Political Propaganda Used in the Us Embassy in Iraq's Facebook Page

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the methods used by the official Facebook page of the U.S. Embassy in Iraq for political propaganda and its impact on the Iraqi audience. The study focused on identifying the key issues emphasized by the page and analyzing the elements highlighted in the propaganda content. It also investigated the persuasion techniques employed and identified the targeted demographics of these advertising efforts, with a specific focus on how Americanpolitical values and the American project in Iraq and the region are promoted.The study's problem statement revolved around uncovering the roles played by the official page of the U.S. Embassy in Iraq on the social media platform "Facebook" in marketing American political ideas and values, as well as promoting the American project in Iraq and the region. One of the study's notable findings was that the U.S Embassy in Iraq relied on addressing the concerns of Iraqi youth and attempting to promote their issues and challenges. Furthermore, the study highlighted a focus on cultural, environmental, sustainable development, education, water resources, and Iraqi employment-related topics

Introduction

Throughout history, media has gained great importance in human life, and that's because of its variety of roles and functions, especially for its ability to influence others of different backgrounds, cultures, and social levels. Despite the importance of the news role that the media covers, the role that mostly influences people and changes their opinions, behaviors, and attitudes holds the greatest reason in employing these means in social life.

The change that occurred in strategic thinking methods, led to the theory that intellectual and economic control has less financial and human costs than direct military occupation. This was the theory that caused what is called "soft war" to appear, which targets controlling societies by spreading thoughts, beliefs, and culture, and making them gradually take the place of national and cultural values of the targeted audience.

Employing social media for influence and propaganda represents the most important direct application of these means of media, and that's because of the great potential that these means provide for the sender of media propaganda. This can be achieved by employing a variety of different techniques to serve the intended message and diversifying the methods in a way that guarantees getting the intended impact for as many of the targeted audience as possible.

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Social media platforms have provided great possibilities for diplomatic missions abroad to address the local audience in their mother tongue for the purpose of intellectual and cultural propaganda. The application of these methods become clear by tracking the official websites of different diplomatic missions, especially US embassies around the world, as their official websites have shifted to become media platforms in which American culture is promoted.

Study Methodology

Study Questions

The current study focuses on seeking to investigate the roles played by the official Facebook page of the US Embassy in Iraq in marketing American political values and promoting the American project in Iraq and its regions. The current study aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the methods used to employ the Facebook page of the US Embassy in Iraq for political propaganda to influence the Iraqi public?
- What are the most prominent issues that the Facebook page of the US Embassy in Iraq focuses on during political propaganda to influence the Iraq public?
- How does the Facebook page of the US Embassy in Iraq employ persuasion methods during political propaganda to influence the Iraqi public?

Study Objective

The current study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Know the methods through which the Facebook page of the US Embassy in Iraq is used for political propaganda to influence the Iraqi public.
- Identify the most prominent issues that the Facebook page of the US Embassy in Iraq focuses on during political propaganda to influence the Iraqi public.
- limit the most important persuasion methods used by the Facebook page of the US Embassy in Iraq during political propaganda to influence the Iraqi public.

Study Approach

The descriptive approach provides a set of appropriate methods to continue social and media studies. Because of the specificity of the current study, the content analysis approach has been used. Content analysis is known as an approach or a tool used for scientific studies that the researcher can use in a variety of research fields to describe the apparent and explicit content of the material that is being analyzed based on its form and content.

Study Population

The "Facebook" platform was used for the intended sample because of its constant daily updates from the US Embassy in Iraq, and the possibility of measuring the analytical elements and categories accurately through the platform's statistics.

Study Sample

The researcher has chosen a sample of publications that have been displayed on the US Embassy in Iraq's page which contains content that relates to political propaganda directed to the Iraqi audience. The study sample included 150 publications for a period of six months, and a comprehensive survey was conducted on the intended sample to analyze a variety of analytical elements, categories, and measurement elements.

Study Tools

The researcher has developed a special tool called "Analysis Form" to analyze the chosen publication contents from the "US Embassy in Iraq."

Study Limits

Time limits: The study extended from May 1st, 2023 till October 6th, 2023.

Spatial limits: Includes the US Embassy in Iraq and its Facebook page.

The Theoretical Framework of the Study

Political Propaganda and Its Uses

Propaganda is considered one of the most important promotion ways used to influence audience decisions and attitudes, and to direct them towards a specific direction or influence a specific system. Propaganda stands for motivating people to do a specific thing, and on the linguistic level, that means using a variety of methods intentionally for influence, and publishing for the goal of influencing the minds of certain people and arousing their feelings to reach a specific goal. Furthermore, propaganda can also be defined as publishing political beliefs, positions, and ideas broadly, with the aim of delivering it to the largest audience. To achieve that, propagators use means of communication with a great influence on the public. Propagation is considered a method used to influence opinions and beliefs of the audience, to guide them into a specific system, and works on preparing psychological ideas to adopt this trend. Although the term propaganda is known commonly as lying, political propaganda is not necessarily considered wrong, as it may be a matter of adding or changing facts in some way. Propaganda in general is considered as one of the most powerful communication tools that plays a part in influencing citizens to coexist and interact with the current era. It has also become an important role in explaining and interpreting issues and presenting them to the public opinion, especially with issues related to national security. From that point of view, the twenty-first century is an era characterized by global control and international propaganda, and is being controlled by all its political, economic, and social elements in the light of communication and information revolution[i]

Political propaganda is known as a method used for guidance and spreading messages and ideas as well as political views in the aim of influencing public opinion and the audience and forming the political beliefs and positions of individuals and societies. It also aims to influence political decisions and political participation for individuals and encourages them to support specific policies or adopt political ideas and issues. Political propaganda also includes a variety of tools and techniques such as media, political speeches, political debates and conferences, and the use of social media sites and the internet to spread the political message. It can also include field activities such as political associations and gatherings, election campaigns, and organizing political events and protests.[ii]

Political propaganda relies on using emotional impact, linguistic persuasion, symbolism, political symbols, photos, cartoons, and political signs to attract attention, stimulate interactions, and encourage empathy with the political message. It also aims for forming and enhancing the political identity for individuals and societies and influencing their political views and beliefs. Propaganda is used by political parties, governments, candidates, and political pressure groups to achieve their goals and influence the public view and their political

participation. Political propaganda could be used positively to enhance values and positive thoughts, or it could be used negatively to discredit political opponents and reduce their influence. From an ethical standpoint, political propaganda must be transparent, honest, and based on facts, respects the rights of individuals, and promotes diversity and democratic discussions, nevertheless, individuals must have the right to critically analyze and have a preference for political messages and have the right to choose what is consistent with their personal convictions and values.[iii]

The term "propaganda" has many definitions, such as the definition of the researcher "Norman John Powell" who describes propaganda as "Publicating opinions and viewpoints that influence ideas, behaviors, or both." According to the dictionary of media terms, propaganda is considered "Influencing the opinions and beliefs of the audience to take a specific direction towards a system or doctrine in a positive or negative way, as well as trying to psychologically prepare individuals into accepting the advocated opinions and resorts to distorting facts."[iv]

It should be noted that propaganda is not only used at the verbal level, but also includes actions and behaviors. We must also note the presence of terms related to propaganda, such as rumors, which is considered a way of propaganda that stands for spreading fake news among people relying on an unknown source, and is used to create confusion and distort facts. Political poisoning differs from propaganda as it doesn't aim to convictions, instead it aims to destroy the opponent. Finally, political advertisement is another way of propaganda used to spread ideas with the aim of these ideas being accepted. It should be noted that propaganda can not appear as "propaganda" to not fail in achieving its goals.

Clarifying the concept of political propaganda requires its causes and objectives to be introduced to the general definition. Based on that, political propaganda was known as "intended communication efforts aiming at transporting information and spreading ideas and specific directions, and stating them in a way that influences the opinions, trends, beliefs, and behaviors of certain groups of the public. It aims to control the public opinion and their behavior in a way that serves the propaganda goals, without leading the public to notice the reasons that pushed them to those ideas and beliefs, and without examining the logic behind the mentioned ideas."[v]

The history of political propaganda witnessed a remarkable evolution starting from World War I (1914-1918 AD), as the methods of propaganda were used during the war. The effective methods of promotion have been developed, which has strengthened the role of political propaganda. At the beginning of the twentieth century, communist leader Lenin played a pioneer role in using political propaganda, as he led a communist revolution in Russia. Lenin used two types of persuasion, propaganda and incitement. According to his vision, propaganda is based on using historical and scientific evidence to persuade the educated minority, while incitement is based on using half-truths and slogans to motivate the audiences that might not be able to understand complicated facts and interpret them in a conventional way. The period of World War II (1939-1945 AD) was affected by big propaganda campaigns that were used by Germany, Italy, and Japan against Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Propaganda influence became an essential part of secret military operations of the US office of strategic services. In the period after World War II, the Cold War started (1945-1991 AD), in which the Soviet Union was the leader of the communist countries, and the US was the leader of the non-communist countries. Both militaries have presented different kinds of political propaganda with the aim to influence global public opinion and local public opinion at the same time. The US has created the US Information Agency in the year 1953 AD to support its

international politics, and the US Central Intelligence has created radio stations such as Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty to broadcast in East Europe. Relationships between some communist and non-communist countries improved in the 1960s, which led to a change in political propaganda relations between the Soviet Union and the US in the early 1970s and 1980s.[vi]

Regarding the uses of political propaganda, they appear through[vii]:

- Political propaganda to influence public policies: Non-governmental political parties and organizations use political propaganda to influence political decision making and encourage adopting certain policies. These efforts can include directly communicating with government officials, and presenting evidence and arguments to support the specified issues, as well as organizing community campaigns to collect signatures for petitions.

- Forming public opinion: Politicians and political groups use political propaganda to form the public opinion on specific issues and change the stances and political beliefs of individuals and communities. This is done through delivering strong and emotional messages, using media platforms to spread political messages, and providing supporting statistics and information.

- Influencing public issues: Political propagandists use political propaganda to influence public issues and social and cultural transformations in the aim of displaying important issues and shining the light on social and political challenges, as well as changing mass awareness and making a positive change in social and political behavior.

- Youth influence: Politicians and youth organizations use political propaganda to influence the youth and encourage them to have political participation and make enlightened decisions. This is achieved by using social media platforms, youth events, and making educational and awareness initiatives.

- Global public opinion influence: countries and international organizations use political propaganda to influence global public opinion and enhance its political and international image. Global media channels and diplomatic and cultural campaigns are used to exchange political messages and influence other countries and societies.

It is apparent that politics and media are closely connected, which makes some people point to the cohesion between them. In the era of communication revolution that passes through the borders of countries and continents, political work needs to use a variety of media platforms. In addition to using it for political reasons that serve the homeland, political propaganda is also used for destructive political purposes in soft covers known as "Tendentious Political Propaganda." From that standpoint, political action relies on propaganda, which can only be achieved through media platforms. Political propaganda is used at the local and national level, as well as the international and global level within the framework of the countries' foreign policies.

The role of political propaganda intervenes with many political affairs, such as its prominent role in wording public policies, through elections and peaceful political deliberation, as well as through the process of power transfer, whether it was done in peaceful or violent ways. In the event of violent transfer of power, political propaganda's role could be before the transfer action, to prepare favorable conditions and prepare public opinions. Its role extends to after the power transfer, such as the conditions of armed revolutions that relies on rallying and unifying the masses to achieve one goal.

Political propaganda is also used in the event of the failure of opposing political parties that are supported by external parties, which leads the external party to provide them with financial and moral support to force change. In most cases, these opposing political parties residing abroad are supported by the country hosting them, which uses as many of the propagation methods available to them as possible.[viii]

Because wars are not the only means used to settle big conflicts anymore, media wars have gained a great importance after technological advances in the world of media and communication. Political propaganda gained an important role in directing people's opinions and accepting international and national policies. Effective media administration is considered one of the most important elements in the success of media wars. As military and media wars intertwine together, media wars might precede military wars and pave the way. Political propaganda is considered a part of foreign policy tools that combines diplomatic work in peaceful cases and military work in war cases. Even though military wars are still important, media wars have become a strong tool to achieve victory, as political propaganda plays a critical role in guiding people's opinions and accepting international and national policies. Propaganda combines science and art within its folds, and uses many psychological theories to achieve its goals. For example, it uses Bavlov's theory that states "everytime we control a stimulus, we get a response." It also benefits from the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud who views that individuals' response to propaganda can be more influential if it reminds them of their sadness, frustration, and defeat. In addition to that, political propaganda in our modern era uses the theory of education and reinforcement presented by the American researcher John Dewey, which combines propaganda work and the process of upbringing and political culture. Propaganda also uses a variety of media platforms such as television and radio advertisement, internet social communication methods such as social media, newspaper and magazines, as well as labels and banners.[ix]

Briefly, political propaganda is considered a powerful tool in current politics, as it is used to direct the public opinion and their influence and acceptance of government policies and political decisions. It is employed in many different groups of contexts and places including election campaigns, the process of forming public policies, settling conflicts, and international relations.

Foreign country policies do not only depend on propagation, they also depend on propagation response, or what is known as "Counter Propaganda." Counter propaganda is considered vital to the success and continuation of foreign policies, as it requires a strong confrontation to counter propaganda. If not countered, the opponent country might face inner conflicts and disputes with other countries, and these tense situations that are caused by strong propagandists without the existence of counter propaganda might also lead to a devastating war.

In the same way that the opponent military is confronted in military wars, pencils, words, photos, and voices should also be countered as well, as they are considered tools for political propaganda in political psychological wars. This can be achieved by exposing the lies and slanders of the enemy, and clarifying important information to the public, as well as encouraging internal public opinion. Given the propaganda objectives and its great influence, it became known as a war against enemies, and the winning side of this war has the final victory. And for that reason, British military analyst J.S Fowler created the term "political war" in the year 1920, and Americans used the term "psychological war" at a later time, while Germans chose the term "cultural war." Despite the fact that propaganda alone does not form this kind of war, it cooperates with various methods that can potentially lead to it.[x]

From that point of view, psychological war is only an application of propaganda to reach the war's goals, and it consists of intimidation methods and it could lead to victories equal to that achieved by the army in an entire month.[xi]

The Practical Framework of the Study

The Purpose of the Post

Table (1): Objective Category of the Publication.

Objective Category of the Publication	Repetition	Percentage
American-Iraqi solidarity	39	26%
Portraying America as a peace-loving country	27	18%
Interacting with the audience	18	12%
Offering humanitarian aid to those affected	13	8.6%
News and information	10	6.7%
Portraying America as a country that believes in equality	10	6.7%
Job advertisement	9	6%
Broadcasting similarities and differences between Arabs and Americans	6	4%
Demonstrating the military capabilities of the US army	5	3.3%
Showing interest in Iraqi heritage and antiques	5	3.3%
Showing the American point of view regarding Arab, regional, and international events	3	2.1%
Portraying Arab as the saboteurs	2	1.3%
Health	2	1.3%
Other	1	0.7%
Total	150	100%

Table (1) shows that the goals of the US Embassy in Iraq initially focused on American-Iraqi solidarity at a rate of 26%, to then focus on portraying America as the peace-loving country at a rate of 18%, interacting with the audience at a rate of 12%, offering humanitarian aid to those affected at a rate of 8.6%, and portraying America as a country that believes in equality at a rate of 6.7%. The weakest focus on the US Embassy in Iraq's Facebook page was showing the American point of view regarding Arab, regional, and international events at a rate of 2.1%, and portraying Arabs as saboteurs at a rate of 1.3%.

Quotations

Table (2): Used Quotations.

Used Quotations	Repetition	Percentage
No quotations	103	68.6%
Popular	19	12.6%
Universal occasion	18	12%
Heritage	7	4.7%
Religious	1	0.7%
Literary	1	0.7%
Other	1	0.7%
Total	150	100%

Table (2) shows that the US Embassy in Iraq has relied on using no quotations in its Facebook page at a rate of 68.6%, then relied on popular quotations at a rate of 12.6%, on universal occasions at a rate of 12%, on heritage quotations at a rate of 4.7%, and finally on religious and literary quotations at the same rate which reached 0.7%.

Highlighting Elements Used (Attachments to Posts)

Table (3) Attachments Used.

Attachments used	Repetition	Percentage
Photos	61	40.7%
Videos	46	30.7%
Links	43	28.6%
Total	150	100%

It is clear from Table (3) that the US Embassy in Iraq relied in its Facebook page on using photos at a rate of 40.7% as attachments added to posts, followed by videos at a rate of 30.7%, and finally coming in the third place were links as attachments which reached a rate of 28.6%.

Propaganda Methods on the Us Embassy's Page

Table (4) The Us Embassy in Iraq's Soft Methods of Propaganda.

The US Embassy in Iraq's soft methods of propaganda	Repetition	Percentage
Promoting joint cooperation	26	17.3%
Promoting humanitarian work	25	16.7%
Promoting youth support	20	13.3%
Promoting a security image	15	10%
Promoting the protection of minorities	9	6%
Promoting the protection of women	9	6%
Promoting democracy	9	6%
Promoting artistic work	9	6%
Promoting equality	7	4.7%
Promoting the protection of antiques and cultural heritage	7	4.7%
Promoting for religious extremism prevention	6	4%
Promoting reconstruction	6	4%
Promoting the protection of children	2	1.3%
Total	150	100%

Table (4) shows the soft method of propaganda used in the American Embassy in Iraq's Facebook page. The method that was focused on first was promoting joint cooperation with Iraq at a rate of 17.3%, and the second focus was on promoting humanitarian work at a rate of 16.7%, followed by promoting youth support at a rate of 13.3%, promoting a security image at a rate of 10%, promoting the protection of minorities and women as well as promoting democracy and artistic work all with the same rate of 6%, promoting equality and the protection of antiques and cultural heritage at the same rate of 4.7%, promoting for the prevention of religious extremism and promoting reconstruction at the rate of 4%, and in the final rank, promoting the protection of children at a rate of 1.3%

The Political Positions Taken by the Us Embassy in Iraq

Table (5): The Political Positions of the Us Embassy in Iraq.

The political positions of the US Embassy in Iraq	Repetition	Percentage
No political position taken	95	63.2%
Political position on Iraq	30	20%
Political position on foreign countries	13	8.6%
Political position on Arab countries	3	2.1%
Political position on Iraq's neighboring countries	3	2.1%
Political position on immigrants	3	2.1%
political position on developing countries	2	1.2%
Political position on Iran	1	0.7%
Total	150	100%

Table (5) shows the political positions taken by the US Embassy in Iraq on its Facebook page. In the first rank, the Embassy did not mention a political position in 63.2% of its posts. In second place, it took a political position on Iraq with a rate of 20%, then it took a political position on foreign countries with a rate of 8.6%, and at a rate of 2,1% there was a political position taken on Arab countries. Following that, it took a political position on Iraq's neighboring countries, on immigrants, then on developing countries, all at a rate of 1.2%, and finally on Iran at a rate of 0.7%.

Embassy Issues

Table (6): Issues Adopted by the Embassy.

Issues adopted by the Embassy	Repetition	Percentage
Youth issues	25	16.7%
Demonstrating its personal interest in Iraq	22	14.7%
Environmental issues	16	10.7%
Cultural issues	15	10%
Minorities issues	13	8.7%
Security issues	9	6%
Combating terrorism	8	5.3%
Political issues	8	5.3%
Women issues	7	4.7%
Development issues	5	3.3%
Peace issues	5	3.3%
Press-related issues	4	2.7%
Demonstrating a position on equality issues in Iraq	4	2.7%
Equality	2	1.3%
Kurds issues	2	1.3%
Social issues	2	1.3%
Health issues	2	1.3%
Sports issues	1	0.7%
Total	150	100%

Regarding the issues adopted by the US Embassy in Iraq on its Facebook page, table (6) shows that youth issues ranked first with a rate of 16.7%, then demonstrating its personal interest in Iraq reached 14.7%, followed by environmental issues with a rate of 10.7%, cultural issues with a rate of 10%, minorities issues with a rate of 8.7%, security issues with a rate of 6%, combating terrorism and political issues with the same rate of 5.3%, women issues with a rate of 4.7%,

development issues and peace issues both with a rate of 3.3%, press-related issues and demonstrating a position on equality in Iraq with a rate of 2.7%, and respectively came the issues of equality, Kurds, social, and health with a rate of 2.7%, and in the final rank came sports issues with a rate of 0.7%.

Forms of Propaganda

Table (7): Forms of Political Propaganda Used to Employ Soft War.

Forms of political propaganda used to employ soft war	Repetition	Percentage
Directing posts to public opinion	26	17.3%
Directing posts to a specific audience	25	16.7%
Using expressions that carry a specific political messages	20	13.3%
Repeating ideas directed at Iraqi public opinion	14	9.3%
Regularly seeking help from political experts and analysts	12	8.1%
Relying on information sources that carry a specific political vision	11	7.3%
Relying on a specific style of presenting topics	10	6.7%
Trying to direct public opinion towards a specific issue	10	6.7%
Using publications that serve political debates	8	5.3%
Relying on global information sources	3	2%
Using intimidation	3	2%
Relying on disruption of facts	3	2%
Criticizing events and issues by stating facts	3	2%
Relying on private information sources	2	1.3%
Total	150	100%

Table (7) shows the forms of political propaganda used to employ soft war that the US Embassy in Iraq relies on in its Facebook page. It is apparent that directing posts to public opinion is its priority with a rate of 17.3%, Then comes directing posts to a specific audience at a rate of 16.7%, followed by using expressions that carry a specific political message at a rate of 13.3%, repeating ideas directed at Iraqi public opinion at a rate of 9.3%, regularly seeking help from political experts and analysts with a rate of 8.1%, relying on information sources that carry a specific political vision with a rate of 7.3%, relying on a specific style of presenting topics at a rate of 6.7%, Trying to direct public opinion towards a pacific issue also had a rate of 6.7%, Using publications that serve political debate at a rate of 5.3%, relying on global information sources with a rate of 2%. Using intimidation, relying on disruptions of facts, and criticizing events and issues by stating facts were all of the same percentage as it formed 2% of the embassy's posts. Finally, in the last place was relying on private information sources which was at a rate of 1.3% of propaganda forms used to employ soft war.

Objectives of News

Table (8): Objectives of Publishes News.

Objectives of published news	Repetition	Percentage
Showing a benevolent and peace-loving America	69	46%
News and media	28	18.7%
Motivation	23	15.3%
Spreading Awareness	19	12.7%
Warning	11	7.3%
Total	150	100%

Table (8) shows the objectives of published news on the Facebook page of the US Embassy in Iraq. Its priority was on showing a benevolent and peace-loving America which had a

percentage of 46%, then came interest in news and media with a rate of 18.7%, followed by interest in motivation with a rate of 15.3%, interest in spreading awareness with a rate of 12.7%, and finally interest in warning which came with a rate of 7.3%.

Conclusion

War methods and tools have developed over the years, and it has become more complicated and lethal in human life in every historical stage. Human concern was finding a way to confront the enemy and achieve victory with increasing losses on the enemy's side and decreasing them on their side. This is the interest that led in the end to the appearance of what is known as "political wars."

The Most Important Study Conclusions

- The US Embassy in Iraq aimed through its Facebook page to focus on American-Iraqi solidarity, showing America as the peace-loving country, interacting with the audience, offering humanitarian aid to those affected, as well as portraying America as a country that believes in equality.
- The US embassy in Iraq's soft ways of propaganda in its Facebook page focus on promoting joint cooperation with Iraq and promoting humanitarian work as well as youth support.
- The US embassy in Iraq hasn't taken any clear political positions on its Facebook page, as its soft war was padded and with buried goals, and the political propaganda it adopted was not directly clear and visible.
- The forms of political propaganda used to employ soft war and that which the US Embassy in Iraq uses on its Facebook page directs its publications to the public opinion and to a specific group of the audience.

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