

Like many scholarly tomes derived from graduate work, this one bears the stamp of those years of intellectual toil not only in substance but also in formal aspects, and makes for slow reading. A bigger lesson might be that, although worthy books have emerged from academic theses, a dissertation does not automatically a book make. Density and absolutist tone aside, however, the book is useful in bringing together a vast array of sources, studies, and findings from the mass communication literature of the post-Mao period. As such, it belongs on the shelf as a resource for other scholars of Chinese media. It is not recommended for the uninitiated.