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LISBOA

The Social Implications of Manipulation via Social Media: The Liberal West vs. Autocratic China

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## **Abstract**

The intent of social media is to allow one to build a virtual world to augment one's reality, through the construction of connections without borders. In building such a world, one can lose themselves in the limitless possibilities of community, and not realize that their digital habits are being tracked for the purposes of adapting sociopolitical messaging to achieve pre-meditated ends. Currently, both liberal democracies and autocracies are guilty of utilizing algorithms, psychological profiling, and propaganda inundation tactics, to influence political actions in their citizens, albeit with differing scopes and intents. This work seeks to answer the question of how such regimes differ in their scope and methodologies in doing so, and what outcomes they hope to achieve. In order to do so, I will: analyze what encompasses modern liberal democracies and autocracies by definition; provide an operational framework for political manipulation and political misinformation, juxtaposed by traditional propaganda inundation tactics; elaborate upon how totalitarian regimes and liberal democracies have rallied around telecommunications technologies for political ends in times of conflict, and contrast these realities with the advent of social media in achieving strategic political decisions today. As a result, I wish to highlight that regimes worldwide are not acting sufficiently to protect the privacy of their citizens or the integrity of the digital commons, and as a result, there is little variance in the level of intrusion seen between political manipulators via social media, in liberal democracies and autocracies.

## 1. Introduction and Methodology

The intent of social media is to allow one to build a virtual world to augment one's reality, through the construction of connections without borders. In building such a world, one can lose themselves in the limitless possibilities of community, and not realize that their digital habits are being tracked for the purposes of adapting sociopolitical messaging to achieve pre-meditated ends. British journalist, Jamie Bartlett, reflects on the limitlessness of social media to achieve these goals by questioning if, " [We] have unwillingly handed too much away to shadowy powers behind a wall of code, all manipulated by a handful of Silicon Valley utopians, ad men, and venture capitalists?" (Bartlett, 2018). Bartlett's meditation serves as a springboard for exploring the relationship between politics and social media, through the targeted utilization of algorithms, psychological profiling, and propaganda inundation tactics previously used by totalitarian regimes. In order to better comprehend this relationship, one must question: how the divergence of scope for manipulation via social media differs in liberal democracies and autocracies respectively, and which modeling tactics are the most effective in each regime type? In order to do so, I will compare and contrast the ideological intents of both, examining how they are conditioned for manipulation via social media. This will be strengthened by illustrating how strategic communication tactics incubate differing societies' exposure to destructive propaganda. Once these conditions are established, I will examine how in periods of global conflict, liberal democracies and autocracies have utilized innovations in telecommunications technology as a vehicle for subconsciously influencing their societies to achieve desired ends. I will then heighten this historic analysis by commenting on the psychological tactics utilized as the means for purporting these messages, and how they were

strategically adapted for the medium broadcasting them. Along with that, I will provide two modern examples of how social media is utilized to achieve strategic sociopolitical outcomes through nuanced propaganda and psychologically motivated messaging. Particularly, in the use cases of Brexit and the centralization of communication applications in China. This is purposeful, in establishing that the only difference observed in the manipulative use of social media in both types of regimes, are the desired ends. In making this clear, I will also define that in liberal democracies third party firms are financially motivated to control political outcomes, while autocracies directly censor digital content to uphold an idealized set of behaviors. I will complete my assessment by providing suggestions for regulatory frameworks to be implemented on a global scale, to prevent intrusive acts of political manipulation.

## **2. A Bi-Polar Understanding of what Defines a State: Liberal Democracy vs. Autocracy**

In order to comprehend how two ideologically diverse states can be affected by political manipulation and misinformation, it is vital to analyze how they compare and contrast. As a result, I will provide a basis of what encompasses a modern liberal democratic state, and how modern autocracies are created in opposition to them. This is reflected most strongly in the core tenets that belong to the structure of a liberal democracy, and how modern autocracies can mimic similar societal benefits without such strong moral commitments.

### **A. Core Ideas of a Liberal Democracy**

Michael Sandel best articulated what a liberal democratic state should strive to achieve, in his landmark work *Liberalism and Its Critics* (Sandel, 1992). Sandel specifies that, “[T]he state should not impose a preferred way of life, but should leave its citizens as free as possible to choose their own values and ends consistent with a similar liberty for others” (Sandel, 1992). Sandel’s reflection points to a key assumption of liberal democracies, which is that individual rights are the ends of the law. So long as, all individuals under the protection of a single state, have equal access to preservation of these rights. As a result, liberal democracies have evolved to possess universal variables that distinguish them from other forms of governance. These are the separation of powers, periodic elections, and prioritization of human rights (Givetz et al, 2019). I will proceed to provide a historical context of each, juxtaposed by the modern expectations placed upon them.

The establishment of the separation of powers, was created as a solution for the problem of absolute power becoming too tyrannical a force in society (Givetz et al, 2019). As a result, the operational definition became, “...the distribution of power between such

functionally differentiated agencies of government as the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary” (Givetz et al, 2019). This later became known as a system of checks and balances solidified by the publication of *The Federalist Papers*. The core idea of checks and balances was to establish rules for each vein of the federal government, preventing one cleavage from overrunning another. This was achieved by clearly spelling out operational duties, including the mode of appointment for representatives, and functions of interaction amongst the three branches (Madison, 2019). In order to ensure that these contingencies were met, James Madison stipulated that each branch of government must be able to be held accountable by the general populous, ensuring that the voice of the majority was actually being represented (Madison, 2019). In order to achieve these objectives, Madison provides branch-specific use cases in *Federalist 51*, that later become enacted into law. The first, is that the judicial branch should not be subjected to an election by the people. This is because a judicial representative’s skillset is not political, but rather, based on experience and the individual’s ability to best enforce the law (Madison, 2019). Therefore, it is the Executive branch, who chosen by election of the general populous, acts according to their best interest to appoint judicial representatives. This decision is based on the Executive’s ability to mediate their necessary skillset, and uphold the values of the government. In turn, the power of the Executive should not be limitless, and is subjected to checks via the legislative branch. The legislative branch is also elected by civilians, but from a smaller scope of local jurisdictions. Their intent is to become the will of the people, and due to the scope of election necessary to enter the branch, they are the most powerful (Madison, 2019). However, Madison understood that such a structure would be unbalanced due to the number and mixed agenda of states. As a result, he proposed dividing the legislative

branch into two entities (The Senate and the House of Representatives). The objective of such a division was to promote internal checks and balances at the same level of the other two branches (Madison, 2019). By creating a deliberate road map for governance driven by the separation of powers, Madison incentivized the greater populous to educate themselves on the political interworking of their own country. This promoted civic engagement as the best method to resolve impending issues affecting the majority. In doing so, he created a reciprocal responsibility for Americans to vote in periodic elections, as a maintenance tool for their newly established regime.

The formalization of periodic elections as a cyclical maintenance tool for liberalism, also has a check and balance system incorporated, in order to prevent an overstay of a single leadership combination. This ensures that diversity of opinion is able to refresh itself on a consistent basis. This intrinsic balancing tool, is best described as the intentional use of, “...staggered periodic elections to make the decisions of any given majority subject to the concurrence of other majorities distributed over time” (Givetz et al, 2019). By staggering the period in which a populous can vote, a government implements the expectation that:

“Periodic moments of...participation make the political involvement and formal political equality of all citizens manifest. This spectacle reinforces parties’ and elected officials’ incentives to take the interests and concerns of all citizens into account. Elections are not the only way for citizens to hold political leaders [accountable], but elections are still distinctively valuable mechanisms of democratic control when they predictably involve the entire citizenry in the sanctioning process” (Booth Chapman, 2019).

Therefore, periodic elections are the organizational embodiment of how modern liberal governance is held accountable to the sovereignty of the public. While all liberal democracies maintain the establishment of periodic elections, the structure of these elections as well as the electoral systems utilized, differ between countries. This emphasizes the importance of

maintaining individual practices and values for each governing state to respect the sovereignty of its citizens.

For example, in France there are presidential elections and legislative elections, both on behalf of the European Parliament and French parliament. For the presidential elections occurring every five years, candidates must secure 500 signatures in support of their candidacy from elected officials to even be considered on the ballot (Tasch, 2017). Once these signatures have been received, candidates go through a two-round run-off election, where if in the first vote no absolute majority is given to a candidate, the two highest voted candidates run against one another, for a final vote. Whichever of the two highest voted secures the majority of the popular vote, he or she becomes President (Tasch, 2017). In contrast, the legislative elections take place every 5 years, and representatives for each district are elected by, 'direct universal suffrage', and in proportion with the European Union's rules of proportional representation ("The European Elections", 2019).

A second example, is the majoritarian electoral process of the United States, which relies on a different periodic electoral system than France's. In the US, there are also both presidential and legislative elections, but with differing term limits. The presidential elections are every four years and the legislative elections are every two. For the presidential elections, the proportional election system of the electoral college is not based on a popular vote, but rather a point system awarded to each state, based on its proportion to the US population. Each state awards its points to the candidate who won the majority of votes, and the first candidate to reach a total of 270 electoral points, secures the nomination. In contrast, the local elections are based on the popular votes of each district, and the candidate who secures the

majority in each district, wins the designated seat. These delegations are also proportionally based on the population of a given district, compared to the total of the overall state. These differing mechanisms highlight the plurality of periodic elections in liberal democratic regimes, and give credence to the incentive process for citizens to vote. Civic engagement is a measure of political awareness and drive to hold a state accountable for the sovereignty of the people, and thus, becomes the reciprocal responsibility of a liberal state. States ensure this responsibility remains aligned by supplying citizens with a consistent mechanism where they can advocate for policies that uphold their individual ends. In being able to do so, while respecting institutionalized differences amongst ruling states, liberalism is in itself a regime rooted in fluidity and adaptation.

The institutions of liberal democracies not only uphold the reciprocal responsibility of periodic elections, but also the prioritization of human rights in all policy decisions. This is guaranteed by the limitation of government's power, which is designed to advocate for the integrity and freedom of all citizens, due to the unspoken principle that, "...the individual is not only a citizen who shares a social contract with his fellows, but also a person with rights upon which the state may not encroach if majoritarianism is to be meaningful" (Givetz et al, 2019). This aligns with John Locke's views on the purpose of establishing government, being that despite man being totally free in a state of rule-less existence, he benefits most from the comforts that a government can give. Meaning, that he sacrifices total freedom, in exchange for strategic limits placed on his freedom, guaranteeing himself and all other citizens, the freedom to act within the rule of law. This in turn implies the preservation of social integrity, in the pursuit of all of his needs (Locke and Morgado, 2006). The rights liberalism is said to uphold,

stem from the ideal that all men are created equal, and have the intrinsic right to seek an existence where life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are the ultimate ends (Declaration of Independence, 2019). As a founding doctrine, this focuses on policies promoting functioning individualism, and fundamental rights such as: freedom of the press and speech; the freedom to practice the religion of one's choice without persecution; the right to own property and pursue means that allow this; the right to an education, without major obstacles; the right to a fair trial by jury, prior to any conviction; the right to start and maintain a family of any size; and the right to be protected from slavery or indentured servitude (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948).

The maintenance of human rights as a priority for driving policy in liberal regimes, is two-fold. The first, is that Western society has normalized the pursuit of these rights, through extensive publication and discussion led by organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union. Meaning, that since these ideas are widely consumed and spread on a consistent enough basis, that they are accepted as legitimate truths. This expectation creates a vacuum for the second driver, being that as liberal states are regimes reflected by the needs of their population, there is a high incentive for governments to appeal to human rights, as a means of securing votes and political leadership. This is emphasized by the quick turnaround between periodic elections, and thus, highlights why governmental representatives embody key issues in the hope of bolstering votes on targeted grounds. As a result, human rights are both the means to justify cyclical accountability in liberal regimes, as well as the ends that incentivize citizens to act civilly, in name of protecting the said rights that encompass their everyday lives.

By providing a thorough understanding of the firm fixtures in a liberal democracy, it becomes easier to comprehend the less founded basis of what encompasses a modern autocracy. This is due to the contrast of the rich availability of informational and theoretical foundations available for defining a liberal democracy, whereas those studying what defines an autocracy have a far more limited reach in accessing concrete information (Frantz, 2017). Therefore, in the following sub-section I will define what a modern autocracy is and is not, as juxtaposed against the understanding of what encompasses a liberal democracy.

### **B. Core Tenets of a Modern Autocracy**

One key pillar to comprehending the operation of a modern autocracy, is the fact that there is no unified model of governance amongst autocracies, as well as the fact that, "...[we know very little about] who the key political actors are, where decision making powers lie, [and the] political processes are opaque, and information is often intentionally distorted" (Frantz, 2017). As a result, the knowledge base is made up of multiple fragmented definitions of an autocracy, as well as multiple sub-categories that range in functionality from a sole person or party of control, to a full blown, totalitarian regime. Maintaining the aforementioned as key understandings of an autocracy, I seek to define an autocracy as a regime with a wide spectrum of actions, controlled by a single leader or party, desiring to centralize all policies and citizens' behaviors under a unified end. This is often to disrupt the leading grasp liberal democracies have on the world stage, emphasizing further what a modern autocracy is and is not. I seek to discuss autocracies in their modern context, to separate them as more than totalitarian dictatorships, for which they have come to be associated as (Frantz, 2017). Therefore, I will base my operational definition on the activities of reformist China.

China, who is the second most potent economy in the world (China, 2019) and has experienced a digitalization and telecommunications boom (Ang 2018) offers an interesting model for how a central party bureaucracy can challenge the prevailing notion, that liberal democracies are the world leaders in maintained wealth and the production of global influence (Ang, 2018). Similar to the period in which oligarchy was considered the ideal manner of governance to resist widespread attempts at democratization, bureaucratic, centrally run regimes with democratic characteristics injected into them, are offering the same incentives for countries to veer away from liberal democratic styles of governance. This is due to a belief that liberal democracies are in themselves unstable, and promote misery and war, due to their pursuit of policies that uphold the rights of the individual, whereas autocracy is implicitly stable, due to the controls the state applies on its governance (Ang, 2018). The methodology putting this belief into practice, is described by sociopolitical researcher Yuen Yuen Ang, who states that:

“Instead of instituting multiparty elections, establishing formal protections for individual rights or allowing free expression the CCP (Central Chinese Party) has made its changes below the surface, reforming its vast bureaucracy to realize many of the benefits of democratization—in particular accountability, competition, and partial limits on power—without giving up single-party control” (Ang, 2018).

This implies a strategy of political survival, where sensing a decline in the influence of an oppositional regime, a central leader or party takes in what its opponent is doing well, and makes it their own. This is cited as a core trait of the modern autocracy, due to the fact that the political environment is uncertain for autocracies, as well as the fact that, “...traditional tactics such as repression to maintain control, [through coercion] can be costly to maintain” (Frantz,

2017). As a result, China took its two-tier hierarchy of communist bureaucracy<sup>1</sup>, and imposed democratic characteristics, to incentivize the support of its citizens in the regime, in order for them not to question if their well-being was the prime motivation of their government. This explains why China's core focus of governance shifted from, "maintaining a monopoly on power... [and] transforming the Chinese bureaucracy into a driver of economic growth" (Ang 2018) into, promoting social changes and collective leadership at the local and central levels, "[to achieve] accountability and competition within single-party rule" (Ang, 2018).

Once socially oriented rule is implemented on the national level, modern autocracies can tackle the challenge of preserving their leadership on the international stage. China has done so by leading initiatives in modernizing mobile technology in Europe, South America and Africa (Tong and Tian, 2019) as well as offering many struggling countries the opportunity to refine their railroad and transportation infrastructures (How Will the Belt and Road Initiative Advance China's Interests, 2019), through strategic negotiation and investment plans. The purpose of investing in these projects, is that China is able to export its soft power as a regime committed to bettering world infrastructures, and doing so in a way that leaves political association out of the discussion. In doing so, they are offering countries with lower conditions for investing in such projects, the option to seek help without compromising their social structure, which is appealing for countries not subscribing to the Western mindset. This is

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<sup>1</sup> Ang specifies that the Chinese bureaucratic system, "...is composed of two vertical hierarchies—the party and the state—replicated across the five levels of government: central, provincial, country, city and township." This emphasizes the wide scale nature of the central party's involvement in all of China's governmental activities, and specifies a role of administration, and code of behavior (private for the state hired employees and public for civilians) in all factions of societies. This consideration is vital, because if citizens started asking questions about what the state was doing and how, the potential for the state to be cast in a negative light, and overthrown with revolution is high. For further consultation: Ang, Yuen Yuen. 2018. "Autocracy With Chinese Characteristics: Beijing's Behind-the-Scenes Reforms."

especially visible also, in the targets China is seeking for these types of projects, which under the Road and Belt Initiative include: Mongolia, Russia, large blocks of far Eastern Europe, Central and Western Asia, Pakistan, sub-countries encompassing the Indian state, and Indochina(China's Belt and Road Initiative in the Global Trade, Investment and Finance Landscape, 2018). By seeking like-minded countries as beneficiaries for its soft power exportation, China is easily able to increase its sphere of influence, and challenge key American partnerships in the area, and ultimately any effort to exert democratization locally. This emphasizes that the strategic decisions of a central party or leader can be both internally and externally focused, and therefore challenge the widespread notion, that globalization is a Western phenomenon, and thus only an extension of liberal democracy (Held and McGrew, 1993).

By establishing clear lines on what a modern autocracy is and is not, juxtaposed by the more traditional nature of liberal democratic regimes, it becomes possible to differentiate them. In doing so, I wish to establish that each despite its strengths and limits, is susceptible to political manipulation and public misinformation, albeit implemented in different ways. As a result, in the following section I will provide a theoretical base for both political manipulation and public misinformation. I will do so, to later emphasize how these central tactics of corrupted strategic communication are easily transferable to different categories of malintent established in liberal democratic states and autocracies.

### **3. Comparative Analysis of the Use Cases of Political Manipulation and Public Misinformation, and their Actual Juxtaposition**

By establishing a fundamental difference between political manipulation and public misinformation, it becomes clearer how each is utilized and to what end. This becomes a particularly strong point of emphasis when applied to questions of political differentiation and how each category of regime can fall victim to both types of corruptive strategic communication tactics. As a result, I will seek to provide a contextual illustration of both political manipulation and public misinformation, as intentional practices to coerce society into acting on premeditated ends, but with different although similar means.

#### **A. The Establishment of Manipulation as a Political Disruptor**

In the field of political manipulation, William H. Riker is known as its forefather for creating the field of heresthetics (Voeten, 2019). Put simply, and without elaborating on the rational choice infrastructures utilized to anchor his seminal work, heresthetics is, "...structuring the world so that you can win" (Moore and Kreth, 2005). In his seminal work on the topic, *The Art of Political Manipulation*, Riker dictates several rules to provide an operational framework for political manipulation and public misinformation to exist in. While Riker's work provides quantifiable objects with which to define, and then apply either political manipulation or public misinformation (Moore and Kreth, 2005) in a given scenario, his work alone does not capture the full scope of society's modern uses of these devices. As a result, Riker's work falls short in considering the psychological and sociological elements of both political manipulation and public misinformation, which I will add to his strategic use case for each. The objective in doing

so, is to provide a more inclusive definition of political manipulation and to a less severe degree, public misinformation.

Riker's work in establishing heresthetics as a field of study, began with establishing linguistic codes for its proper functionality. He implied that foundationally, heresthetics stems from the Greek word of electing or choosing something (Moore and Kreth, 2005). Applied to political decision making, "Heresthetic is about formulating and executing a strategy: manipulating people, events, objects, rules, and the like so that you can get what you want" (Moore and Kreth, 2005). Therefore, it implies the decision of electing or choosing to do something, in a way that manipulates key variables in a strategic format, for the individual pursuing these actions to target his or her desired ends. In order to accomplish these desired ends, politicians must make use of key variables, easily manipulated by their power, and which they have a strategic enough knowledge of to utilize efficiently. Riker identified these variables as people, alternatives, and dimensions (Moore and Kreth, 2005).

In regards to people, Riker interpreted their role in political manipulation to be:

"...Crucial because their needs drive the process of heresthetic to its ultimate goal in any given situation, their values and tastes define the lengths to which they will go, and their individual strengths and limitations present to themselves and to other herestheticians some of the dimensions of the heresthetic problem to be solved" (Moore and Kreth, 2005).

In establishing this assumption, Riker is acknowledging that people in a scenario of political manipulation can be both the manipulator or the manipulated, depending on who is orchestrating the heresthetical action and why. For example, in the Watergate case, President Nixon was the manipulator pulling the strings to achieve a cover up for winning re-election, amongst a breach and misuse of his access to the American intelligence community (The

Watergate Story, 2019). In doing so, Nixon purposely utilized both the Watergate burglars, and the man arrested for attempting to wiretap the offices of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate hotel (The Watergate Story, 2019) as pawns to advance his ends, and if things went wrong, to take the fall for him. In doing so, he understood his place in relation to the breach that took place, as well as the role the others would take on. This alleges that he purposely implemented them to maintain presidential power. As a result, this emphasizes that Nixon had values and tastes that would drive him to seek re-election at any cost, and that if he had reason to believe there was a risk re-election would not occur, that he would do whatever he needed to, to secure the office. In doing so, he weighed: the pros and cons of his decision to act, the strength of not doing the work directly himself, and the limitations for keeping his activities private, in a space where he was closely watched for his own protection. Thus, Nixon's actions and weighing of these against his tastes and values, highlight Riker's initial acknowledgement of human activity in committing heresthetic. This also transitions into the second variable for how heresthetics can be interpreted as a manipulative action, by way of alternatives.

The idea that Riker purports about alternatives, is that:

“Because heresthetic is all about people choosing among alternatives, there is no heresthetic if there are no alternatives. One quality that makes herestheticians effective is their ability to invent other and better alternatives even when given many poor choices. (Moore and Kreth, 2005).

Riker's aim in including alternatives into his list of operational variables for political manipulation, is purposeful in the sense that while people are the perpetrators of the act itself, the tastes and values they have, are based on what the alternatives they have for achieving their desired ends. Referring back to Watergate, in deciding to overstep his presidential

boundaries, Nixon inevitably considered what he was doing, before he did it. This means that he had to explicitly plan multiple steps of the operation, and in doing so decide if he should carry on, or if the risk of getting caught was strong enough for preventing him to act. In choosing to act, regardless of what the results of his internal analysis were, Nixon acted according to his personal agenda and needs. He did so, by deciding that the alternative of not acting and not risking being caught, were not worth forgoing the potential to directly control his re-election. As a result, Nixon realized how he could act to turn the situation to his favor, and despite being caught, resigned (The Watergate Story, 2019), rather than facing the humiliation of impeachment. This not only emphasizes Riker's argumentative framework, but also gives credence to it in the aforementioned example, as Nixon was later pardoned by his vice-president (The Watergate Story, 2019) and likely chose to resign, expecting this result. Therefore, his pool of knowledge and weighing of the available alternatives, both in acting and then resigning, illustrates that he built these alternatives into his plans and was resourceful enough to evade punishment, despite being guilty of the crime he committed.

Nixon's explicit knowledge of what was working against him, and what would eventually protect him from the worst fate possible, encompass Riker's final relevant variable, being the dimensions associated with political manipulation. Per a modern extension of Riker's original definition:

"The dimensions of a situation can be anything: time, distance, money rules, the number of voters, the issues of a political campaign, the limitations of a technology, the limitations of a system of governance, the limitations of the people involved in the situation, a person's or culture's or institution's values, and so on" (Moore and Kreth, 2005).

In introducing the question of dimensions into what encompasses political manipulation, Riker is accounting for the potential of an individual's personal bias<sup>2</sup> or preferences to influence what will drive them to deceive their electorate, and how these motivations differ from person to person. This is the beginning of considering the weight of human psychology in a leader's decision to implement political manipulation, that a solely rhetorical approach falls short of encompassing. Within the context of Watergate, Nixon accounted for the dimensions of: the years before and after his re-election, the states he would need to win organically, via the electoral college, the three-branch system of the US government, the laws he would be breaking in deliberately misusing intelligence, and the culture in the United States against political wrongdoing. Nixon not only accounted for these dimensions, but also made further manipulative use of them in multiple steps of a grander plan, to deceive the American public. Therefore, his personal interpretation of these dimensions, and his bias in knowing how they would be best manipulated, is reflective of his specific use case in carrying out his plans. The dimensions would differ if for example, Vice President Ford had acted to re-elect Nixon, rather than Nixon himself, based on Ford's specific relational dimensions and use cases. Thus, by

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<sup>2</sup> According to Psychology Today, "A bias is a tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something or someone. Biases are often based on stereotypes, rather than actual knowledge of an individual or circumstance. Whether positive or negative, such cognitive shortcuts can result in prejudgments that lead to rash decisions or discriminatory practices."

This implies a less rational association in why humans make certain decisions, and unlike rhetoric is not easy to map out or define a practice for. As a result, one can infer that political manipulation is not solely a tool of rhetorical manipulation, but also one loaded with psychological nuances that work alongside the rhetorical elements, creating a more powerful form of deception, that is customizable to specific people and specific contexts.

For further consultation: "Bias." *Psychology Today*. Psychology Today. Accessed October 7, 2019. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/bias>.

ascribing dimensional attachment to an operational framework for political manipulation, Riker is accounting for the differentiation available in human nature, and creating a scope for its ability of deception to exist in. Considering the context of when Riker published his work in 1929 (Voeten, 2019), there was not as complete of a development in the field of psychology as there is today, explaining his dependence on a higher quantity of quantifiable, rhetorical variables for the heresthetic framework. As a result, in order for Riker's work to be made relevant in today's political context, and resulting nature, further expansion is needed on his understanding of how people's choices personify manipulation, and how the human mind processes these deliberate choices and feelings, on both sides of political manipulation (the manipulator and manipulated).

In order to pick up where Riker's work leaves off, it is necessary to focus on the elements of people's choices that are the easiest to influence through political manipulation. Legal scholar and sociologist, Cass Sunstein, provides an alternative definition to manipulation, which embodies these choices in a gradual format, and measures them against the qualities in the human mind that are explicitly changed, when a person is manipulated. He characterizes manipulation, as, "...as an effort to influence people's choices as manipulative, to the extent that it does not sufficiently engage or appeal to their capacity for reflection and deliberation" (Sunstein, 2016). The point Sunstein makes is that in order for an act to be manipulative, an individual cannot find any tie to an element that would allow them to reflect on their safety or involvement in the act. Meaning, that they are unaware of the fact that they are being manipulated, and if they found out, would instinctively feel betrayed (Sunstein, 2016). This implies a purposeful modification of a person's awareness and emotions when they are being

manipulated, which does not definitively fit into Riker's model. This is because feelings and awareness are not objective or quantifiable. As a result, the manipulated may feel like they consented to the manipulation performed against them, due to the information that was withheld or modified being so complex. This would imply that the manipulator would know that they did not understand the information enough to reflect on it when acting or deciding along a pre-determined end (Sunstein, 2016). Therefore, those being manipulated are conditioned to make specific associations to a given topic, often strategically chosen by the manipulator, to arrive at a given result (Sunstein, 2016). This implies a heavy level of subliminal, psychological coercion, that is designed to weaken the autonomy, dignity, and welfare (Sunstein, 2016) of the manipulated, easing the transition for the manipulator to act however he sees fit.

The explicit distinction of autonomy, dignity, and welfare as key components of the human psyche damaged by manipulation, emphasizes that the aim of the manipulator is to break the sense of purpose of the manipulated. This is demonstrated by the fact that the manipulated become, "instruments of another's will" (Sunstein, 2016), unable to truly think or act with their full capabilities, because the manipulator has conditioned them to believe they are acting of their own accord. As a result, they are not truly autonomous (Sunstein, 2016), and if the reduction of autonomy is done on a strategically reductive scale, the dignity of the manipulated is destroyed, as they are not being treated with respect (Sunstein, 2016). The tradeoff between the loss of autonomy, and destruction of dignity is purposeful in the sense that, "...the manipulator is leading the chooser to make a choice without sufficiently assessing, on the chooser's own terms, its costs and its benefits" (Sunstein, 2016). Therefore, without

considering the needs of the manipulated, the manipulator is coercing the manipulated into acting without full capacity of their faculties, to achieve a desired end. This overrides the notion that the manipulated feels they know what is best for them, and as a result, risks their welfare, at the hands of the premeditated judgment of the manipulator (Sunstein, 2016). Thus, any purposeful usurpation of this principle, makes the manipulator a thief of the manipulated party's wellbeing, resulting in a psychological disruption to healthy rational choice activity. Applied in a political context, any party or leader that acts in the supposed best interest of the electorate, while removing their faculties to cut off their autonomy, dignity, and compromise their welfare, is being manipulative, regardless of the context used. However, Sunstein does differentiate on "nudges" against the rules of the framework's alignment, in order to weigh the degree of an action and if it is truly manipulative or not. This becomes relevant on a gradual basis, for developing a margin of difference between political manipulation and public misinformation.

Sunstein makes a purposeful designation in the sub-categories of manipulation, illustrating the different degrees it can have. Per his sub-categorization:

"Some forms of influence attempt to bypass deliberation altogether (such as subliminal advertising), and other forms merely try to influence it by triggering certain forms of automatic processing (e.g., through framing a problem so as to provoke the desired response" (Sunstein, 2016).

In weighing the degrees of manipulation, Sunstein is implying that an array of terminology can be applied to acts that are considered manipulative in nature, but that do not fall under an explicit definition of manipulation. This is correctly applied when one compares political manipulation and public misinformation. In the following sub-section, I will separate public misinformation as a slighter scale of the aforementioned.

## **B. Distinctive Characteristics of Political Misinformation**

Both political manipulation and public misinformation engender unethical means to coerce the public into acting a certain way or believing in a certain phenomenon. However, this occurs on different scales and with diverse tactics. In juxtaposition to both the technical and psychological tactics of political manipulation, I propose that public misinformation involves manipulative behavior, but on a slighter scale, and only in regards to manipulating how the general public consumes information. The most complete parallel in this regard, is the definition of public misinformation utilized by the European Commission, who classifies it as:

“[including] all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented, and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for profit. It does not cover issues arising from the creation and dissemination online of illegal content (notably defamation, hate speech, incitement to violence)” (Final Report of the High-Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation, 2018).

The European Commission’s definition while expertly technical, like Riker’s work in heresthetics, leaves out a key psychological element needing consideration in questions of public misinformation. Further paralleling the point above of, “triggering certain forms of association”(Sunstein, 2016) public misinformation depends on the idea that:

“People’s judgments are properly and legitimately automatic and not a product of deliberation. We can imagine efforts to alter those automatic judgments through rational arguments that cannot be characterized as manipulative. But we can also imagine efforts to alter those judgments that do not involve rational arguments at all” (Sunstein, 2016).

Therefore, public misinformation is the purposeful modification of human associations to specific information and its processing, in direct correlation to how this information is analyzed and then acted upon. This explains why in political campaigns, politicians, “...attempt to associate their opponents with something scary, ridiculous, foolish, or ugly”(Sunstein, 2016),

with an innate desire to condition, “...certain outcomes [and choices, to be] vivid and appealing...or vivid and unappealing... even though a more neutral frame would present the whole problem in a less tendentious manner” (Sunstein, 2016). Thus, public misinformation is dependent upon a strategic alteration to a natural mode of information processing, in the sense that human associations can be strategically triggered, enticing citizens to vote or behave a certain way, without the deliberate force of full on political manipulation. As a result, this enticement is subliminal and appeals to their ethos and pathos, without them consciously being aware of this strategic design.

The resulting difference between political manipulation and public misinformation, is seen in the degree of deliberate interference from the orchestrator of the intrusion, as well as the mode for receiving the deliberate interference. This is demonstrated in the definitions I propose for each, as followed. Political manipulation is the strategic modification of people, alternatives, and dimensions, to achieve desired political ends, through both psychological and rhetorical means, and is often aimed at destroying the autonomy, dignity, and wellbeing of all of those involved. There is no preferred mechanism or outcome for this, as long as the desired ends of the manipulator are met with the least awareness of the deception, possible.

In contrast, public misinformation is the purposeful alteration of information consumed, produced, deciphered, and shared, with the aim of enticing humans to feel a certain way, or believe a certain idea is appealing or unappealing, based on an appeal to their natural linguistic processing. Public misinformation specifically effects the mode of information sharing and consumption, and is intentionally tampered with on a smaller scope than political manipulation, whose consequences can vary in size and scope, and are also more customizable based on the

desired ends of the manipulator. Both public misinformation and political manipulation are susceptible to customization by way of strategies in differing governmental regimes, political affiliations, and religious preferences, and are designed to adapt to the target society of each. Most commonly, this is achieved through the use of propaganda, which I will define and contextualize in the following chapter.

#### **4. Propaganda as the Preferred Tool for Governmental Exertion and Control**

Political manipulation and public misinformation are processes designed to subvert the public through both rhetorical and psychological means. Within the scope of both of these processes, one finds a variety of approaches of application, utilized by both liberal democratic and autocratic regimes, throughout human history. One of the most prevalent and effective applicative approaches, is propaganda. In this section, I will define and specify the applicative tactics of propaganda in achieving decisive political ends.

##### **A. Definitive Aspects of What Propaganda is and is Not**

Propaganda is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, as, “Information, ideas, opinions, or images, often only giving one part of an argument that are broadcast, published, or in some other way spread with the intention of influencing people’s opinions” (Dictionary, 2019). As noted by the preceding definition, propaganda is not linguistically associated with informational manipulation or wrongdoing, and was designed to, “to successfully divide or unite citizens by creating shared perceptions of events, ideas, and people”(Farkas, 2018), on any side of the political spectrum, defined by a central government’s use case (Shpancer, 2017). It was not until the outset of World War II, that propaganda became connotated with manipulation, when it was utilized by Fascists to create strongholds of support for their ideas (Farkas, 2018), dependent on tactics of fear, hatred, and love (Shpancer, 2017), to sow ties between dictatorial regimes and society. As a result, the definition of propaganda experienced a social shift of association, and has since been associated with a, “mainly disapproving tone” (Dictionary, 2019) when referenced in a political context. In extension of this shift in definitive identification, propaganda has, “continued to evolve alongside political systems and media

technologies”(Farkas, 2018), and must therefore, be analyzed within these contexts. Thus, I will define the refined subversive elements of propaganda that have been in use since World War II, and explore how these uses were customized by both liberal democratic and autocratic regimes, according to the developments made in telecommunications technology.

## **B. Aspects of Application within Propaganda**

Propaganda is a medium that is both fluid and standard, in the sense that it can adapt to different media as advances become available, while maintaining a set of core standards. These standards were defined in radio research studies in the 1930s and 1940s, by social scientists of the Frankfurt School, who sought to research how specified radio content (in this case propaganda) was utilized to subjugate its users into acting for or against, specific social movements of the time period (Jenemann, 2019). The work of authors Lee and Lee in their seminal publication, *The Fine Art of Propaganda*, defined a seven-tiered mechanism for analyzing propaganda, which is still the most widely used (Jenemann, 2019). The mechanism is comprised of the following, which I will define and elaborate on individually: Name-Calling, Glittering Generality, Transfer, Testimonial, Plain Folks, Card Stacking, and Bandwagon (Jenemann, 2019).

Name-Calling is defined as, “Giving an idea a bad label and therefore rejecting it without examining the evidence” (Jenemann, 2019). Politicians often utilize this tactic while campaigning, in the hopes of reducing their opponents’ credibility, by calling them an emotive name that stays in the minds of voters, and entices them to discredit said opponent. A recent example of this, is when then presidential candidate, Donald Trump, repeatedly called Hillary Clinton, “crooked” and a criminal, due to allegations of illicit activity on her White House email

(Parker, 2019). The intent, was to barrage voters with an image of Clinton as dangerous, and keep the allegations on voters' minds, as they went to the polls. As the result demonstrates, this appeal was effective and helped solidify Trump's victory.

A Glittering Generality is, "Associating something with a 'virtue word' and creating acceptance and approval without examination of the evidence" (Jenemann, 2019). These virtue words are highly charged with emotional appeals, which the propagandist can attach to his or her desired ends, and solicit multiple associations, from people in different walks of life (Shpancer, 2017). This is also a tactic widely used during election season to garner as much support from diverse parties as possible, without taking explicit positions on key issues. This was a hugely successful tactic in both of Barack Obama's presidential campaigns, where he ran under the slogans, "Change we can believe in" (2008 campaign) and "Forward" (2012 campaign), associating moderate leftist positions to both slogans, while covering a wide scope of issues important to diverse voters (Sanchez, 2012). The emotional appeals here used, referenced necessary elements Obama sought to change from Bush era leadership, drawing upon anger and discontent, in regards to the prolonged nature of the Iraq conflict (A Year After Iraq War, 2004). The effect was wide-spread at guaranteeing Obama a victory, and personified him as the only natural progression for America at the time.

The third tier of the mechanism, called a transfer, "Carries the respect and authority of something respected to something else to make the latter accepted. [This] also works with something that is disrespected to make the latter rejected" (Jenemann, 2019). An example of this would be a politician seeking a celebrity endorsement for his or her campaign, in an

attempt to garner the star power of the endorser, in his favor and as a parallel to his own campaign.

Similarly aligned with a transfer, is a testimonial; in which, “Propagandists will use testimonials to legitimize an idea or position. This technique makes use of the fact that we more easily attach to specific personal narratives than to general facts and dry statistics” (Shpancer, 2017). This explains why testimonials are legitimized by, “Having some respected or hated person say that a given idea or program, product, or person is good or bad” (Jenemann, 2019). A relevant example of political testimonial, would be when German chancellor Angela Merkel, publicly denounced Donald Trump for a racist tweet against four congresswomen, starting a wave of outcry against him from further world leaders (Baker, 2019). By creating a narrative that Trump was ‘dishonoring America’s strength as a country’ in using racist language (Baker, 2019), Merkel was able to delegitimize Trump as an international leader, as well as his intent for governing the United States, in a way that did not have to reference his past discretions. As a result, she had an emotional appeal that distanced Trump’s behavior from the norm of international leadership.

The fifth potential use mechanism for propaganda is a tactic called Plain Folks. This is, “The method by which a speaker attempts to convince the audience that he or she and his or her ideas are good because they are ‘of the people’ the ‘plain folks’” (Jenemann, 2019). This creates a connection to what is deemed popular in society, making a person or a party appeal more human and relatable to the populous, and less associated to a large political party. An example of this would be, a political candidate being photographed eating at McDonald’s

during election season, bolstering support for his or her relatable choice of meal, and sense of ordinary life, rather than that of a politician (Shpancer, 2017).

Another potential propaganda tactic is Card Stacking, where the propagandist “Uses under-emphasis and over-emphasis to dodge issues and evade facts. He resorts to lies, censorship and distortion. He omits facts. He creates a smoke screen of clamor by raising a new issue when he wants an embarrassing matter forgotten” (Shpancer, 2017). This tactic is commonly seen in the media today, where leaders and politicians divert the attention of one matter, by deflecting it with another. A recent example, is Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro’s response to the fire in the Amazon. Scientists specializing in ecosystem preservation, have cited the Amazon as the world’s lungs due to the huge share of carbon available in the region, which if harnessed correctly could help stave off drastic climate change (Amazon Rainforest Belongs to Brazil, Says Jair Bolsonaro, 2019). In response to these citations, Bolsonaro claims the aforementioned points are a ‘fallacy’ and ‘misconception’, and that the international community is utilizing conservationist rhetoric as a means to interfere with Brazil’s international policies (Amazon Rainforest Belongs to Brazil, Says Jair Bolsonaro, 2019). Bolsonaro is purposely discrediting the international community, so that he does not have to answer to Brazilian conservationists in the country, who accuse him of doing nothing to stop the fire, and instead blame him for aggravating it, due to aggressive deforestation (Amazon Rainforest Belongs to Brazil, Says Jair Bolsonaro, 2019). As a result, Bolsonaro is evading credible scientific analysis from specialists in the region, and is instead creating a smokescreen around questions of Brazilian sovereignty in the region, to rally his supporters and not answer for his actions (Amazon Rainforest Belongs to Brazil, Says Jair Bolsonaro, 2019).

The final tactic of propaganda defined by Lee and Lee is called a band wagon, and is designed to appeal to humans' tribal nature (Shpancer, 2017). Meaning, that it:

“Has as its theme ‘everybody—at least all of us—is doing it!’ and thereby tries to convince the members of a group that their peers are accepting the program and that we should all jump on the bandwagon rather than being left out” (Jenemann, 2019).

This is because humans are conditioned to thrive in specifically organized groups, and, “...want to belong and are terrified of social rejection and isolation” (Shpancer, 2017). Armed with this knowledge, propagandists purposely focus on pre-existing groups and identities as targets for achieving their ends or carrying out their desired actions (Shpancer, 2017). An example of effective use of the band wagon mentality is visible in Donald Trump's presidential campaign in 2016. By running under the slogan, “Make America Great Again” (Choi, 2019) Trump created a strong climate of those in favor of American supremacy against everyone else, inducing divisive messages designed to bolster strong feelings from his supporters, and justify the need for his leadership to fulfill the void of a “not great” America. In doing so, he created a band wagon that was purposely vague enough to motivate citizens to vote for him, and mock those who did not, for not belonging to the same herd mentality they instinctually latched onto (Shpancer, 2017).

The existence of these key targets demonstrates a key peril in the continued use of propaganda, being that, “The biggest underlying problem with propaganda is not who is using it, but the extent to which it's used to the diminishment or exclusion of reason, science, fact and truth” (Shpancer, 2017). This, in addition to the fact that propaganda is adaptable to several outlets of communication designed for mass consumption, emphasizes humans' tendencies toward supporting public misinformation, and becoming tools of political manipulation. The best manner to mitigate this is through an analysis of how

telecommunications technologies have been strategically utilized by both liberal democracies and autocracies to control the spread of information. In examining the strategic use cases of these technologies, one finds a tendency of governments in transition or in periods of crisis, to manipulate and misinform the general populous to the highest degree, under the guise of protecting them and fulfilling the government's ends. A period where this was done both to the benefit and detriment of the populous, is during World War II. This period also demonstrates a high contrast between the use cases of telecommunications technology between a liberal democracy (Great Britain) and an autocracy (Nazi Germany), fighting against each other and often in close proximity. This enables one to see the extent to which technology is easily controlled and manipulated by a state, and the consequences that arise if a transparent strategy is not established.

## **5. Historical Use Cases for Propaganda During World War II**

In the following sub-sections, I will analyze the historical significance and actions of both Great Britain and Germany during World War II. I will focus particularly on the differentiation between their content and strategies to mobilize their societies according to their aims in the War.

### **A. The British Radio Empire, and the BBC's Decisive Role in World War II**

Adolf Hitler understood the complexities of war and the layers comprising it, driving him to believe that, "in war, words are actions (Life at the BBC, 2019). This reinforces the ideal that media can shape cultural identity (Chignell, 2019), exemplified by the type and frequency of information consumed in a given country. This phenomenon is seen in Great Britain through the progression of the BBC into:

"A central position in British cultural life since its reputation was fully established during the Second World War. The BBC's influential role is unparalleled elsewhere in the world; focusing the nation's interest on cultural and political concerns at home and abroad" (Chignell, 2019).

The singularity in the BBC's position, is seen in its development as an entity originally established as a commercial broadcasting firm, later transformed into a multi-media outlet with government ties. The British Broadcasting Company Ltd was founded in 1922, as a privately-owned radio broadcaster, dependent upon commercial British radio manufacturers who purchased shares (Britannica, 2019). In order to acquire these shares, the Company centralized its content according to the broadcasting norms of the period, which following World War I, "were taken by commercial firms that regarded broadcasting primarily as point-to-point communications" (Britannica, 2019). Meaning, that from one transceiver to another, the intent of the broadcast was to transparently inform the listener on the other side, of the news or

intended message in as simply delivered a consumable as possible. This straight forward use case of the Company continued until 1925, when then general manager John Reith, followed the suggestion of a parliamentary committee to liquidate the privately-owned entity and replace it with its modern counterpart The British Broadcasting Corporation (Britannica, 2019). The public transfer process was completed in 1927, solidifying the BBC's link to the government, which remained strong until 1991 (Britannica, 2019) when the organization began to take more steps toward creating and sharing more independently developed content (mostly through television offerings).

Throughout its established relationship with the British government, the BBC, "Although ultimately answerable to Parliament, has virtually complete independence in the conduct of its activities" (Britannica, 2019). However, despite the fact the government mostly took a laissez-faire approach to supervising the efforts of the BBC, there is an added layer of transparency the BBC shares with the monarchy, established through the fact that the royal family is responsible for appointing the members of the BBC Trust, which is, "an independent 12-member panel, governed by a chairman, that oversees day-to-day operations" (Britannica, 2019). As a result, it is possible to infer that while the BBC's aim is to develop and broadcast transparent, culturally relevant news and entertainment content to its widespread audience<sup>3</sup>, that it does so by being

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<sup>3</sup> Under the protection of the link to the government, John Reith, who eventually transitioned from general manager of the original company, to director general, was able to extend the broadcasting parameters of the BBC from just England, to all of the British Isles. As a result, he made history by, "inaugurating the empire shortwave broadcasting service, and directed the development of the world's first regular television service in 1936." As a result of these adjustments to scale, Reith developed a new standard for broadcasting at the country specific level, encouraging the adaptation of public service broadcasting worldwide. For more information: Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "British Broadcasting Corporation." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed October 19, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/British-Broadcasting-Corporation>.

as transparent as possible in establishing neutral content and then providing detailed, public reports about its content management and themes to governing entities. This inference is strengthened by the terms of the original charter which took the BBC public, giving it a government backed monopoly on all phases of national broadcasting (Britannica, 2019).

Despite having the ability to interfere with broadcasting norms and official positions within the BBC, and not doing so often, the high-level of transparency to government entities has led telecommunications researchers to question the level of influence the government still holds over the organization. This question, articulated by telecommunications expert, Tom Burns, speculates that:

“The unceasing watchfulness of government over the BBC's news and discussions programs has made for recurrent outbursts of criticism of BBC policy, allegations of political bias and a continuous mumbling undertone of disquiet, suspicion or downright animosity” (Chignell, 2019).

Based on these allegations, scholars continue to push the boundaries of these questions to reflect on the necessity and intent of the BBC's annual publication of both its *Annual Reports and Accounts* and *The BBC Handbooks*.<sup>4</sup> Hugh Chignell, an expert on the historical inter-

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<sup>4</sup> For purpose of clarity, both are annual reports with differing, but overlapping purposes. *The Annual Reports and Accounts*, are a publicly accessible document stipulating what the BBC does annually and why these key decisions are taken. While in contrast, the Handbooks are:

“a review of the BBC's year, information on notable programs, and other basic factual material including names of senior staff and governors, engineering developments, audience trends, the accounts, and a copy of the BBC's charter.”

One may argue that the Handbooks are a guide to measure the transition of creative content management, rather than a transparent report of specific management activity, however the argumentation in favor of both measures being redundant, is highly provocative when taken into the entire context.

For more information, consult both: Chignell, Hugh. “BBC Handbooks, Annual Reports and Accounts, 1927-2002 - Description.” British Online Archives. Accessed October 19, 2019. [https://microform.digital/boa/collections/6/bbc-handbooks-annual-reports-and-accounts-1927-2002/detailed-description](https://microform.digital/boa/collections/6/bbc-handbooks-annual-reports-and-accounts-1927-2002/detailed-description;);

Chignell, Hugh. “The BBC and National Identity in Britain, 1922-53.” *The BBC and national identity in Britain, 1922-53* | Reviews in History. Accessed October 19, 2019. <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/1079>.

workings of the BBC, insinuates that in analyzing the position of the BBC to the government, and its specific rhetoric in publishing the Handbooks, that the intent of the document is to regularly remind Parliament that the BBC is a public organization dedicated to informing the public for its own benefit, and that in doing so, the public's ultimate good is supported by a link to the government, and thus, transparent programming that the government can access whenever needed (Chignell, 2019). This adds a layer of skepticism to the official mission statement of the Handbooks, which is:

“To provide a clear and reliable guide to the workings of the BBC, to survey the year's work in British broadcasting, and to bring together as much information about the BBC as can be assembled within the covers of a small book”  
(Chignell, 2019).

Despite the undertone that Chignell's analysis carries, as well as his deep dive into all of the thematic offerings available in the entirety of the Handbooks' collection (Chignell, 2019) an added layer of transparency to maintain a balance between the government's position and the information consumed by the populous, is not sufficient to create a causal relationship where there is not one. This is emphasized by the fact that the government does not implement any review of the BBC's content before it airs, and does not impose any publicly known laws on what the BBC can and cannot publish. As a result, the BBC has grown to be a worldwide leader in news broadcasting, through its online, radio, and television broadcasts, and is denoted as having a high level of factual reporting, according to the Media Bias Factor Check (BBC, 2019). Therefore, one can assume that the government may support the scope of the BBC and its worldwide influence, but does not infiltrate it in anyway. This fact is heightened when analyzing this relationship during periods of public crisis, where heavier government involvement may

have been justifiable to return the country to equilibrium. However, in looking at World War II Britain and the BBC's role in informing the country, the Allied Powers, and in some cases even Nazi Germany, of what was happening in as close to real time as possible, the government's position of support of scope, but non-infiltration remained the same. Thus, one can assume that the primary function of the BBC during the War was to inform and protect Britain, in as transparent but safely a way as possible, while simultaneously protecting the secret operations of the British government, and the divulgence of information, from enemy interception.

Although Chignell comments with skepticism on the connection between the BBC and the British Parliament, he validates the position of the BBC in World War II era reporting, to be one boasting a:

“Reputation...for accuracy and independence, a reputation enhanced by the journalism of men like Frank Gillard, Wynford Vaughan Thomas and Richard Dimbleby. The wartime handbooks provide insight into the thinking of the BBC and the government on issues of truth and propaganda” (Chignell, 2019).

Thus, in order to assert that the scope of assurance of the BBC is one to inform and balance a quality of public life, and not one of appeasement to the government, I will analyze the content of the radio broadcasts available from the BBC online archives, specifying their organization, literal content, and overall scope of collection and intent, to support the reputation Chignell solidifies.

The BBC Online Archive has a dedicated resource to its contents produced during the War. It is strategically organized according to sub-facets of its activity during this period, covering: a general introduction of its war-time position, the type and methodology of reporting during the war, how life was for BBC reporters and collaborators, its home-front programming (outside of frequent newsgathering), overseas programming, analysis of

editorial control, censorship and anti-propaganda operations, a D-Day and regular war story segmentation, and a dedicated end of war section (The BBC at War, 2019). In order to clearly define the unique points of the BBC's approach to covering all of these sub-facets, as well as analyzing how it did so independently and alongside the government, I will explore the overall intent of the BBC's programming, and provide detailed insights on the style of war reporting followed, as well as clarifying the initiatives covered by the censorship and propaganda archive.

The BBC underwent a large shift in intent of coverage during the war, likely due to the fact that the organization, "reinvented itself during the Second World War and public perception of the institution changed dramatically. It more than doubled in size and adopted a new culture and outlook" (The BBC at War, 2019). Prior to the war, both the television and radio strands of the BBC were active, but due to the shifting need of coverage to be less easily accessible in the wrong hands, the BBC television outlet shut down. As a result of this the overseas language services expanded in Britain, while the radio side of the broadcasting was reconfigured to deliver the Home Service and the Forces Program (The BBC at War). Through this initiative, the resulting content broadcast was strategically managed to closely reflect the needs of listeners back home, and created a dynamic for news, drama, entertainment, and educational programming to be centered on the war, and equally digestible and distracting from the realities of daily life in war time (The BBC at War, 2019). In addition to unifying the central content broadcast in Britain, the BBC also wanted to ensure that the populous was educated about the goings on of various war fronts where British soldiers and efforts were stationed. Therefore, the BBC established a frequent monitoring strategy of international

broadcasts, where it worked to identify foreign propaganda stations, aiming to undermine the mission of the Allied powers (The BBC at War, 2019).

A momentous force in the BBC during this period, is its shift from being solely a source of entertainment to a highly regarded news source. From its outset, the BBC had strayed from “newsgathering” (Reporting the War, 2019) due to the influence of powerful newspaper owners convincing the BBC’s management that broadcasting had no place in sharing news, and that journalistic ends were best left to journalistic means (Reporting the War, 2019). As a result of these limitations, any journalistic news shared by the BBC had to be picked up from one of the widely regarded newspapers, and could only be broadcasted after 6 p.m., the day that the newspaper released the story (Reporting the War, 2019). However, with the changes brought on by the War, especially the rationing of newsprint, newspaper supplies began to dwindle (Reporting the War, 2019) and the consumption of news needed to be more immediate and accessible. Therefore, the BBC expanded quickly into the business of newsgathering and sharing, collaborating often with journalists formerly writing for the newspapers. The intent was to provide the general populous information about the conditions their loved ones were experiencing, without going into details that were too gruesome, or betraying locations of troops and war tactics, that the enemy could use to their advantage<sup>5</sup> (Reporting the War,

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<sup>5</sup> It was common knowledge that Hitler consulted the BBC reports looking for any minute piece of information, telling of the Allied Powers’ war tactics or location, as well as any insight into how the government was rallying spirits through the BBC’s broadcasts. This imposed heavier measures of caution, and obliged journalists to develop precise, but vague reporting terminology, that if infiltrated would not share any secret operations with the Axis powers. The result was often frustrating for Hitler, and is widely held to be a reason for why Hitler ordered the bombing of various BBC Outlets in Britain during violent air raids.

For more information: Reporting the War-History of The BBC.” History of The BBC. The BBC. Accessed November 10, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/research/bbc-at-war/reporting-the-war>.

2019). However, despite these limits, the BBC's attitude to war-time reporting was to be as honest as possible, "to tell the people like it [was]" (Reporting the War, 2019). The content of the reports, closely followed Britain's position in the war itself, and started with the stationing of Richard Dimbleby in France, who for the better first portion of the war did not have detailed news to share, and instead was allowed to provide "colorful" commentary on the realities of living in a war zone, as well as popular attitudes of those around him (Reporting the War, 2019). It was not until Britain was heavily involved in the war, due to the Nazi invasions of Norway, Denmark, and the Low Countries, as well as the siege of the beach at Dunkirk, that real-time reporting began to broadcast the realities of battle, and the experience of British soldiers (Reporting the War, 2019). The nature of Britain's quick escalation into the war, did not leave much time for journalists to develop a plan for the style or content of broadcasts. As a result, the divulging of news featured an approach of learning about a given situation, sharing all possibly relevant details not deemed sensitive or gruesome, and keeping the news succinct, to not discourage citizens from giving their all to the war effort. This strategy was also applied simultaneously, for the British government to garner support from the United States, for their eventual entry into the war (Reporting the War, 2019). An example of this adjusted content for wide-consumption, was the Battle of Britain, where the BBC described hefty damage done by the Axis powers via air raids as, 'heavy bombing on the east coast' (Reporting the War, 2019), in the hopes of downplaying, "the impact and value of such attacks, and to prevent the Luftwaffe from learning which of its sorties had found the target" (Reporting the War, 2019). This tactic of reporting grew as the variety of fronts that British were fighting on grew, and eventually resulted in the stationing of highly famous reporters on these war fronts. This was predominant

in Africa where Richard Dimbleby led the stationing efforts, later joined by Edward Ward who eventually became a prisoner of war, and Godfrey Talbot, who with his recording truck, “Belinda” provided in-depth coverage of violent battles, including the Battle of El Alamein (Reporting the War, 2019). Through localized reporting, strategically vague reports, and a no-nonsense attitude, the BBC utilized its radio broadcasts in a straight forward manner to fill the void left by newspapers. It sought to inform the public for its own benefit of what was occurring on each front, in a manner that kept them abreast but not fixated on where their loved ones were. The BBC also helped stabilize a Great Britain shaken by the gruesome realities of the War. Although for reasons of protection against infiltration, it could not explicitly specify distinct outcomes of battles or attacks, the BBC did not manipulate the information shared, or bolster it according to the classic propaganda tactics, aforementioned. Meaning, that it was transparent to the government in its aims and style of delivery, only to maintain equilibrium in a time of crisis. It was not a vein for government produced content or deliberate misinformation. The BBC also stood against the government on key positions it did not agree with, to prevent the over-infiltration of the government in influencing its content. This is demonstrated by the path of collaboration between the BBC and the British government in regards to combatting anti-war propaganda, and their disagreements on how and if information should be censored, during war-time broadcasts.

There was temptation on the side of the British military and government, to infiltrate the BBC during the War in a wide-scale attempt to curtail Nazi propaganda from being consumed in Britain (Censorship and Propaganda, 2019). This was due to the existence of an anti-British propagandist named William Joyce, who broadcast under the name ‘Lord Haw-Haw’

(Censorship and Propaganda, 2019), to both poke fun at the British way of living, and through sinisterly, well-informed humor, undermine the Allied initiatives in the war (Censorship and Propaganda, 2019). The first tactical division between the BBC and the government was seen in response to Lord Haw-Haw's broadcasts, where the government wanted to produce corresponding anti-fascist propaganda to offset the damage of the broadcasts, but following the strong advice of the BBC, decided not to (Censorship and Propaganda, 2019). The rhetoric behind the decision taken, was that the BBC, "Argued that to put out clumsy rebuttals at the behest of Government would dignify Haw-Haw's propaganda, and undermine the trust of the audience. In the long run, a trusted news source for audiences at home and abroad would be a more potent weapon" (Censorship and Propaganda, 2019). As a result, the BBC focused on producing thoroughly researched and strategic news content, that coincided with the government's standards of production and security, without succumbing to their desired censorship. Throughout the development of these standards, and the strategic censoring of sensitive information, there was a consistent tension between the BBC and the government, about the need to protect certain information, but not all information (Censorship and Propaganda, 2019). This emphasizes the consultative nature of the relationship between the BBC and the government, and their mutual desire to broadcast relevant content for the good of society, despite their differing visions on how these ends were best achieved. The thorough discussions between both parties led to the omission of key 'unmentionables' (Censorship and Propaganda, 2019) during broadcasts, refining how the information was being delivered to the public, in order to keep them safe.

One standard developed by the BBC in response to the government's desire to censor anti-fascist content, was to share a wider scope of factual information, containing both Britain's successes and failures in the War, in an attempt to be as transparent and democratic as possible. As described by the BBC's online archive, during such broadcasts:

"It would say, for instance, that bombs had fallen and that there were casualties. But precise number of casualties and the location and time of a bombing would often be withheld, so that the enemy would not know which of its missions had found the target" (Censorship and Propaganda, 2019).

In addition to closely identifiable information regarding military gains and losses, the BBC was also not allowed to specifically reference: the weather (for fear of revealing conditions that could help or hurt Axis powered bombings, due to the forecast); the names of any military operations or equipment; or the location of the royal family (Censorship and Propaganda, 2019). By keeping sensitive information safe, and off of the public record, the government aimed to protect citizens from attack, while allowing them to be equally informed. The ideal that knowledge in the hands of the populous was power in maintaining the war effort, was purposeful in the sense that it was not solely a war of one state versus another; it was of an informed populous, against a manipulative political machine. The relationship between the BBC and the government, despite being convoluted, demonstrates that a central power can influence the scope of public broadcasting, without infringing upon it, and doing so in a way that protects the interests of all. As a result, one can infer that Britain's history in telecommunications broadcasting, is one of transparency and strategy, without being overtly controlled. This plays a stark contrast to the reality in Nazi Germany, where all shares of public communication channels sought to over-glorify the regime, and its manipulative messages. This illustrates that the central intent of a regime can be centered through how it promotes the

public consumption of information, and how these attitudes manifest themselves in governmental decision-making.

### **B. The Destruction of Bi-Partisan Radio, into a Nazi Stronghold for Propaganda**

The Nazi regime is often cited as the most powerful example of propaganda in action (Adena et al, 2013), due to the scope of the government's involvement in distributing materials for consumption, and ensuring that strategic messages were so well dispersed that they become unavoidable. In order to comprehend the centrality of such a thorough scope of control and execution, one must contextualize how the Nazi party viewed radio communication as a stake in its survival, and the measures it undertook to ensure no outside threat risked exposing an alternate reality. Therefore, I will analyze the perspective of Josef Goebbels, who was the Minister of Propaganda under Hitler, and how he worked to dismantle the private industrialization of the radio into a publicly run government machine, and how through this, Goebbels purposely amplified the German populace's access to radio content, through governmentally subsidized radio sets (von Saldern, 2004). Furthermore, I will juxtapose this manipulation of reach and frequency against Hitler's overall strategy of unifying a geographically diverse Germany, separated into ideologically differing regions, into a single, political machine. I will also infer that Hitler's political machine was capable of ensuring blind loyalty through implementing fear tactics, and the creation of a new society without an alternative on how to live. In doing so, I will emphasize how Hitler and Goebbels maximized on key regions' pre-dispositions to Hitler's messages in order to unite the entire country under them. I will emphasize that the purpose for which they did so, was their desire to create a new German identity in a state plagued by economic collapse and incredibly low morale.

The main call to action of the Nazis' broadcasting strategy, is best articulated by telecommunications scholar Vladimir Barović, who noticed that:

“In Hitler's state, media were the controllers of the heart and minds of citizens that had to be kept in submission and obedience, with a well-known dictator, and more open methods of terror such as the Gestapo and the SS” (Barović, 2015).

The reasoning for a seamless unification of party, people, and media, was to discourage any doubt in Hitler's ability to, “...clean up the 'mess' of democracy, restore order, and rebuild national strength (Pick, 2012). Hitler sought to indoctrinate these images through a strong-hold rule and enforce them through widely dispersed communication objectives. In order to achieve these, and condition the German populace to accept them as law, Hitler turned to Josef Goebbels in 1926. Goebbels, who was ambitiously looking to climb the Nazi party ladder, was at this time a provincial party leader, called a *Gauleither*, who found propaganda to be the most valuable tool of shaping the masses. He found radio the best fit method to shape vulnerable minds in the quickest time possible and without citizens' consent or realization (Barović, 2015). This highly appealed to Hitler, who promoted Goebbels to Supreme Leader of Party Propaganda in 1929, and eventually to Minister of Propaganda of the Third Reich, in 1933 (Barović, 2015). In doing so, Hitler allowed Goebbels to have free reign of all Nazi federated telecommunications outlets, with the intent of centralizing Nazi ideals as commonplace and the only option for a Germany in progress (Barović, 2015). Goebbel's thesis was one of psychologically refined propaganda. This is demonstrated by a speech he made to top Nazi radio executives in 1939, where he divulged that:

“ This is the secret of propaganda: the one who wants to include propaganda, completely saturate the ideas, cannot see that it is permeated. It is understood itself to propaganda aims, but the intention has to be so smart and cleverly hidden, to whom the intention to be fulfilled, it does not feel” (Barović, 2015).

Goebbels' reflections demonstrate an understanding that Nazi propaganda had to be so precisely interwoven into the German populous' life, that they would never question the government's role in purporting these ideas, and dispersing them into the mainstream public space. In order to do so seamlessly, Goebbels had to create an operational framework at the state level, where the regime would control both the confines of the output of Nazi radio broadcasts, as well as the content. He successfully did so, by dismantling the Weimar Republic era mode of operation for radio broadcasting and content, and replaced it with a more dynamic, pro-Nazi version. Goebbels' version become the national mouthpiece for Hitler's ideas from the outset of the formation of the Third Reich.

Prior to Nazi influence reaching subsequent enough levels to disrupt the balance of power in German governance, the Weimar Republic, “[was associated] with a lively avant-garde, modern mass culture, and a broad, well-developed workers' cultural movement. Weimar radio [was too] usually regarded as an instrument of modernity and plurality “ (von Saldern, 2004). The set-up of the radio system in Weimar Germany, was characteristically strategic because it had a central dependence on the Reich, as well as a regionally specific sub-organization amongst the individual states in Germany. This is demonstrated by the fact that in 1923 and 1924 there were nine, regional broadcasting outlets dispersed throughout the Reich in: Berlin, Leipzig, Munich, Frankfurt am Main, Stuttgart, Breslau, Münster, Hamburg, and Königsberg (von Saldern, 2004). In addition to the regionally specific outposts, there was also a tenth frequency reaching all audiences in the Reich, called the *Deutsche Welle*, which broadcast out of Berlin via a long-wave frequency radio (van Saldern, 2004). This co-alignment of the regional and national entities within the radio logistical system was dependent on a strong

central Reich, which began establishing itself in broadcasting in December of 1923. The centrality of the Reich's leadership in producing radio content, was dependent upon two federally run organizations; the first being the Reich Radio Company (Reichsrundfunkgesellschaft), and the second being Reich Interior Ministry (von Saldern, 2004). The Reich Radio Company was encompassed by two key stakeholders, responsible for managing its finances. The largest shareholder was the Reich Post Office, who owned fifty one percent of the Company, and the second, smaller shareholder was an umbrella organization who owned more than half of the shares in the nine regional outposts, and therefore was able to supervise them (von Saldern, 2004).

Alongside the activities of the Reich Radio Company, were those of the Reich Interior Ministry, which was tasked with aligning the regional states to appoint three out of five members of the supervisor committees (Überwachungsausschüsse) that were required for the functionality of each regional station (von Saldern, 2004). In addition to these appointments, there were also appointments of the local state radio cultural boards, which had to have Reich approval before they could be made official. Along with that, any news broadcast on German airwaves had to be reported by the *Dradag Zentrale Nachrichtenagentur*, which was a publicly-traded company largely owned by government shares, at a rate of fifty-one percent (von Saldern, 2004). The *Dradag* was run by the Interior Ministry, and therefore was accountable to their input, which often resulted in the Ministry exerting its influence over the network to control the content being dispersed regionally. Lastly, as an added layer of federalization, the Reich Post Office Ministry owned all of the technical tools used by all stations (both the centrally run long-wire station and the regionally specific stations) and was able to ensure

maintained use of the equipment for the regionally run stations, by charging them usage fees (von Saldern, 2004). In addition to the extensive support provided by the state to run the regional outposts, there were also private capital venture investments involved (von Saldern, 2004) which acted as an insulator to the solely state-run administration requirements placed upon the stations. This is a fact I wish to emphasize, to distinguish the largest source of change Goebbels sought to impose on the Weimar era organization and content sourcing for the radio structure. This is because the regionally specific content allowed strategic discussion in each state, without a need to only subscribe to a uniform way of thinking. For a party seeking to create a new German identity, this existence was dangerous because it provided the populous more than one cleavage for which to identify themselves. Meaning, they could be German, but could also subscribe to key ideas specific to their state, and pick and choose what appealed most to their chosen identification. This reality is demonstrated by the fact that, “When territorial shifts between the broadcasting companies were discussed, the notion of the regional cultural area (Kulturraum) become a substantial element in the bargaining process” (von Saldern, 2004). This become a popular argument for maintaining regionally specific broadcasting and independent content, due to the ‘cultural capital’ available in each region, and the ability each region had to celebrate this (von Saldern, 2004). The interworking of both the federal and regional systems, was slowly transitioned out by Nazi sympathizers, before Hitler even came into power.

In 1932, Reich Chancellor van Papen<sup>6</sup> passed a law which:

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<sup>6</sup> He is now officially known by scholars as Hitler’s backer (*Steigbügelhalter*), and through a parallel party to the National Socialist Democratic Party (which was widelyensored by the Weimar Republic) was able to set into

“...expanded the Reich’s power so extensively that the regional radio stations came to be completely directed by the Reich and its Reich Radio Company. Private capital owners, who were minority shareholders of the regional radio companies, were forced to sell their shares, so that the regional companies became publicly owned corporations” (von Saldern, 2004).

The result of cutting privately held ties with the German radio system, was that the Reich held fifty-one percent of all shares, and the various states held forty-nine. In addition to the reduction of the states’ investment controls, the Reich was also given control of the entirety of the radio programming content broadcast through the regional stations, which was enforced by Reich appointed state-commissioners (van Saldern, 2004). This action signaled the beginning of the unification of a new German identity, not susceptible to the interest of regionally diverse states. Instead, the unifying alternative was a strong, central state. This was also the initiation of a system developed by Goebbels called equalization, where, ‘public administration and all pores of social life’ (Barović, 2015) had to be compliant with one another, and with the central aims of the Nazi state. In transitioning the administration of how the public consumed news and entertainment content, Goebbels created a framework where questioning the actions of the state was not possible, and if no one was incentivized to do so, would not notice the transition of popular beliefs happening at the same time. This aligns with Goebbels’ overall strategy of creating ‘good propaganda’, and ensuring that the ethos of, ‘ a lie repeated often

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motion several key initiatives that allowed Hitler to maximize on the weaknesses found in the Republic to take it over.

For more information, please consult: “Volk and Heimat Culture in Radio Broadcasting during the Period of Transition from Weimar to Nazi Germany.” *The Journal of Modern History* 76, no. 2 (June 2004): 312–46. <https://doi.org/10.1086/422932>.

enough becomes the truth' (Barović, 2015) became an operational mission statement for the Third Reich.

In addition to centralizing the broadcasting structure of the original Weimar radio administration, Goebbels also sought a heavy makeover to the content produced and consumed by the public, in an attempt to complete his Nazi propaganda machine. Prior to Goebbels' intervention in manipulating the content broadcast, the German radio system under the Weimar Republic was exposed to certain measures of accountability to the German state. This accountability was established between state officials and radio content creators who had to adhere to four key assumptions. The first assumption was that content could not be politically based and should be noncommercial and neutral (von Soldern, 2004). This was because under the Weimar Republic there was an inherent belief in the institution of governance being above the influence of political parties, and as a result the state censored any content that could be politicized as an attempt to protect listeners from having their beliefs interfered with. The centrality of this belief was rooted in the fact that the populous did not find proximity to the government to be synonymous with a loss of democratic right, and therefore saw it in their best interest for content to follow these lines. This perspective followed a traditional philosophy widely held by society since the Imperial German period (von Saldern, 2004).

Another key assumption held when broadcasters were strategizing content, was that radio was sought after as a tool to promote education, under an ideal that society could be refined through it. As a result, the radio was a source to both popularize high culture and refine the overall level of popular culture. In combination with these ideals, there was also a

presentation of programming on technological innovations and scientific discussion (van Saldern, 2004). The justification followed by radio makers for promoting such an agenda, was to stray from resorting to the commercialized 'dumbing down' of society through content like that produced solely for entertainment in the United States, and focusing instead on educational content that could contribute to the German cultural value (van Saldern, 2004).

The third tendency observed in Weimar radio programming was the ideal that the radio, "Should advise people on how they could cope with the challenges of modernity and everyday problems" (van Saldern, 2004). For this reason, content creators adapted diverse programming for targeted audiences to consume at the time of day they would most likely have access to a set. For example, housewives had targeted programs during the mornings, and in the afternoons the youth could enjoy special broadcasting (van Saldern, 2004). This parallels radio as a relationship building tool, where citizens could be made to feel less alone in living their lives, by reminding them that there were large segments of the population sharing their everyday experiences. As a result, this promoted a healthy understanding of self, and fulfilled the ambition of helping one cope with their problems. In turn, this also generated an incentive for the maintenance of the final assumption, which was that radio was intended to exert a stabilizing force on the family unit (van Saldern, 2004). By appealing to the experience of each member of the family and helping them cope with the realities of their role within the family unit, through targeted content, the state had a hand in ensuring that the family would remain an integral part of the German lifestyle. As a result, this created spaces for entertainment to instruct key values and behaviors in a way that benefitted the ends of the populous (according to the Weimar ideals of governance).

Although the aforementioned assumptions guided the strategy of the content produced during this period, they were not absolute in terms of dictating that only those types of content would be broadcast. In addition to consuming lectures and other targeted spoken programming, listeners wanted light entertainment and music, and made these appeals so strong that radio-makers established a set of compromises to meet the public's expectations (van Saldern, 2004). One of these compromises was to include devoted time for musical medleys to be broadcast, which included a mixture of light music, operettas, and traditional Volk music (van Saldern, 2004).

The strategic alignment of content designed to positively benefit society and instruct it to pursue a targeted set of values, is a disposition found in both the Weimar and Nazi strategies, despite the difference in intent and manipulation of this alignment in the Nazi case. The aforementioned content broadcast in the Weimar era, had the attached intention of maximizing the traditional German cultural references of the *Volk* (the people) and the *Heimat* (homeland), which were cultural ideals attached to key states in the Weimar Republic (van Saldern, 2004). In these regions, these ideas were purported by the working and non-educated classes who felt misrepresented by the metropolitan, high-brow culture Germany was centralizing through its media representation. As a result, the populous in these states carried highly nationalist tendencies, and believed that their version of *Kulturraum* was the only cultural capital worth preserving (von Saldern, 2004). In response to this, these state members were highly distrustful of outsiders, including Jews, and carried higher rates of anti-Semitic ties prior to Hitler's rise to power than most other regions in Germany (von Saldern, 2004). Therefore, one can assume that the content Goebbels was entrusted to create, and on a higher

level, Hitler's overall doctrine, were designed to fulfill a pre-disposition to related ideas that were not yet fully developed to Hitler's scale. This confirms the result of a hypothesis in purporting radio propaganda, that the implementation of wide-spread change at the societal level through telecommunications technology and media, is most effective when there is an existing cultural pre-disposition, no matter how small the pre-disposition is in a fragmented society (Adena et al, 2015). Thus, the ideals of the *Volk* and the *Heimat* can be inferred as building blocks of the pathos Hitler and Goebbels sought to implement at the overall societal level. Furthermore, this serves as the logos for which Josef Goebbels sought to increase the populous' access to radio sets, ensuring that Nazi messages were everywhere and easily dispersed.

Josef Goebbels prioritized the radio as his main tool in the fight to promote Nazi propaganda, and did so by making radio sets widely accessible to the German public with the implementation of the *Volksempfänger* (Meier, 2018). The *Volksempfänger* which translates into the, 'the people's receiver' (Meier, 2018), was the first mass-produced, federally subsidized radio set distributed throughout the Reich beginning in 1933. The aim of these devices, was, "...to transmit Nazi messages into the daily lives of Germans" (Meier, 2018) in a manner that was of the largest possible scale and in as seamless a fashion as possible (Meier, 2018). The objective was for the government to incentivize the wide-scale dissemination of Nazi news, and promotions, and doing so by providing the everyday German family an affordable, but high-quality radio set for which to receive these messages. The early versions of these sets were made of durable plastic, cardboard and cloth, and cost only 76 Reichsmarks. The low price of the subsidized sets was purposeful because it discouraged citizens from purchasing rival,

commercial sets, and promoted the Nazis as benevolent entertainers who cared about their citizens (Meier, 2018). In subsidizing these machines in a similar format to the *Volkskühlschrank* ('People's Refrigerator') and the *Volkswagen* ('People's Car'), the German government sought to create an inseparable boundary between itself and the homes of everyday German families, with the intent of, "Emphasizing consumer-oriented programming as a means to build consensus among the German people, and distract them from the sacrifices and the destruction being conducted in their name" (Meier, 2018). This can be further inferred by the design of the *Volksempfänger* sets, which were simple and functional, apart from, "The national arms in the form of an eagle and swastika on either side of the tuner" (Meier, 2018) identifying the sets as the mouth piece of the Nazi regime. This is why the sets and the content they popularized become known as Goebbel's muzzle (Barović, 2015). The wide-scale dispersion of these sets was so successful, that it is estimated that by 1941, 65% of the German populous owned a *Volksempfänger* and were avid listeners of the Nazi-backed broadcasts (Meier, 2018). This created a sensation that following the Nazi creed was unalienable, and that no other ideological options existed in Germany. The sense that the majority of individual German homes were receptacles conditioned to Hitler's messages, augmented the incentives for there not to be dissidents from the highly-popularized interworking of the regime. This incentive was further maximized by the fact that anyone found to be listening to international radio broadcasts such as the BBC (which were more easily accessible during the night hours) was considered a traitor, and the resulting punishment was death (Meier, 2018). The purposeful transaction that the Nazis implemented in these tactics, is what presently known as othering. Othering is, "The viewing of various groups as different and inferior on the part of those who identify with the

mainstream” (Jones, 2018). By creating the assumption that being a Nazi supporter and follower of Hitler’s doctrine was the mainstream, anyone in opposition to these beliefs or those targeted by these claims were othered, and served as the living example to enforce the importance of these beliefs in German society. As a result, psychological guilt and fear became the pillars with which Josef Goebbels structured the content being broadcast on Nazi radio, and why they were efficient at creating an intrinsic structure for othering.

At the initiation of Goebel’s career alongside Hitler, he was structuring the Fuhrer’s fiery speeches, which were played on public PA systems, in cities where radio ownership was not popular (Barović, 2015). This created a further public dynamic of othering which became Josef Goebbel’s inspiration for creating strategic content to be broadcast for the radio. Where the Fuhrer’s speeches were full of boisterous dialogue preaching the importance of the Nazi creed and reaching the public with longer, psychologically pulling content, Goebbels realized that for the consumption of mass media broadcasts, a shorter, more easily digestible message was the ideal, mimicking the shorter run advertisements popularized by the radio (Barović, 2015). As a result of this modification from the longer winded speeches, Goebbels produced slogans like, “One Nation, one state, one leader”, “The Jews are our misfortune!”, and “You are nothing, the People is everything” (Barović, 2015). These slogans which were easily implantable due to their short nature, and natural triggering of othering as a psychological incentive not to stray from the Nazi belief system, were the first level of Goebbel’s strategy at creating a Nazi media machine. William L. Shirer, an American World War II journalist stationed in Germany, ironically captured the efficiency of the Nazis in achieving their goals and documented how blindly German citizens followed the Nazi ideology:

“It [was] obvious that the parrots (citizens of Germany, V.B.), repeated the nonsense they had heard on the radio or read in the newspaper. Sometimes I was tempted to tell them it, and when I did so, they looked at me tensely in disbelief or would shut-up astonished like I blasphemed God. I am convinced that the vain attempt to make contact with the brains that are crooked to the facts of life is what Hitler and Goebbels, with his cynical contempt for truth, intended” (Barović, 2015).

In order to implement such a widely institutionalized and compelling case of othering, Goebbels had to enact a second tier in his strategy for content creation which was more elaborate to complement the shorter, more implantable content of his first tier. A prime example of this is the *Nazi-Sozi*, which is an early publication Goebbels wrote in 1927. However, due to its wide popularity and highly centralized content, was re-distributed in 1931 and became a pillar of the Nazi cause (Bytwerk, 2014). The opening section of the *Nazi-Sozi* is the ‘Ten Commandments for Each National Socialist’, which is a set of idealized rules for the German populous to follow and obey, paralleling the same pull that devout Christians have in following the Ten Commandments of the Bible. This inference is vital when analyzing the content of the Commandments authored by Goebbels, as they sought to be institutionalized on the same degree as a religious decree, and practiced with an equal fervor, often punishable by death or a stint in a concentration camp when disobeyed. The first half of the Commandments are designed to promote nationalistic behavior and the sacrifice of any sense of self, in the name of the German state. In making this sacrifice, Goebbels sought to enforce that the German state would provide all citizens with the ideals of community and wholeness. This claim resonated so strongly, because of the sharp loss of morale, access to basic needs, and economic collapse, experienced during the fall of the Weimar Republic. This is referenced in the first Commandment, which reads, “Your fatherland is Germany. Love it more than anything else, and more in deed than in word”, (Gobbels Verlag der Nationalsozialistischen Briefe, 1927), as

well as in the fifth Commandment which states that one should, “Be proud of Germany; You may take pride in a fatherland for which millions gave their lives” (Goebbels Verlag der Nationalsozialistischen Briefe, 1927). In staking these claims, Goebbels is incentivizing citizens to prioritize the State and its mandate above else, strengthened by the aforementioned logos of sacrificing one’s self for the State. This created a cycle of dependability on the citizens to subscribe to these ideals, which in turn allowed Goebbels to continue fine-tuning the content centered around them.

The latter half of the Commandments are focused on ideal behaviors and identities that Nazi sympathizers should subscribe to, in order for their society to remain as perfect and ‘pure’ as possible. This is demonstrated by both Commandments seven and eight, which read respectively as, “Don’t cause mischief, but where someone denies you your rights, God gives you the right to use your fists” (Goebbels: Verlag der Nationalsozialistischen Briefe, 1927), and, “Do not be a crackpot anti-Semite, but keep away from the Berliner Tageblatt” (Goebbels: Verlag der Nationalsozialistischen Briefe, 1927). The aforementioned ideals both praise violence as a method for maintaining an iron grip on a situation, and the condemnation of Jews and their locales of choice, as key institutions of the Nazi identity. Both align with the ideal of othering on a societal and behavioral level, as well as bolstering the German identity in the face of all it had suffered, but with an added layer of tension that made them more psychologically appealing to those who processed them. This was the ability to justify why these ideals were important and not just an instinctual urge to follow, in order to not be on the “them” side of the “us vs. them” paradigm. Articulated by psychologist Wendy Jones, this is the idea that:

“The ease with which we view people as part of an out group and have negative emotions about them. Expose someone to an image of another person for fifty milliseconds (not enough time for conscious processing),

and the viewer's amygdala, a brain area involved in fear and aggression, will activate for other races/ethnicities.

The fusiform face area, involved in facial recognition, will activate only for those of their own kind. The brain processes information about gender and social or economic status just as quickly. And such processing can be based on minimal cues about race, ethnicity, and gender" (Jones, 2018).

Therefore, despite the fact that Goebbels did not have the psychologically backed proof capturable with today's technology mentioned above, one can infer that he speculated about propaganda's power to trigger someone's unconscious and subliminally influence their behavior. This is further paralleled by Freud's popular explorations of the sub-conscious in the same area which became highly popularized shortly prior to World War II. As a result, one can further parallel Goebbel's motivation to desire being able to exert total psychological control over German citizens, including their subconscious, in order to fulfill his initial mission of wanting the implementation of his propaganda to be unrecognizable. For this reason, he created a societal creed within the *Nazi-Soli*, for each pillar of Hitler's belief system. The publication includes commentary on: why citizens should be politicized; how the economy is salvageable only through a political unification; the nature of politics in relation to the youth and struggle between classes; the differentiation of what is social and socialist; the class state and mind between nationalism and socialism; the desperation of the Marxist creed; the call for anti-Semitism and its justification; the differentiation of the regime not being a monarchy or a republic; the intent of the party's rule and demands on society; a thorough critique of the Bourgeoisie; and the role of Germany nationally and internationally under Nazi rule (Goebbels: Verlag der Nationalsozialistischen Briefe, 1927). The wide-encompassing social concerns of this creed emphasize the wide nature of the conflict in Germany and how entrenched Goebbels was to these pre-dispositions rampant in society. In order to fine tune them into the aforementioned content, he needed to be able to grasp the entire psychological picture of what

was occurring, and juxtapose it into an encompassing movement. As a result, Goebbels made it so that for the ordinary citizen, “it was almost impossible to make public opinion different from the regime” (Barović, 2015).

The wide scope of Goebbel’s beliefs that he intertwined into his propaganda content were also shared on propaganda talk shows, such as that produced by Hans Fritsch, who was Goebbels’ appointed Head of Radio Propaganda (Barović, 2015). Fritsch’s show, ‘Hans Fritsch Speaks’ was regarded as having the best radio commentary and reached 16 million listeners (Barović, 2015). The content of his show, widely aligned to that of his superior and the *Nazi-Stozi*, focused on the perspectives and actions of major political parties in relation to governmental decisions. The majority of this was based on the narrative of ‘my [his] struggle’ which illuminated listeners on, “The alleged worldwide Jewish conspiracy to destroy democracy, plutocratic national power, Bolshevik danger, ‘the benefits’ of ‘fuhrerprincip’ (absolute rule by the Fuhrer) and its alleged benefits for the country and the nation” (Barović, 2015). Such content resonated with listeners and became the popular, underlying theme of fictional entertainment content, as well as military backed content, which were inter-broadcast on Nazi radio stations. The goal of simultaneously broadcasting both content archetypes was to ensure maximum reach and the most seamless reception possible (von Saldern, 2004). As a result, one can therefore infer that the transformation of content performed by the Nazi party was designed to maximize on the pre-dispositions found by supporters of the *Volk* and *Heimat* movements from the Weimar era, and replacing them with a psychologically manipulative equivalent designed to rebuild Germany into a nationalistic empire.

The strength of this manipulation is heightened when comparing it to the intent of leveraging society to win the War, as was the use case of the BBC. This insight allows one to see a sharp contrast in intent and governance between two nations who were geographically close, but ideologically opposite in every way. Therefore, one can infer that how information is created, dispersed, and shared is telling of how citizens will be conditioned to think, and depending on the level of involvement of a specific state, how deeply entrenched a government is in controlling this. As the radio was the beginning of news and entertainment being shared instantly and then being widely dispersed by citizens consuming it, this allows a parallel and identical communication path for television and social media. Furthermore, as Great Britain and Germany demonstrate, differing types of regimes have different necessary use cases for mass media, in order to ensure societal support for a smooth implementation of their ends. Paralleling the history of both a liberal democracy (Great Britain) and an autocracy, albeit a totalitarian version (Germany), one can assume that autocracies centralize mass consumed content to ensure ideal social behaviors and practices, while liberal democracies maintain the freedom of content creation, in order to allow thorough discussion on topics of governance and societal pull. As a result of this discussion, liberal democracies can exert control on citizens through the consumption of mass media, without them being aware. Thus, I propose that while autocracies demand more social responsibility and homogeneity in exerting control over their citizens, they are doing so to protect their perceived best interests. Furthermore, and in alignment with this, I argue that liberal democracies do not directly engage in manipulation or misinformation via social media, but do not inflict heavy enough punishment on third parties who do so to interfere with political decisions. I will begin this exploration within the

subsequent section on how Cambridge Analytica allegedly interfered with the integrity of the Brexit vote, and did not suffer sufficient consequences.

## **6. The Power of Political Manipulation via Third Parties in Liberal Democracies**

A liberal democracy's innate nature is dependent upon a commitment to protect the natural rights of all citizens in both the public and private spheres. However, the advent of social media has blurred the lines of what encompasses the confines of the public and private spheres, exposing a vulnerability on what defines an attack on one's privacy. This gaping vulnerability is being increasingly exploited by big data companies, who through the use of non-ethical psychological profiling and the creation of overtly disturbing propaganda, aim to simultaneously exert control over global governance. This is the alleged operational objective of the former media conglomerate, SCL Group, who as the parent company of Cambridge Analytica is accused of employing the illicit tactics stated above to interfere in numerous elections worldwide (Kaiser 2019, Wylie 2019). In this section, I will analyze the strategic communication tactics that the SCL Group patented to influence political decisions, and how these tactics were purposely implemented in the United Kingdom to support the success of the "Leave Campaign". Furthermore, I will comment on how the whistleblowing scandal activated by two former Cambridge Analytica employees, highlights the dangerous potential for private agencies to influence citizens via social media, without their consent or awareness to achieve strategic political means. Lastly, I will revisit the actions taken by Parliament to punish Cambridge Analytica for its interference, and evaluate if they were sufficient for preventing any future intrusions of the same nature.

### **A. How Cambridge Analytica Extended Military Tactics into Everyday Life to Influence Brexit Voters**

In this section, I will explore how Cambridge Analytica strategically targeted voters with psychological profiling and streamlined social media algorithms, designed to mimic the “psy-ops” of SCL’s military campaigns, I contend that Cambridge Analytica’s alleged targeting of undecided voters, is an extension of SCL’s Target Audience Analysis<sup>7</sup>, and was intended to exert heavy influence on the outcome of the Brexit referendum vote to leave the EU. This assertion is supplemented by the firm’s complex relationship to both the Leave Campaign and Leave.EU platforms, and the further complication of how the firm advised the Vote Leave campaign to illegally fund its social media activities. In provoking this discussion I seek to cite Cambridge Analytica’s actions as an act of informational warfare upon the privacy of a large faction of UK voters, and a valid reason for debating the legitimacy of the Brexit vote.

Cambridge Analytica’s strategy in interfering with Brexit can be traced to a singular line of thought articulated by its former employee, Christopher Wylie, when he states that:

“Cambridge Analytica was a company that took large amounts of data and used it to design and deliver targeted content capable of moving public opinion at scale. None of this is possible, though, without access to the psychological profiles of the target population—and this it turned out, was surprisingly easy to acquire through Facebook, with Facebook’s loosely supervised permissioning procedures” (Wylie 2019).

In 2012, Facebook filed a patent to support research into how its platform could help determine the psychological disposition of its users, based on the idea that, “inferred personality characteristics are stored in connection with the user’s profile, and may be used for targeting, ranking, selecting versions of products, and various other purposes” (Wylie, 2019).

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<sup>7</sup> The SCL Group’s business objective was to be, “A London firm...supplying the UK Ministry of Defence and NATO armies with expertise in information operations” (Wylie, 2019). As a result, the firm developed the Target Audience Analysis tool, to identify key groups in war opponents of the UK, as a method of convincing them via strategic communication channels, to alter their allegiance and support operations based on preserving individual freedoms (Tatham, 2008). This was particularly done in counter-terrorism operations for the UK Defence Ministry who wanted to use persuasive social tactics to explicitly identified interest group, manipulating them into acting without their knowledge (Tatham, 2008).

Therefore, one can argue that Facebook knew how to draw specific tendencies from users' activities on the platform, and was developing a strategy to capitalize on these psychological data points without users' consent. The manner that Facebook allowed this exchange of data, was through an open supply of users' data points for any party willing to build a compatible application with the platform, and to use the platform to conduct research studies on how Facebook is being used. This was done through Facebook's API (application programming interface) which prompted users to join apps on Facebook, and synthesize their data for an augmented experience (Wylie, 2019). Under the guise of implementing relevant content to improve user's experience, Facebook requested users accessing API apps for their permission to track specific data points, without elaborating on the objective usage for this data. In addition, it also did not limit how API developers could design apps to mine data, and thus if a developer wanted to create an app that also took the information from friends of one user's data, it could do so because, "Facebook did not require express consent for apps to collect data from an app user's friends, as it viewed being a user of Facebook as enough consent to take their data—even if the friends had no idea the app was harvesting their private data" (Wylie, 2019). As a result, Cambridge Analytica collaborated with multiple contractors who were capable of building such apps at scale, and utilizing the data mined from consenting users and their non-consenting friends, built both psychological profiles to target voters on key issues, and algorithms derived from these profiles to inundate key target audiences with curated content (Kaiser 2019, Wylie 2019).

In order to build politically relevant psychological user profiles, researchers working in Facebook's API needed to understand the type of data being harvested through the platform.

Researchers quickly discovered that Facebook provided access to how users would behave in their home environments, without fear of counter-balancing their persona in the exterior world. This is achieved by tracking every click a Facebook user makes, and building an action set that is capable of measuring their nuance, interests, and dislikes, and quantifying them for outside parties use cases (Wylie, 2019). Wylie expands on the relevance of the organic nature of this content, when he states that:

“The data from Facebook has increasingly more ecological validity, in that it is not prompted by a researcher’s questions, which inevitably inject some kind of bias. In other words, many of the benefits of the passive qualitative observation traditionally used in anthropology or sociology could be maintained, but as many social and cultural interactions were now captured in digital data, we could add the benefits of the generalisability one achieves in quantitative research” (Wylie, 2019).

In making the above observation, Wylie is implying that by capturing a user’s natural behavior without fear of outside influence, researchers can exert more control on formulating hypotheses, and running consequential tests, to quantify their suppositions. This is exactly what Cambridge Analytica did by hiring psychologist, Robert Kogan. Kogan, who was highly distinguished as a professor of psychology at Cambridge University, knew how to purchase data mined from the Facebook API at hugely discounted rates. As a result, he then implanted this data into Facebook apps where users consented to answer questions that were psychologically inquisitive in exchange for the payment of a dollar or two (Wylie, 2019). From there, Kogan and the team at Cambridge Analytica acquired sufficient data to begin building profiles based on the needs of their immediate clients, and structuring algorithms to stream this content in real-time, based on the target audience identified and the personality profiles they acquired with the mined data. Consequentially, in constructing these applications with a small gratification payment, users provided through their consent access to their Friends’ likes and usage histories

to Cambridge Analytica, without their knowledge (Kaiser 2019, Wylie 2019). This allowed for more accurate patterns to be derived from users who believed they were exploring curated content in private, but were actually tracked without their knowledge.

In order to supplement the potency of its targeting, Cambridge Analytica built psychological profiles capable of predicting the construction of the overall majority of peoples' personalities based on OCEAN modeling (Kaiser, 2019). Through qualitative testing and coordination of common data points, the firm was able to determine, "The degree to which an individual was "open" (O), "conscientious" (C), "extroverted" (E), "agreeable" (A), or "neurotic" (N)" (Kaiser, 2019). Following the receipt of this data, Cambridge Analytica then constructed several personality types based on each aforementioned variable, and matched like-minded people into pre-determined groups for receiving targeted messages. This basic model was then expanded into a five-step commercialization strategy, for strategic client usage (Kaiser, 2019). These steps involved: segmenting people into nuanced groups based on the extremities of their OCEAN profile ratings; bombarding these segmented groups with issues in which they had already shown interest (but on a greater scale than their original interest); implementing adaptive and highly accurate algorithms capable of predicting the likelihood of users' behavioral tendencies in relation to any issue; analyzing the variety of social media platforms (mainly Facebook, Twitter, Pandora, and YouTube) to define a targeting strategy for reaching the segmented target audiences; then refining the targeting strategy with metrics streamed into a client-facing database or activation system for scalable variation; and micro-targeting users with these refinement systems to gauge when the inundation of content to the target audience members, resulted in engagement (Kaiser, 2019). This scalable strategy made it

possible for Cambridge Analytica to determine general personalities for users in relation to hot-button issues, and shape how voters would act prior to a decision being made. In the case of Brexit, the firm identified that the key pillars for any leave campaign would need to be centered on targeting, “‘Eager Activists’, ‘Young Reformers’, ‘Disaffected Tories’, and ‘Left Behinds’” (Kaiser, 2019). The definitions for each group, identify key issues and likely behavioral trends in users and allowed the firm to provide a blueprint for how the data should be used. According to Cambridge Analytica’s analysis:

“The Eager Activists were extremely politically engaged, looking for opportunities to get further involved with and donate to the cause. They were also somewhat pessimistic about the economy and the National Health Service.

The Young Reformers were single, in the education field, politically active, and comfortable with people from different ethnic groups; they tended to dislike talking too much about immigration. In general, they were also fairly optimistic about the economy and the future of the NHS.

The Disaffected Tories were fairly satisfied with the current and previous governments, but they were unhappy with those governments’ stances on the European Union and immigration. Generally, they were upbeat about the economy and the NHS, and they believed crime was decreasing. Most were fairly affluent professionals and managerial level employees. Most weren’t particularly politically active.

The Left Behinds...felt increasingly alienated by globalization and society in general. They were deeply unhappy about the economy and the NHS and felt that immigration was the central issue of their time. They were suspicious of the establishment, including politicians, banks, and corporations; and they worried about their economic security, deteriorating public order, and the future in general” (Kaiser, 2019).

These personality prototypes were further analyzed to see which target audience would be the most susceptible to the micro-targeting and it was determined that the Left Behinds would be if the messaging appealed to their fears (Kaiser, 2019). This finding emphasizes the granular ability with which Cambridge Analytica could augment the perception that these realities were growing in British society, and entice the ‘Left Behinds’ to be more vocal about their beliefs, encouraging higher voter turnout. Such a relationship appears to be effective political

campaigning at first glance, but when juxtaposed against the illicit funding structure that Cambridge Analytica advocated for the Vote Leave campaign to use, the reality is oppositional.

### **B. Illicit Budgeting Becoming a Cause of Disdain and Concern in the Brexit Vote**

When reflecting upon what defined the success of Brexit, political journalist, Tim Shipman, contemplates that, “Four decades of Euroscepticism, coupled with the eurozone crisis and the mass migration from the Middle East, were more important than what happened during the campaign in determining the result” (Shipman, 2017). Holding such an inference, would allow campaigners enough attrition to strategically target their voters and ensure a higher voter turnout than depending on traditional media. However, augmenting the perception of these issues as larger than they appeared, and inducing psychological incentives for strategic voters to go to the ballot box, implies crossing a moral line that modern privacy law was not built to accommodate. The scope of such an act is magnified when target audiences are bombarded by content that confirms their worst fears, driving them to act and influencing others to act, as was the case with the Left Behind Voters (Kaiser, 2019) in the Brexit vote. However, Cambridge Analytica’s illicit actions do not stop with creating immoral psy-ops campaigns designed to weaken and segment voters in the UK. They continue with the firm’s contradictory activities with both Leave Campaigns (Leave.eu and Vote Leave) and the offshore financial advice they provided to Vote Leave, resulting in the largest act of campaign fraud in the UK’s history (Wylie, 2019). As a result, it is a natural inclination of members in the political community to question the validity of the Brexit vote, when considering both the financial and psychologically manipulative interference applied against it. Therefore, to argue that the Parliament did not do enough to punish both Cambridge Analytica and the Leave campaigns for

their activities, I will expand on the relationship amongst them, emphasize the illegal contexts their actions undertook, and evaluate the effectiveness of the Parliament's actions in preventing any further breach of its citizens' privacy, and the legitimacy of their democratic process. I contend, that the United Kingdom has failed on both counts, and serves as a literal model for the dangers that social media and information manipulation pose to liberal democracies.

In organizing their consulting activities to serve both Leave Campaigns, Cambridge Analytica had a divide and conquer strategy. They wanted to meet with both the Leave.EU and Vote Leave Campaigns before their bid before the UK Electoral Commission, in the hopes of providing strategic analytical services to secure the official campaign spot (Kaiser, 2019). In bidding to become the official campaign for the Leave side, both organizations had to put together a formal proposal justifying their expertise over the other in representing a brand of voters, and in doing so were competing for a public funding budget of seven million pounds and designated TV ad spots, which were only made available to the winning campaign (Kaiser, 2019). Both groups wanted to meet with Cambridge Analytica to funnel their potential proposals with targeted data, and the firm agreed to meet with both, starting with Leave.EU. The then Director of Business Development for Cambridge Analytica, Brittany Kaiser, was tasked with managing the communication and management of the proposed services, as CEO Alexander Nix had not wanted to be associated with characters on the Leave side, designating himself as a political pariah in his own country (Kaiser, 2019). At first glance, this was under the guise of wanting to leave his personal politics out of business decisions for reasons of objectivity, but given the relational context I will illustrate, this was in fact an act of self-

protection. This is due to the fact that the SCL Group was a British firm, and Nix was a British citizen, meaning he would be under harsher penalty of local law for interfering in domestic elections. Kaiser, however, as an American citizen, could later be manipulated to appear clueless of the local law and therefore admonish the firm from its activities. This fact should be emphasized when considering the resulting analysis that Cambridge Analytica performed for Leave.EU, as well as their eventual financial routing to Vote Leave, following the Electoral Commission's decision to designate them the official campaign for the Leave side (Kaiser, 2019). However, prior to this occurrence Cambridge Analytica sought to provide Leave.EU with a competitive edge over Vote Leave, as they were the more disruptive campaign.

The Leave.EU campaign, was led by controversial business man Arron Banks, who abandoned the Tory political platform and alongside Nigel Farage, founded the UKIP Party (UK Independence Party). UKIP is a populist movement credited for advancing many central ideas of the Brexit campaign (Kaiser, 2019). Banks and his associates, allegedly went to the SCL Group headquarters to meet with Kaiser in the hopes of providing the firm their initial data sets and technological capabilities for targeting the British public through the Leave Campaign, and coupling this with Cambridge Analytica's inundation strategy for maximized potency. The firm had planned to tackle this primary analysis through a two-tiered proposal of determining target audience tracks for the content to be customized to (the 5 previous personalities I have expanded on as key Brexit voter groups), and then a deployment strategy for these tactics that maximized the visibility of these pre-determined messages (Kaiser, 2019). However, Banks sought another solution from the firm, which was to establish an initially competitive edge over its rival campaign, "Vote Leave", who held the advantage with the Commission due to its

mainstream political connections. As a result, Banks wanted to disrupt Vote Leave's reputation by holding a press conference, where it would cite content based on Cambridge Analytica's data mining findings. Banks' intent was to emphasize that his campaign was more in touch with the British populous than Vote Leave, and thus the better choice for the official campaign (Kaiser, 2019). In order to prepare, the campaign had access to UKIP Party data, which designated who was a member of the party and of these people what their attitudes toward Brexit were. This data was provided to Cambridge Analytica in the form of two spreadsheets, which had been delivered by a member of Leave.EU via a computer tower (Kaiser, 2019). The reason for doing so, was not provide a paper trail for the data leaving the Party, as it had been given to Cambridge Analytica without the consent of party voters and not through an unbiased, third party source, as was the law. This was due to the fact that Cambridge Analytica hired a barrister, Matthew Richardson, to arrange the contracts between Leave.EU and UKIP allowing the firm access to the data. However, as both a legal counsel to the Leave.EU campaign and a leader in the UKIP party, in giving himself permission to transfer the data he was not being compliant nor transparent with party members about the exchange, and violated British law (Kaiser, 2019). He did so by hiring a further legal representative, Philip Coppel, who drafted a legal justification for Cambridge Analytica's role in mining and augmenting Leave.EU's data. With these underlying precepts established, neither UKIP or Leave.EU paid Cambridge Analytica for their work, but sought a pre-meditated analysis to continue their campaigning. This was provided by Kaiser, who using the illicit data from UKIP combined with a public summary of data on British voting behavior, explained the five potential target audiences and how each could be reached with micro-targeting. In doing so, she ordered the creation of a

database of all UK citizens that were voting age, and paralleled how their habits and personalities tied them to key issues in the campaign, utilizable to Leave.EU's advantage. This data was then taken to a press conference, where Kaiser and Leave.EU leadership was present, intending to discredit Vote Leave's credibility (Kaiser, 2019). This was following the days of the terror attacks in France, where 131 people were murdered, emphasizing a pre-text to illustrate immigration as problematic to British daily life. During the press conference, journalists focused on the "sow and divide" mentality that Leave.EU wanted to maximize on, and attacked the campaign for its hypocrisy in employing two Americans (including Kaiser) in its research (Kaiser, 2019). This, coupled with the campaign's ties to Nigel Farage, eventually led to its downfall and loss of public popularity, securing Vote Leave the official campaign spot. Following Leave.EU's defeat, they kept campaigning via social media using the messaging expanded upon by Cambridge Analytica, in a more extreme capacity than their Vote Leave counterparts.

As the campaign designated "official" by the UK Electoral commission, Vote Leave was awarded a seven-million-pound budget to manage its outreach activities. In doing so, it was expected that the campaign would adhere to the legal standards established by the Commission for utilizing the money, considering that:

"British electoral law...sets strict spending limits, applied equally to both sides, to ensure that one side is not unfairly advantaged by more money than the other. Having more resources means being able to reach a disproportionate number of voters with one's messaging, so the resources are regulated to maintain a fair election. Other groups are still allowed to campaign, but they do not receive public funding and they may not coordinate their campaigns without declaring the spending against the official limit" (Wylie, 2019).

Strategically, Vote Leave did not want to centralize its outreach to just one area of the Brexit campaign. This is because the campaign wanted to target traditionally Liberal Democratic voters who while still progressive, would vote Leave to protect British social institutions and sovereignty, as well as strategic pockets of non-European immigrant voters who felt isolated by

the EU with regards to immigration (Wylie, 2019). Therefore, to segment these voters under the Leave umbrella, the Vote Leave campaign employed two young interns, Darren Grimes and Shahmir Sanni, who were tasked with creating sub-brands for Vote Leave to appeal to voters outside of the “Left Behind” category. The pair produced campaigns driven by progressive social issues, such as, “Green Leaves, Out and Proud and BeLeave” (Wylie, 2019) which, “...Attempted to appeal to the softer side of the pro-Brexit vote by focusing on issues such as parity in treatment for immigrants, ending what they termed ‘passport discrimination’ between EU and non-EU citizens, the unfair impact protectionist EU policies had on African farmers, and environmental protections” (Wylie, 2019). The campaign was also visually relevant to younger voters due to the color association of Serenity blue and Rose Quartz pink, which deviated from the original Red branding of the overall Vote Leave umbrella. The content was created organically by Grimes and Sanni, and soon went viral surpassing Vote Leave’s paid ads, which utilized boosted algorithms from Facebook. This quickly got the attention of the Vote Leave outreach leader, Stephen Parkinson, who needed to boost the campaign’s data sourcing to ensure these sub-campaigns were performing with enough vitality to complement the far-right, populist vote primarily engaged by Leave.EU (Wylie, 2019). The initial desire to guarantee quantitative data in favor of these initiatives was to work with a firm capable of tracking and re-implementing content in order to ensure success, but it was common knowledge that the only firm able to do so (Cambridge Analytica) was already providing these services to Leave.EU. This would not only be a conflict of interest in the firm’s business, with the potential of invalidating its analysis already provided to Leave.EU, but it was also a violation of British campaign law which forbade Vote Leave and Leave.EU from collaborating officially or sharing financial

burdens for producing campaign related content (Wylie, 2019). As a result and to avoid heavy fining for coordination between the campaigns and their already illegitimate relationship with Cambridge Analytica, the Vote Leave campaign created a money routing scheme with the Canadian subsidiary of the firm, AIQ (Wylie, 2019).

The scheme was designated for management by then intern Grimes, who with the assistance of Sanni, was instructed by lawyers working for Vote Leave, to establish their BeLeave branding as an official campaign separate from Vote Leave. To do so, they were asked to open an independent bank account and draft a formal Constitution, to be utilized as the brand's articles of association which the campaign's lawyers also assisted with (Wylie, 2019). Sanni and Grimes then signed ownership papers of the campaign, and were then told that as a separate campaign the bank account established for BeLeave would not actually receive funds, and instead have them transferred to AIQ in Canada. The illegality of these actions stems from the fact that as campaign agents under an independent brand, Sanni and Grimes should have been able to spend the funds on sourcing and content for BeLeave , but were in fact barred from doing so. BeLeave received funding from an anonymous donor in the amount of seventy thousand pounds, and had it immediately transferred to AIQ who was running data testing and inundation tactics on behalf of Vote Leave (Wylie, 2019). This relationship is further complicated by the fact that AIQ is the Canadian subsidiary of the SCL Group (who is the parent company of Cambridge Analytica), and due to an intellectual property agreement, allowed all three companies open exchange of the data available on internal projects. Meaning, that both the financing and coordination of outreach activities for Vote Leave and Leave.EU were funneled through the same entity (Wylie, 2019). As a result, one can confidently argue that the

Vote Leave campaign broke British campaign law, and did so by casting legal responsibility onto two interns who were purposely misadvised on their scope of ownership. This resulted in the largest incidence of campaign fraud in British history (Wylie, 2019) and due to refined data tactics and mass-produced strategic communication tactics, helped ensure Brexiteers a narrow margin of victory in the referendum vote with a rate of 51.33% (Wylie, 2019). Despite several calls and even official petitions for a second Referendum vote, the United Kingdom formally exited the European Union on January 31, 2020 (Brexit, 2020). While the exit and stiff negotiations have received heavy media attention, little has been dedicated to the actions taken by the Information Commissioner's Office against both Facebook and Cambridge Analytica. I seek to complete my analysis on Brexit by analyzing these actions, to illustrate the short-range of legal consequences attributable to such actions.

### **B. The Resulting Legal Consequences of Allegedly Manipulating a British Referendum**

In this section, I will be analyzing the actions taken by the UK Parliament in response to the allegations raised by both Kaiser and Wiley. I will be doing so by focusing on the actions taken, and analyzing how the current legal framework is established to protect citizens. This will include a consideration of the fact that formal persecution against Cambridge Analytica is ongoing, but unlikely to result in any further persecution. In analyzing these ends, I hope to sufficiently argue that the legal consequences taken by the UK government do not create a strong incentive to prevent further violations of the law, and that therefore, democratic institutions are in danger of suffering similar attacks.

Following the publication of alleged offenses committed by Cambridge Analytica, a professor at Columbia University sought to learn how his mined data had been used. The

professor, David Carroll, sought to document his process into receiving the use case of his personal information, through the release of the documentary, *The Great Hack*. Carroll discovered that he was one of 240 million people whose information had been mined by the firm, and that by British law, Cambridge Analytica was obligated to divulge what information they had on him and how it was gathered (The Great Hack, 2019). When Cambridge Analytica failed to do so, the ICO intervened and in support of David Carroll took the firm to court. The ICO took this action, because:

“Under EU law, citizens can file a Subject Access Request (SAR) to obtain personal data held on them. So Carroll, a U.S. citizen, decided to bring a test case by requesting his data even though he is not a UK citizen — having learnt Cambridge Analytica had processed his personal data in the U.K.” (Lomas, 2019).

David lodged a formal complaint against Cambridge Analytica in January of 2017, following the release of a rumor that the firm held 7,000 diverse data points on the entire voting aged population in the United States. Cambridge Analytica did not respond until March of the same year, and did not do so with a complete divulgence of the information they had harvested on Carroll (Lomas, 2019). As a result, the ICO took further against the firm and fined them fifteen thousand pounds for the individual violation of data harvesting against Carroll and for not complying with the entirety of the ICO summons. This demonstrates an important step toward enforcing the ideal that any British company is legally obligated to divulge information gathered or saved regardless of where the original owner is located in the world (Lomas, 2019) however, it does little to physically ensure that the misused data is returned to its original owner. This is inferred by the fact that fining a company who had already ceased operations amidst a scandal due to its illicit conduct, is simply adding a smaller layer of attention and culpability that has already been attributed to it. Further action toward demanding that all records of information

harvested by the firm in the UK be released to their original owners, would show more accountability on behalf of the ICO to enforce its legal responsibility in protecting data misuse. Furthermore, one can infer that the ICO was incentivized to support Carroll's specific case due to its public nature of being filmed in a documentary. This is augmented to a higher degree, due to the resulting fallout the scandal would cause Facebook, and the pressures the platform would apply to protect itself. As a result, simply taking action for the sake of taking action and to slap the hand of the perpetrator in a single instance, does not do anything to ensure that the full scope of information stolen will be returned. This also does not scare future actors out of committing such acts, if the legal consequences are minimal.

In fining Cambridge Analytica, the ICO also sparked conversation on the role that social media platforms themselves have in protecting users' data. The particular example probed was the responsibility Facebook had to more heavily investigate the claims circulating about Cambridge Analytica's abuses of their API, and theft of non-consenting users' data. According to alleged estimates, the data of one million Facebook users in the UK was compromised by Cambridge Analytica, out of the total 87 million users worldwide (Russell, 2018). Furthermore, the lawsuit alleges that Facebook was aware of the possession of such user data in 2015, but did not remove the guilty party's access to the platform until the end of 2018. In this case, the guilty party is Dr. Robert Kogan, the psychology professor employed by Cambridge Analytica to refine the psychological potency of the data received from the platform's API (Russell, 2018). This fact becomes paramount, considering Facebook's denial of the fact that Cambridge Analytica ever had access to any illicitly obtained user data. For this reason, and due to the platform's lack of a response upon hearing of the allegations against Kogan and Cambridge

Analytica, the ICO fined Facebook the maximum penalty possible of 500,000 pounds (Russell, 2018). While this is a significant blow to the company's reputation and a proactive approach of the ICO to protect British data, it is insufficient for two reasons. The first, is that at the time of the lawsuit, the United Kingdom was still a part of the EU and could still invoke the conditions of the GDPR; meaning, that the maximum fine could have been up to 17 million pounds or four percent of the company's annual turnover, circa 1.6 billion American dollars (Russell, 2018). Such a high-level fine would have done more to burden the company and force it to act more proactively in the future to prevent such a loss. In addition, invoking the GDPR would emphasize both the UK and EU's commitment to data protection, as other European users' data was also stolen as a result of the breach. However, due to domestic politics centered on Brexit and Euroscepticism this was not invoked and seen as solely a British issue. As a result, this calls into question the legitimacy of the ICO's ability to protect the public from similar future attacks. This is due to priority being given to popular politics, over collaborating with relevant firms to maximize punishment, while these organs were available to them. Especially when considering the legitimacy of a referendum vote, with uncertain consequences for the entire diplomatic community.

Following an analysis of the level of manipulation Cambridge Analytica was able to implement, it gives one the impression that they did not enough of a pay the price for their actions. This sentiment is also echoed by the ICO in their incident report to the British Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport from 2018 (Commons, 2019). This is stated explicitly in the concluding paragraphs of the report, stating that:

"In common with other countries, the UK is clearly vulnerable to covert digital influence campaigns and the Government should be conducting analysis to understand the extent of the targeting of voters, by foreign players,

during past elections. We ask the Government whether current legislation to protect the electoral process from malign influence is sufficient. Legislation should be in line with the latest technological developments, and should be explicit on the illegal influencing of the democratic process by foreign players. We urge the Government to look into this issue and to respond in its White Paper” (Commons, 2019).

This suspicion of the House of the Commons is amplified by their awareness of past executives from Cambridge Analytica, moving on to new enterprises with parallel business objectives to the former (Commons, 2019). As a result, one can argue that the simple closure of the firm, taking over its official servers, and fining it for a single case of non-compliance with UK law, was not sufficient to prevent further attacks, if the leaders of the organization are still at large. Therefore, liberal democracies need to be more mindful of the lines that both multinational businesses and social media platforms can draw over government jurisdiction. If they are not, liberal governments run the risk of being over taken by corporations that exist worldwide and do not have their power checked by any single source. This would result in liberal democracies being unable to uphold their fundamental purpose of guaranteeing both a prioritization of human rights and the freedom to live in security, that personal freedoms will not be restricted for a profitable end. As a result, the pillars of governance in such civic societies become almost hypocritical and little different to the governmental enforcement of social behavior via restricted platforms in autocracies. This becomes increasingly apparent when taking into context the actions of a country like China, who emphasizes a similar quality of life to liberal democracies, by way of a centralized power with no freedoms granted to the citizens that go against the regime’s doctrine. While less civil in practice, this provokes a discussion on if the greater evil being is: a central state carrying out limitations on the social parameters of its people, or a government not prioritizing enforcement against attacks on social liberties, that they are elected to represent.

## **7. Social Media Limitations for the Sake of Protectionism: China and Controlled Digital Uses**

The Chinese government has purposefully been censoring all citizens' online activities since 2000, following the cultural revolution and social outcry caused by the Tiananmen Massacre (Shen and Zhang, 2018). It has done so under the guise of wanting to protect its reputation and its citizens from subversive opinions about their country, and its common practices (Freedom House, 2019). However, in doing so, it has become one of the most sophisticated censorship powerhouses in the world (Shen and Zhang, 2018), ranking as the fourth strongest blocker of online freedom and content production (Freedom House, 2019). As China is an autocracy, founded upon the idealization of central party power and ownership of all decisions, such actions may not be surprising to the outside world. However, when juxtaposing the reality of how far China has gone to uphold its core set of behavioral values, one may argue that its actions lean heavily toward a dystopian totalitarian regime, rather than the semi-democratic but still centralized state, China wishes to be seen as. In the hopes of emphasizing that the latter intent is false, I will discuss how the Chinese government has: digitally isolated its citizens from the rest of the world by intentionally impairing their ability to access content; created an incentive for total obedience from citizens, for fear of violating the government's implemented limit on shareable content; and viciously violated the rights of users who are apart of strategic user groups, that the government finds threatening. I will then parallel this disseminated information alongside the government's newest social implementation standardization project (its social currency system), fully illustrating its total encroachment on citizens' lives. I propose that these censoring actions and refinements over the course of the last 20 years are intentional, in the hopes of removing any ideological

challenge to the governmental ideas. This is mimicking the mindset of Goebbels here aforementioned, and cross-attributing it to a society with a larger population and scope of international influence than any other totalitarian regime. As a result, I wish to argue that the Chinese autocracy is a society dependent upon high levels of manipulation, to exert control on ideas it finds dangerous, without its citizens' awareness.

#### **A. Decisions Implemented, Creating Obstacles to Accessing "Offensive" Content**

In order to ensure that citizens' internet usage collaborates with government intent, the Chinese state has implanted a series of obstacles to functioning internet access. These include, "poor infrastructure in mountainous and rural areas, a telecommunications industry dominated by state-owned enterprises, centralized control over international gateways, and sporadic localized shutdowns of internet service to quell social unrest" (Freedom House, 2019). The first tier of the government's strategy in disabling ease of internet access, is creating a large discrepancy of access between metropolitan and rural areas, in terms of speed and quality of service. According to figures captured by the China Internet Network Information Center, the country has over 802 million users of the internet (Russell, 2018) dispersed throughout all of its provinces. Of these users, 73% are estimated to be in concentrated metropolitan centers like Beijing and Shanghai, emphasized by differing rates of usage penetration. For example, in Beijing the average population of Internet users is 77.8% of the total populous, compared to 39.9% in the Yunnan province (Freedom House, 2019). These usage figures are further dissected to highlight that public computer usage, particularly in cyber cafes is higher in rural areas than in metropolitan areas, at a rate of 19.3% compared to 18.7% for total metropolitan users (Freedom House, 2019). These findings allow one to infer that in metropolitan centers,

where there is greater population density and higher rates of educated citizens, that ownership of private devices is more common. As a result, this allows for a second inference that the further away a rural region is from metropolitan centers linked to the government, the less personal access a citizen will be able to have, due to resource dispersion and management.

This inference is further strengthened when analyzing the discrepancy between internet speeds between metropolitan and rural areas. This fact is increasingly troubling, when noting that there is not consistent reporting across all institutions with regards to broadband speeds available in the country. For example, the Broadband Speed League states that national averages are below 2.4 Mbps, and the China Broadband Development Alliance reporting speeds to be upwards of 19 Mbp (Freedom House, 2019). This reporting also highlights an important difference in consistency in terms of access between regions such as Shanghai, boasting a rate of 20.52 Mbps, compared to 'less-prosperous' rural regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet, who hold recorded rates of 16.77 Mbps and 15.65 Mbps (Freedom House, 2019). A close examination of this data allows one to infer that the government prioritizes dissemination of information in areas with large financial turnover and proximity to government holdings, as a driver to incentivize productivity in the economic and technological spheres. This aligns with the President's calls to turn China into a "cyber superpower", through the creation of projects like "Broadband China" seeking to boost internet speeds throughout the country by the end of 2020 (Freedom House, 2019). However, noting the project's speed penetration targets for both metropolitan areas (50 Mbps) and rural areas (12 Mbps minimum), the disparity of incentivizing access in metropolitan centers, becomes even clearer. This is driven further by limits to

connectivity imposed on government order, by the nine federally run operators maintaining citizens' access to online platforms (Freedom House, 2019).

Through telecommunications operators being federally owned, the Chinese government is able to strategically segment internet access on a state-bordered basis. This is because the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, has created mandatory benchmarks and access gateways, which all subsequent providers must adapt to (Freedom House, 2019). As a result:

“The government is known to shut down access to entire communications systems in response to specific events, notably imposing a 10-month internet blackout in Xinjiang—home to 22 million people—after ethnic violence in the regional capital, Urumqi, in 2009” (Freedom House, 2019).

Such network shut downs are commonplace and reflect the government's narrative of wanting to stabilize Chinese society. This is why network shutdowns are linked to “national security precautions” (Freedom House, 2019) and have led to the drafting of legal frameworks designed to intimidate activists and punish anyone pushing boundaries with their online activities. These legislative frameworks are focused on data consumption and prohibition of trigger behaviors, best documented in article 84 of the 2015 anti-terrorism law, and the entire basis of the 2017 cybersecurity law (Freedom House, 2019). Both of these laws will be investigated more thoroughly in a later section about enforcing punishment for disobeying the purposeful limits placed on access.

One of these limits is the domination of the Chinese telecommunications market, led by federally sourced: China Mobile, China Telecom, and China Unicom. These entities which cooperate with regulatory bodies specialized in digital controls, like the Ministry of Culture, hold a monopoly like affect in the market, discouraging independent players from introducing

healthy competition (Freedom House, 2019). This creates a cyclical relationship between the government and telecom providers. This is because if the government makes it harder for smaller data providers to receive necessary business licenses allowing normal operations<sup>8</sup>, then the large conglomerates are financially incentivized to cooperate with government controls and regulatory measures, on all levels. This explains why all three companies are compliant with government standards for reinforcement and control, and heavily prohibit public browsing in internet cafes and public domains (Freedom House, 2019). In doing so, the three media giants are solidifying the assumption that the government prioritizes metropolitan centers which are less likely to boast usage of public domains, and do so to hold the remaining provinces to a dissimilar standard of operation than their larger counterparts have. One can infer that this is because each Chinese state boasts a level of diverse functionality and natural resources, and as a result may wish to maximize on both variables to improve the quality of life and functionality offered. Therefore, in order to practice strategic containment in key borders, the government ensures the dependability of its cyclical relationships with both the large media conglomerates and its metropolitan centers, through invoking heavy regulation on all areas of information consumption. The maintenance of these relationships, coupled with mechanisms that limit digital access, augment the potency of the technological limits also implemented.

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<sup>8</sup> One such example of the government purposefully interfering in the information consumption market, is when in 2016, the federally owned China Broadcast Network, wanted to enter into the market of the big 3, it was able to do so on a highly limited basis. This is because the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, provided the firm a business license that only allowed, “infrastructure and data transmission services...that were not seen as a threat to the three dominant players (Freedom House, 2019). This emphasizes the government’s interest in promoting as continuous a cyclical relationship with the big three providers as possible, ensuring their loyalty for creating a “lack of alternatives” market controllable by the central state.

For more information, consult: “China.” China Country Report. Freedom House, February 11, 2019. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2018/china>.

## **B. Technological Limits Placed on Digital Content, and Regulatory Bodies of the Chinese State**

Throughout China's recent rise on the world stage, the state has exerted heavy controls on internet usage and availability, on both the federal and regional governmental levels. However, this process has been centralized further under Xi Jinping's governance (Freedom House, 2019). This is due to the reunification and restructuring of all of China's regulatory bodies, ensuring heavier dependence and compliance with the Party's standards. Therefore, in this section I will discuss several examples of shifted responsibility amongst the various regulatory bodies, and how this strategic unification allows Xi Jinping to implement harsher physical limits on how the Chinese populous can access information, and how many are trying to circumvent national governmental controls in search of less biased information.

The leadership of controlling online content, lies with the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) and the CCP's Office of the Central Leading Group for Cyberspace Affairs, who were created in 2014 to oversee the telecommunications market and implement all internet regulations. In 2018, both organizations were transitioned under a single umbrella organization, called the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission, who resumed its aforementioned members' responsibilities (Freedom House, 2019). This new hybrid organization was deemed the official regulator of these domains by the cybersecurity law of 2017. This solidifies central control under the leadership of Xu Lin, a former deputy of Xi Jinping's (Freedom House, 2019). The CAC is then exposed to a higher entity, directly governed by Xi Jinping, being the aforementioned Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission. This, as designated by the President's involvement, allows the CCAC to also control, "The CNNIC, an administrative agency under the MIIT that

issues digital certificates to websites” (Freedom House, 2019). Meaning, that the President restructured all digital and internet regulatory bodies to be subjected to his direct influence, in an attempt to unify which providers will collaborate with the government. This is purposeful in quieting social discord on any point opposing government aims. Much like the strategy of Goebbels and Hitler, this adds a layer of fear in society, incentivizing the public to cooperate with limits being input. This also eliminates alternatives that may make them question the government’s legitimacy for acting in consequent manners. This strategy is continuously applied by the central party through all platforms that engage with any online content or collaborators. This is demonstrated by the existence of:

“The State Administration of Press, Publications, Radio, Film, and Television (SAPPRFT), [who] is tasked with overseeing the media and entertainment sector in China, which includes internet-based television, online videos, and streaming services. The state news agency [which] announced plans to reorganize the SAPPRFT as a new body—the National Radio and Television Administration—overseen directly by the State Council, which would place media and entertainment under closer government control. Meanwhile, the CCP’s Central Propaganda Department continues to oversee the political and ideological inclination of online content” (Freedom House, 2019).

In augmenting the number and scope of organizations committed to preserving the integrity of the government’s social media standards, one can offer that Xi Jinping is highly concerned with social activism resulting in consequences that challenge the intent of the state’s controls. For this reason, the creation one final regulatory entity precedes the government’s necessity to implement physical, technological roadblocks to citizens’ free perusal of online activities. This is, “The nonprofit Cyber Security Association of China, [which] was established in March 2016 to promote online security. It is made up of more than 200-member technology and cybersecurity companies and research institutions, and headed by Fang Binxing, who is recognized as the developer of the Great Firewall” (Freedom House, 2019). The Great Firewall, is an

internationally recognized nickname for a federally owned device, blocking and filtering content being produced and streamed by citizens defying governmental standards for online behavior (Leskin, 2019). The common knowledge about the Firewall, is based on information leaks regarding the technological limits the regime has allegedly developed through its carefully controlled group of compliant regulators and consequential legal frameworks.

According to Freedom House's, 'China' Report, on its annual review of internet freedom on all countries worldwide, "The CCP's (Chinese Communist Party's) Central Propaganda Department, government agencies, and private companies employ hundreds of thousands or even millions of people to monitor, censor, and manipulate online content" (Freedom House, 2019). This is achieved by strategic advancements in blocking and filtering allowable content and the platforms housing it; as well as, the purposeful removal of sensitive content, and manipulative controls exerted on the media, diversity initiatives, and overall content. I will juxtapose the existence of these features, with an objective illustration of circumvention tools for accessing non-approved content, and who is the audience most likely to do so and to what ends.

In order to strategically implement its censorship activities that are both human and machine led via the Great Firewall, the CCP distributed its targets across multiple sub-types of content. These sub-types, were those which most strongly threatened the perception of the Chinese populous with regards to federal concealment of information. Therefore, the first of these targets to be blocked and filtered, were international news sources capable of stirring up social discord on domestic taboos. According to a governmental information leak to Freedom House, these topics include:

“Breaking news related to health and safety, followed by media censorship, official wrongdoing, foreign affairs, the reputation of the party or officials, and civil society activism. There is also consistent and systematic censorship...on topics such as the Cultural Revolution, the 1989 crackdown on Tiananmen Square protesters, Taiwanese independence, repression of minorities in Xinjiang and Tibet, and the banned spiritual group Falun Gong” (Freedom House, 2019).

As a result of the above topics being explicitly banned from any news report publicized in China and regardless of medium, platforms either had to conform and adapt their content to the government’s satisfaction, or be completely blocked from reporting. Examples of websites barred from publication, include, “At least 12 global news websites tracked by the nonprofit news organization ProPublica...[and] in August 2018, all British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) websites were blocked after the company switched from the ‘HTTP’ web protocol to the encrypted ‘HTTPS’” (Freedom House, 2019). Such blockades of international news sources, are also due to international news organizations’ reporting on corruptive practices in the Chinese government, particularly related to, ‘illicit wealth of high-ranking officials’ (Freedom House, 2019). Such limitations on content and the need to comply with micro-management tactics upheld by the CCP result in minimal reporting from outside sources, particularly from the English-speaking market. Exceptions include,” CNN English, *The Huffington Post*, *the Guardian*, and *the Washington Post*, [who] were not blocked as of mid-2018”, the time of reporting of the latest report (Freedom House, 2019).

In addition to blocking international news sources who report on taboo tactics and decry the corruption of some Chinese government officials, the CCP has also blocked access to any website where reports or user generated content regarding human rights and international business initiatives can be accessed. As a result, this explains the state’s desire to cut off citizens’ access to global networks, most likely accessible through Western messaging, social, and informational exchange domains. The latest reporting from *Business Insider*, divulges that

the following Western based platforms are completely inaccessible from any Chinese, private internet connection<sup>9</sup>: Facebook and all of its subsequent subsidiaries (Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger), Google and the plethora of extended platforms under its operation (YouTube, Gmail, Google Play, Google Maps, Google Drive, Hangouts, Blogger), Twitter and its live streaming platform, Periscope, Snapchat, Reddit, Tumblr, Pinterest, Slack, Twitch (a social app owned by Amazon), Discord, Dropbox, Quora, Medium, Wikipedia, Vimeo, Flickr, Soundcloud, Duck Duck Go (a browser based on total privacy and no tracking via cookies), and Dailymotion (a trendy video sharing site) (Leskin, 2019). The justification of such blockades, was that Western activists were incentivizing Chinese citizens to mobilize and break traditional order, based on a call to cede to liberal democratic behaviors. Therefore, to end the mass divulgation of reformist attitudes, the Chinese government implemented total blockades on all “offensive platforms” and even those with similar qualities, who had the potential to disrupt the Chinese traditional social order (Freedom House, 2019). This action had two drastic consequences in the creation of circumvention tools. The first, is that Western governments and technological entities, with the help of those opposing the government, were able to develop and disburse VPN technologies at the highest reported rate in history to bypass the Great Firewall’s blockades (Shen and Zhang, 2018). The second, is that following a study on the most frequent users of circumvention tools such as VPNs, it was quantitatively determined that young, highly educated males are the most likely to participate in punishable activities through

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<sup>9</sup> There are some exceptions in international hotel chains who own their own public VPNs and are not targeted by the Chinese government for compliance checks. These are also usually located in large, urban centers.

For more information, consult: “China.” China Country Report. Freedom House, February 11, 2019. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2018/china>.

these platforms (Shen and Zhang, 2018). This implies that distrust in the Chinese state and media is growing, as is the access to information that alludes to the heavy censorship exported by the government. The downside to the finding of the largest target audiences being highly educated and young, means that rebellion to government policies is occurring mostly in metropolitan centers where private device ownership is more frequent. Meaning, that the majority of the population in more rural provinces, is not being equally presented with alternative information capable of challenging the state's tight power hold on information consumption. As a result, and due to the state's knowledge of this, they have responded with heavier measures against VPN usage (Freedom House, 2019).

Examples of strategic warnings for those implementing VPN usage include: automatic blocking of entire domain names and IP addresses; alerting users of such pages that they are accessing illegal content; purposefully implemented slow internet speeds through throttling tactics, amplifying the difficulty of loading illicit pages; the use of deep packet inspection, which automatically scans posts or webpages for blacklisted words, and if detected, severs the user's connection to the site; and, "Returning fake pages, or replacing the requested site with content retrieved from an unrelated IP address using a technique known as DNS poisoning" (Freedom House, 2019). Such a wide scope of tactics applied in strategies ranging from geographic isolation and focus on preventing social disharmony, are rarely divulged transparently and have led the Chinese government to augment its practices to other levels of limiting online expression and information consumption.

As a result of proactively eliminating access to outside platforms, the CCP has invested heavily in the creation of Chinese equivalents, such as WeChat and Weibo. Sina Weibo is the

country's equivalent of Twitter, and has widely grown as the most popular microblogging site. It has an average of 430 million active users a month, and is widely known as a space where Chinese influencers (called Key Opinion Leaders), blog to create viral content (Ren, 2018). In comparison, WeChat is a combination of several traditional Western platforms, such as Facebook, Venmo and even Uber. The platform's most popular feature is friend to friend direct messaging, but it can also be used to send and receive instant money transfers, and even to book ridesharing. For this reason and its prevalent presence in the market, it boasts one billion monthly users and is the most popular app in China (Ren, 2018). Due to the wide-usage of these domestically aligned apps, the government has found ways to infiltrate them and assure that their parent companies are compliant with eliminating sensitive content created by users (Freedom House, 2019). For example, in relation to Sina's required compliance to national social media usage regulators, the company has implemented several content erasing and regulating terms on Weibo, including:

"Staff members [who] delete individual posts or accounts, often within 24 hours of an offending post, but sometimes long after publication. They also make published posts visible only to the account owner or personally warn individual users about illicit content. Hundreds of terms have been automatically filtered from Weibo search results over time" (Freedom House, 2019).

WeChat also boasts highly technical tools capable of removing offensive content from its sites, and does so by, "No longer inform[ing] users when content has been censored. [This is supplemented] by research by Citizen Lab [who] found that WeChat employs AI technology to filter images for censorship, countering a previously popular method of sharing sensitive content" (Freedom House, 2019). These facts allude to a fear that by allowing freedom of speech on online pages, that liberally democratic values will seep into Chinese society, demanding the government provide more rights to its citizens, and toppling the carefully

constructed order that has allowed China to catapult into an international superpower (Shen and Zhang, 2018). However, what this ideal ignores is the quantitatively proven ideal that the general Chinese populous is suspicious of overall political genesis and reporting, regardless of whether it is related to China or not. And, consequently, that even if there is distrust in the legitimacy of the government's reporting schemes and content, there is no correlation that nationalism is low and would result in reformist ideology spreading as a mainstream value. On the contrary, it has been documented that most Chinese citizens, even those purposefully circumventing the government's blockade, trust that the government's actions are what is best for their wellbeing (Shen and Zhang, 2018). Therefore, one can argue that this study's experimental proof acts as a pathological call for the government to not focus so strongly on developing blockade activities on the consumption of citizens' information. However, the reason I find this continues to occur is the fact that there is a lack of alternatives in Chinese society, out of the government's fear that a single event can topple all of the financial and infrastructural progress the country has made, and the fact that it threatens to surpass the United States as the world's largest economy. Therefore, it continues to augment its reach in blocking online activities and disallowing diversity in media platforms to protect this cycle of self-fulfillment fueled by fear of alternatives. I will present multiple case studies as follows, to illustrate this parallel between further government activities and digital information consumption.

The CCP strategically removes content based on events that are socially significant to society's perception of the government's activities, for the aforementioned rhetorical relationship. One such example of higher rates of visible content removal, followed the death of

journalist and academic Liu Xiaobo, from liver cancer while in Chinese police custody following the publication of news stories against the CCP (Freedom House, 2019). The effects of the content removal particularly related to the activist's death, were noted due to:

"The highest rate of deletions on Sina Weibo over the past 2.5 years. WeChat users [also] reported that images depicting Liu and his wife Liu Xia were also blocked; those sent via private messages were not visible to the recipient, as SMS and instant messages are subject to blocking and filtering. Citizen Lab research on both Weibo and WeChat found that the scope of keyword and image censorship related to Liu Xiaobo had greatly expanded after his death" (Freedom House, 2019).

Similarly to the above case, visible censorship occurred online prior to the meeting of the "two session" (Freedom House, 2019), which is the annual conference between The National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (Freedom House, 2019). One of the key points of discussion at this summit, was the lifting of term limits for Xi Jinping's leadership from the Constitution, citing national outrage and paralleling him as an Imperialist. What followed the outrage from the public, was consistent observation and censorship, including:

"A long list of keywords related to Xi's ability to rule the country indefinitely were banned on social media, including "constitution amendment," "consecutive terms," "monarchy," and "long live." In a new extreme, even the letter "N" was briefly banned to prevent citizens from using it in the equation " $N > 2$ ," with N signifying the number of presidential terms" (Freedom House, 2019).

These rules follow a traditional trend that any information posted on Xi is almost immediately always blocked as is atypical and political content (Freedom House, 2019). This mimics the desire of Nazi Germany, for the regime to be the only mouth piece legitimized to discuss politics, and as a result, conditions its citizens at any cost to subscribe to these ideals or face great punishment. As a result, the concept of othering is here applied, in a sense that if the government cuts off the Chinese populous from the outside world and normalizes such an existence, then the entire country serves as a large scale us vs. them society. This justifies the fact that any internet or mobile news service fully licensed to disseminate information is of

traditional media or state-controlled origin (Freedom House, 2019) and why the CCP consistently rolls out laws to enforce this principle.

### **C. The Legal Framework Designed to Enforce Chinese State Censorship and Public Behavior**

As emphasized in the prior section, the CCP will impose any means it feels is justified, to uphold the legitimacy of the government; while also preventing its citizens from criticizing it. This fact becomes clearly visible, by the exceptions and legal alterations that the CCP implements on all aspects of Chinese information consumption. In this portion, I will discuss multiple citations of these legal exceptions, in the hope of highlighting the government's purpose to condition society to its ends. This result will be culminated through the imposition of a social currency model that is already being tested in key regions of the country.

One strong legal loophole is exemplified by the fact that, although Article 35 of the Chinese Constitution protects freedom of speech, assembly, association, and publication, these rights are subsequent to any topic the CCP deems inappropriate or sensitive (Freedom House, 2019). This means that any citizen must exercise their rights of expression by conforming to the conditions laid out by the CCP. If this adherence is not complete, the CCP automatically blocks the Constitution from being, "invoked in courts as a legal basis for asserting rights" (Freedom House, 2019) and also ensures that, "the judiciary is not independent and closely follows party directives, particularly in politically sensitive freedom of expression cases" (Freedom House, 2019). This lack of human rights is also augmented by the fact that:

"Government and CCP agencies issue regulations to establish censorship guidelines. These are highly secretive and subject to constant change, and they cannot be challenged in the courts. Prosecutors exploit vague provisions in China's criminal code; laws governing printing and publications; subversion, separatism, and antiterrorism laws; and state secrets legislation to imprison citizens for online activity. [This allows one to infer that] trials and hearings typically lack due process" (Freedom House, 2019).

By purposely limiting a fair structure for citizens' legal protection, the government and central party aims, emphasize a mutual commitment to continually exhibit control over citizens and condition them to fit into a desired social end. This is emphasized by the fact that the CAC published a record high of 176 new laws in 2017, designed to limit the content of user created media, strengthen the rules and compliancy standards for all microblogging and social media sites, and heighten the responsibility of accountability Chinese federated platforms have to any government driven investigation (Freedom House, 2019). The most powerful of these implemented laws, is the cybersecurity law published on June 1, 2017, which, "increased censorship requirements, mandated data localization, codified real-name registration requirements for internet companies, and obliged them to assist security agencies with investigations" (Freedom House, 2019). This law also demands that any international, digital provider complies with the same standards, or is automatically prohibited from publishing and conducting digital business in China. In addition, this required the modification of all public VPN usage to be compliant with Chinese standards, and if any way a provider defaulted on providing a data audit to the government, heavy fines would be applied (Freedom House, 2019). As a result, companies like Apple had to block a plethora of applications from being visible or tracking data in China (600 to be exact), resulting in the development of specialized geographic strategies presented for the government's approval to ensure continued business development (Freedom House, 2019). In implementing these legal frameworks to guarantee maintained controls over citizens and how they share and consume information, one might naturally question what the CCP could hope to achieve. Some argue that China is simply a highly evolved totalitarian regime with some democratic characteristics, with a parallel capacity for providing

financial security to its citizens (Ang, 2018). However, while I validate the presumption of this argument, I wish to extend it further to include a sociological concern China has demonstrated investment toward. This concern is an ideal form of behavior in public venues, which incentivizes citizens to be completely obedient to anything the government asks of them. This model is currently being tested on society, through the implementation of a social currency model which rewards citizens for “good behavior” (Elgan, 2019).

The basis of China’s social currency system, which has been in the rollout phase since 2014, is, “A technology-enabled, surveillance-based nationwide program designed to nudge citizens toward better behavior. The ultimate goal is to ‘allow the trustworthy to roam everywhere under heaven while making it hard for the discredited to take a single step’” (Elgan, 2019). The system, which is currently in place in municipalities willing to implement it before a formal, national, roll out, acts as a point system for each Chinese citizen. Akin to a financial credit score, it is encompassed by the “good” and the “bad” actions of each citizens, and averaged to form the resulting figure (Elgan, 2019). Its underlying aim is to encourage the limitation of behaviors or engagement with belief systems that the government deems unworthy, including, “Membership in or support for the Falun Gong or Tibetan Buddhism, failure to pay debts, excessive video gaming, criticizing the government, late payments, failing to sweep the sidewalk in front of your store or house, smoking or playing loud music on trains, jaywalking, and other actions deemed illegal” (Elgan, 2019). The punishment for anyone found partaking in the aforementioned can be harsh and wide ranging, including, “...Bans on leaving the country, using public transportation, checking into hotels, hiring for high-visibility jobs, or acceptance of children to private schools. It can also result in slower internet connections and

social stigmatization in the form of registration on a public blacklist” (Elgan, 2019). In addition to punishing offenders, the system also rewards those who practice “good behaviors” such as charitable donations or supervising the medical care of one’s parents. The social currency system is currently underway in 40 ‘pilot projects’ run by both technological conglomerates compliant with the state’s standards, and local governments wanting to incentivize positive results (Elgan, 2019). In order to uphold the success of these projects, public shame is being utilized as a tactic to incentivize citizens to engage in more permissible behaviors than prohibited. One example, is the existence of a black list and a red list in Beijing; where the black list publicizes transgressions and the red list (due to being a lucky color in Chinese culture) celebrates the behavior of those who are compliant (Elgan, 2019). Other examples also include, monitoring of personal speech on Weibo to ensure compliancy, as well as projecting the addresses of blacklisted citizens on city maps, and their names in publicity spots through Tik Tok (Elgan, 2019). The height of the dystopian nature of these events is the fact that an estimated 80% of citizens support these projects and their overall principles (Elgan, 2019). I believe this acceptance is widespread, due to the exertion of control the Chinese populous is used to through the implemented censorship tactics here discussed. By incentivizing a populous to behave a certain way, and expect a reward for doing so, the Chinese government is implementing a physical mechanism of othering, based on shame rather than fear. As a result, it can ensure its citizens meet the standards it establishes as ideal, normalizing such behaviors without opposition. This follows the core of efficient propaganda that Goebbels designed to promulgate Nazi ideas, creating an atmosphere where there was a perceived lack of alternatives. The Chinese regime is following this same formula to preserve its reformist

ideology, to the leading school of thought found in liberal democracies, and is implementing such an enforcement mechanism through social media.

## **7. Conclusion-Moving Forward and Addressing the Global Issue of Privacy Preservation**

After exploring the endless opportunities that telecommunications technologies provide to governments and subsidiary businesses to manipulate their publics, I find it difficult to argue against a need to strengthen privacy protections. As technology becomes more advanced, we must assume that it will become increasingly difficult to control the scope of its influence. This is particularly true of social media platforms, like Facebook, who have openly admitted that they do not have sufficient control. This is inferable, following the company's statement after the perpetrator of the mass shooting in New Zealand in 2019, streamed the attacks live and the platform was not able to stop him from doing so (Wylie, 2019). A simple statement in light of such an act, confirming that, "We have heard feedback that we must do more" (Wylie, 2019) does little to guarantee the prevention of reoccurrences. The same question of scope becomes applicable against hot button issues like Cambridge Analytica, alleged Russian interference in the US elections in 2016, Myanmar's publication of racial cleansing against the Rohingyas, and the aforementioned mass shooting in New Zealand, which were all cited as "miss handles" by Facebook, with no resulting changes to their policies and no enforced accountability measures led by any government or NGO (Wylie, 2019). As a result, whistleblower Christopher Wylie, provides valid talking points that citizens should demand of their governments, but which I would like to extend to world organizations equipped to manage these issues in a less partisan way.<sup>10</sup> In addition, organizations such as the United Nations allow non-traditional players a seat at the table in such discussions, and result in applying pressure to reformist countries like

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<sup>10</sup> This is due to the differing political conclusions observed between liberal democracies and autocracies, and their pre-established methods for managing issues related to digital information consumption and privacy.

China, where such ideas are harder to divulge. The intent of these ideas is to build regulatory, legal frameworks for world institutions and governments to hold tech companies accountable for implementing privacy measures worldwide, and not just in one-off situations, as was the case in the United Kingdom.

The first of these methods of implementation, is the development of a building code for the internet (Wylie, 2019). In purporting this suggestion, Wylie makes the astute point that consent alone is insufficient for users to allow platforms to operate applications, which require access to information that interferes with their basic rights (Wylie, 2019). This is because there is no standardization for what has to be divulged in a set of virtual terms and conditions, and no required format that enables ease of readability of this information. As a result, Wylie calls for a digital archetype to be developed, called “privacy by design” which serves as a basis for an ethical code for the internet. This would have principles of ‘choice-enhancing design’ which, “include respect and agency for the integrity of end users... [and] bans dark pattern designs, which are...design patterns that deliberately confuse, deceive or manipulate users into agreeing to a feature or behaving in a certain way” (Wylie, 2019). This enhanced design could be achievable through a global collaborative study, where universities and NGOs could hold contests for submissions of ideas and projects to implement such an architecture online. The winning projects could then be presented to entities like the EU and UN, and put into action, and legal protection under the International Criminal Court of the UN. In doing so, there would be a legal system able to punish on a global scale, any party or regime attempting to violate the construction of such an archetype, with heavy enough action to hold them accountable. As a result, this would require any social application or website to also be compliant with such an

architecture, in order to maintain its free activity. If it does not, it has the potential to be shutdown or lose legitimacy worldwide, which could hurt its business development opportunities. Such a construction would require the compliance of a large share of world powers, and as a result end a crucial point in Wylie's thesis, being untested experiments on humans without fear of punishment (Wylie, 2019).

A second suggestion that I argue is fundamental to prevent abuses of privacy and ultimately misinformation, is the creation of a treatment for the internet as a public utility. This is because, "Utilities are traditionally physical networks said to be 'affected with the public interest'" (Wylie, 2019). Meaning, that they become involved in our everyday lives and function as a platform that impacts our commerce, understanding of our environment, and a natural monopoly we exploit daily. As a result, there are internet providers who own the largest share of the market, and therefore build a dependency upon their services as is similar to an electricity or water company, with no need for natural competition in a given space (Wylie, 2019). This is due to the fact that businesses thrive with positive buzz from social media and user reviews, and the public good of being able to instantly consume important information, also forms the internet and social media as a backbone of everyday survival. Therefore, Wylie proposes that like public utility companies, there should be an infrastructure built for internet utilities, ensuring that the scope of their service always incentivizes the public good. Wylie defines internet utilities as, "A service, application, or platform whose presence has become so dominant on the internet that it becomes affected with the public interest by the very nature of its own scale" (Wylie, 2019). In distinguishing social media platforms as such, Wylie calls for a level of standardization to be developed prioritizing the care of users, for which the success of

these platforms is dependent. This would be achieved in, “The form of statutory duties, with penalties benchmarked to annual profits as a way to stop...regulatory infractions [from being] negotiated and accounted for as a cost of doing business” (Wylie, 2019). In likening social media to public utilities, Wylie is calling for the development of public standards to ensure maximum efficiency and protection as is the case for any service on which one’s daily life depends. This allows for the development of positive social benefits to be derived from a public use benefit, and rewarded as such to discourage abusers of platforms, like Cambridge Analytica. With the creation of social media platforms as a public benefit, companies are then held accountable to quantifiable standards and are not allowed to develop a business sovereignty model that surpasses positive human need. As a result, this would lead to the development of a specialized world agency in protecting the ‘digital commons’ and insuring compliance on all matters of, “safety standards specific to software applications and a new code of digital consumer rights” (Wylie, 2019). This agency, would also be held compliant to the aforementioned internet archetype responsible for building and enforcing internet standards through the UN and the International Criminal Court. These observations and suggestions are purposeful to eliminate lines of jurisdiction for specific countries from policing one another. This would allow an international delegation dedicated to the task of implementing improvements and punishments. This would also be achievable on a gradual scale, allowing countries to maintain their sovereignty and only altering their digital enforcement policies to align with those stipulated by a global institution.

The need to implement improvements on a worldwide scale becomes imperative when addressing that political manipulation and public misinformation are not occurring in isolated

geographical pockets. They are occurring in all corners of the world perpetrated by both international firms (Kaiser 2019, and Wylie 2019) and direct government actions (Freedom House, 2019) to control outcomes and impact citizens' quality of life. While in liberal democratic societies this has occurred to manipulate voters into determining political elections, and in autocratic regimes this is to maintain widespread governmental control, the result ends up being the same. Control is exerted on citizens without their knowledge, conditioning them to participate in civil society in a specific way, sub-verting their thought and behavioral patterns. The modern existence of political manipulation is founded upon the classic foundations of implementing propaganda, and will continue to evolve unscathed as the scope of telecommunications technologies augments. As this augmentation is occurring without a limit to scope or a framework for accountability, there is little room to discredit suspicion that such acts will remain entrenched in human history. Therefore, a positive first step is creating the aforementioned frameworks to apply friction to the current digital infrastructure on a world scale, cutting the scope of tech companies to evade punishment. In doing so, privacy protection would be a matter of world collaboration, like climate change, and incentivize sociopolitical and economic activities to coincide in the hopes of achieving a common goal. By way of world pressures and the fear of being the "other" on the spectrum of psychological othering, reformist countries like China would be incentivized to collaborate on a grand scale, and as a result modify their actions to a fairly high degree to be compliant<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, the question of political stance and digital manipulation would fade into the background, as the preservation of

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<sup>11</sup> This would also create a positive financial incentive for reformist countries and ensure they remain competitive while maintaining their sovereign standards in other industries.

the digital commons would become a uniting factor rather than a divisive one, emphasizing a worldwide commitment to the preservation of dignity in the private-sphere.

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