

Colonization of the Mind

—The Means, Roots, and Global Perils of U.S. Cognitive Warfare

Xinhua Institute
September, 2025

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Foreword

The war on ideology is one without smoke.

In early 2025, after the Trump administration's announcement to dismantle the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and dissolve the United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM), these agencies' longstanding activities of exporting ideology, promoting ideological infiltration, manipulating international opinions, shaping foreign nations' perceptions, and even conspiring to subvert sovereign governments were exposed one after another. These revelations provoked a widespread international outcry.

This "washing of dirty linens" revealed to the world only the tip of the iceberg of the United States' global ideological warfare. The relentlessness with which the United States pursued activities to colonize the mind for nearly a century was once again thrust into the spotlight.

Since World War II, particularly after the end of the Cold War, by leveraging its global supremacy in political, economic, military, and technological might, the United States has been exporting its ideology worldwide in an attempt to capture the minds of nations with American values, reshape peoples' conceptions, and create philosophical dependence on an American-centric worldview.

Colonization of the mind constitutes a cornerstone of U.S. foreign strategy. As noted by renowned American scholar Joseph Nye, "The critical question for the United States is not whether it will start the next century as the superpower with the largest supply of resources, but to what extent it will be able to control the political environment and get other countries to do what it wants." Former Presidential National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski stated even more bluntly: Reinforcing American culture's position as the 'exemplar' for all nations is an indispensable strategy for maintaining U.S. hegemony.

The U.S. campaign for mind colonization poses a serious threat to global peace and development. It erodes ideological sovereignty and subverts foreign governments; it embeds cognitive wedges and incites geopolitical conflicts; it destroys philosophical independence and helps groom pro-American factions; it imposes Western development paths and undermines autonomous progress. With the development and upgrading of new technologies like artificial intelligence, the U.S. attempts to colonize the mind operate more covertly and have more extensive targets, thus the greater need for attention and vigilance of all peace-loving people.

Today, with the accelerated awakening of the Global South and U.S. hegemony moving toward decline, the world is seeing more clearly the selfishness, hypocrisy, and double standards concealed behind the U.S.-fabricated value system. Various changes show clearly that the foundation of the carefully constructed U.S. edifice of mind colonization has started shaking.

At this critical juncture, a systematic examination of the history, practices, and perils

of the United States' colonization of the mind helps shake off the blind belief in U.S. ideology, break its mental shackles, and empower other nations to better safeguard their cultural sovereignty and advance mutual learning among global civilizations.

Chapter One:

The Historical Facts of U.S. Colonization of the Mind

Hans Morgenthau, an American political scientist, believed that "...the most successful of imperialistic policies. It aims not at the conquest of territory or at the control of economic life, but at the conquest and control of the minds of men...." By deconstructing the collective cognition in target nations and implanting American values, the United States hopes to achieve colonization of the mind in "invisible domains", thereby establishing the underpinning bedrock of its hegemonic system.

1.1 Conceptual Characteristics of U.S. Colonization of the Mind

In the wake of WWII, national liberation movements swept across the globe, numerous independent nation-states sprang up like bamboo shoots after the rain, the global colonial system established by European powers crumbled, and the world entered the post-colonial era. As the new global hegemon, the United States discovered that, faced with numerous "awakened" nationalist nation-states, relying solely on "hard power" in the forms of political domination, economic control, military deterrence, among others, could not establish or sustain a lasting and extensive colonial rule; instead, employing "soft power" such as culture and values would enable it to reap higher colonial rewards at lower costs.

Compelling global "voluntary" compliance and subservience under a sentimental veil—this is the "mind colonization" U.S. style. Different from normal human intellectual exchange, it constitutes mental domination predicated on and perpetuating inequality, mainly manifested in the following forms:

a. Compulsory Transformation. Due to the huge disparity in positions of power, a hegemonic power tends to use its hegemonic position to forcibly implant its values and concepts in target nations while selectively eradicating the specific indigenous culture and ideology. This coercive mental restructuring often results in a serious identity crisis, cultural aphasia, and ideological chaos.

b. Malicious Manipulation. To achieve "ideological domestication", the hegemonic power often casts aside morality and indoctrinates obedience, massively cultivates dependent factions, and shatters philosophical autonomy within target populations.

c. Covert Infiltration. Its ideological and cultural exports are often packaged in what appear to be reasonable forms, such as "advanced concepts" or "civilizational progress", to infiltrate and influence the cognition of targeted groups through cultural products, education systems, academic exchanges, and other concealed channels.

d. Long-Term Erosion. Intellectual and cognitive shifts are gradual, incremental pro-

cesses. In the same way, colonization of the mind requires a long cycle of sustained infiltration—even protracted intergenerational transmission—to achieve the goal of mental remolding and perceptual reshaping.

"Conquest of the mind" has always been the aspiration of imperial rulers. Historically, colonial powers in different eras invariably attempted to export their thinking and cultures and unify values in conquered territories through such means as national education, linguistic promotion, historical reconstruction, and canonical compilation in order to eradicate cultural barriers and establish the ideological foundation for prolonged domination. However, constrained by historical conditions, such attempts at colonizing the mind existed in limited space and duration only. In the globalizing tides of material-spiritual exchange, integration, and contestation, the United States—having accumulated abundant resources and formidable power—ultimately ascended to the historical "forefront" of mind colonization.

After the two World Wars, in particular, rapid advances in modern telecommunications, the proliferation of professional media outlets, groundbreaking innovations in social and natural sciences, and the globalization trend of capital and technology flows have created unprecedented conditions for the global dissemination of information and knowledge, propelling American ideological colonization onto the fast track.

As one of the primary architects of the post-war international order, the United States has, on the one hand, been exporting its political and economic systems and American values like "democracy" and "freedom", while on the other hand, purposefully and consciously deconstructing non-American ideologies and suppressing the indigenous cultures of other countries in a bid to foster global philosophical dependence and obedience. By resorting to an incessant stream of double-sided ploys of expansive "construction" and destructive "deconstruction", the U.S. has "accomplished" much more than any former colonial empire had in attempting to colonize the mind.

1.2 Historical Context of U.S. Colonization of the Mind

The evolution of the United States' attempts at colonizing the mind can be delineated through its historical trajectory.

Germination: Continental Expansion Phase (late 18th century to late 19th century). After the War of Independence, the United States, grounded in the doctrine of "Manifest Destiny", rapidly expanded its territory across the American Continent. Through a series of moves such as the Westward Movement and the Mexican-American War, the United States increased its territorial holdings by more than tenfold within the span of a century. President Monroe's proclamation of the "Monroe Doctrine" incorporated Latin America into the U.S. sphere of influence under the banners of "opposing European interference" and "America for the Americans".

Foundation: Global Ascendancy Phase (early 20th century to mid-20th century).

The United States' national power surged during the two World Wars. Abandoning the "isolationist" policy, it actively engaged in global affairs and exported to the world a host of widely influential political and economic concepts. President Wilson proposed the "Fourteen Points" and the idea of establishing the League of Nations. President Roosevelt and Churchill signed the Atlantic Charter, establishing the foundational principles for the configuration of the post-WWII international order. "The Four Freedoms" proposed by President Roosevelt became the theoretical cornerstone of the international human rights system. The United States' ideological exportation during this period laid the historical groundwork for its wholesale pursuit of mind colonization in the decades that followed.

Formation: U.S.-Soviet Confrontation Phase (mid – 20th century to late 20th century). During the U.S.-Soviet rivalry, the United States gradually revealed its predatory fangs of mind colonization. The Marshall Plan, by bundling economic aid with the selection of a given social system, divided countries along ideological lines to create a Capitalist "Free World" bloc under U.S. "leadership" against the Soviet-led Socialist camp. The U.S. established and continued to refine dedicated national propaganda apparatuses, disseminating anti-Communist information through various means, including overt propaganda, ideological infiltration, cultural diplomacy, and academic grants. It cultivated pro-American elites, nurtured anti-Communist forces, and encouraged people of Socialist countries to defect to the "Free World".

Promotion: U.S. Hegemony Phase (late 20th century to early 21st century). Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the United States emerged as the sole superpower, with Capitalist ideology and political-economic systems holding sway globally. The "Washington Consensus" and neoliberal political-economic theories spread extensively while the world Socialist movement waned. In the wake of the September 11 attacks, the U.S. put "counter-terrorism" on the global agenda and launched a "war on terror". Throughout this period—from the Clinton administration's "democracy expansion" as a diplomatic pillar to George W. Bush's "freedom agenda"—mind colonization centering on American-style democracy and liberty developed in depth relentlessly.

Upgrading: Hegemonic Anxiety Phase (early 21st century – present). Amid challenges to U.S. hegemony—intensified partisan strife, deepening social fragmentation, and surging populism—the United States has continually reinforced and upgraded its mind colonization strategy, from the Obama administration's "smart power diplomacy" to the Biden administration's "Summit for Democracy", and to the slogans like "America First" and "Make America Great Again" promoted by Trump. The U.S. has leveraged control over new technological platforms and cutting-edge cognitive technologies to tighten its ideological governance of social media. Under pretexts such as "countering disinformation" and "countering foreign influence", it manipulates information flows on social platforms to dominate global perception-shaping.

1.3 The Real Faces of U.S. Ideological Colonization

In carrying out its activities to colonize the mind, the U.S. wears black, white, gray, and other "masks" at different times, flexibly blending different "hues" to camouflage itself according to contextual needs and situations.

White propaganda. This constitutes the most overt dimension of American colonization of the mind, operating through public, transparent, and officially endorsed channels to disseminate publicly verifiable information designed to shape a positive national image and promote its values. Such activities are typically executed directly by official or quasi-official entities like the Department of State and cultural agencies such as the Voice of America (VOA) which had operated for a long time under the U.S. Information Agency (later under the United States Agency for Global Media), the Fulbright Program, globally popular Hollywood movies, high-profile diplomatic statements by the government, and many others. The core strategy involves packaging American lifestyles, political system, and cultural products as universally appealing "benchmarks of modern civilization". Its critical value lies in superficial verifiability and legitimacy, draping the U.S. global leadership in a veneer of civilizational openness.

Black propaganda. Black propaganda represents the most covert, deceptive, and aggressive facet of mind colonization. Typically executed by intelligence and military agencies under strict secrecy, its core characteristic is clandestine operations—including but not limited to disinformation campaigns, intelligence gathering, and cyber attacks. Such activities are aimed at disrupting target audiences' perceptions, manipulating public opinion on specific issues, and destabilizing adversary countries to gain strategic advantages, with their existence and origins usually flatly denied by official sources. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) serves as the primary executor of U.S. black propaganda. Its longstanding "Operation Mockingbird" systematically bribed or influenced domestic and foreign journalists to manipulate news coverage and public opinion. In the digital age, black propaganda tactics have grown more sophisticated, as evidenced by the National Security Agency's (NSA) "PRISM" program exposed by Edward Snowden in 2013—a massive surveillance operation targeting billions of civilians and political figures worldwide, including U.S. allies. Black propaganda is the "arrow shot from hiding" in the cognitive battlefield with disregard for international rules and ethical constraints. It is the ultimate covert weapon deployed by the U.S. for achieving its strategic goals.

Gray propaganda. It operates in the ambiguous area between "black" and "white", characterized by semi-openness, obscured origins, and a degree of deception. Typically conducted indirectly by the U.S. government through third-party entities such as corporations and NGOs to evade official accountability while creating the illusion of "non-governmental spontaneity". Its objective is to covertly influence public opinion, shape political agendas, or support specific groups in target countries—all while allowing the U.S. to maintain plausible deniability under the pretext of "non-interference in internal

affairs". A typical tool for carrying out gray propaganda is the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Though nominally an independent nonprofit, it primarily receives funding from Congressional allocations. Through its core subsidiaries, NED finances media outlets, think tanks, civil society groups, and political activities worldwide—such as funding the media, supporting specific biased reporting, and amplifying social divisions. By exploiting the opacity of information, gray propaganda helps effectively achieve the goal of infiltration while maintaining deniability of intervention.

The black, white, and gray masks operate in coordination, collectively serving U.S. strategic interests. This multi-layered, three-dimensional structural design enables flexible selection of propaganda methods tailored to different targets and environments, thereby achieving optimal dissemination outcomes.

1.4 Basic Conditions of the U.S. Pursuit of Mind Colonization

If U.S. hegemonic dominance on the world's political, economic, and military scenes serves as the "hard prerequisites" for its ideological colonization, then the enabling conditions in language and culture, discourse narratives, mass media, and academic research constitute its "soft foundation".

Reaping the benefits of "the world's language". Language serves as a fundamental tool for colonizing the mind. Samuel P. Huntington, a noted American political thinker, opined, "The distribution of languages in the world has reflected the distribution of power in the world." During the 17th to 19th centuries, Britain forcibly spread English through colonial expansion to regions like the Americas, South Asia, and Africa, establishing it as the administrative and educational language in these territories. Following World War II, the U.S., on the strength of its economic, military, technological, and popular cultural dominance, vigorously promoted English worldwide, further elevating its status as the global lingua franca. Influenced by the inertia of this hegemonic mindset, many Americans have come to take it for granted that "if the world is moving toward a common language, it should be English. And if common values are emerging, they should be values that meet Americans' wishes.

Dominating international discourse power. Discourse dominance is crucial to the U.S. pursuit of mind colonization. By leveraging its narrative hegemony in the economy, technology, and cyber communication system, the U.S. dominates global cultural exchanges and dissemination while bolstering its soft power. Through this discursive advantage, the U.S. systematically glorifies itself while energetically demonizing others, creating artificial binaries like "democracy vs. dictatorship", "freedom vs. authoritarianism", "market economies vs. non-market economies", and "counterterrorism states vs state sponsors of terrorism". With this, the U.S. is attempting to monopolize the image-shaping power vis-à-vis all other countries.

Seizing the high ground of communication. He who controls the valves of informa-

tion flows commands the initiative in shaping perceptions. As Marx observed, conquests achieved by the sword will be consolidated by the electric telegraph and the press. Today, the U.S. maintains an iron grip on global information and dissemination channels and platforms through its possession of numerous news agencies, powerful multinational media conglomerates, internet-based social media platforms, and a host of new tech giants. In the traditional media era, wherever American mainstream media pointed their cameras, the UN Security Council's agenda would follow. In the digital age, by leveraging platforms like Facebook, X (Twitter), and YouTube, the U.S. has achieved a manipulation of public opinions characterized by "wherever algorithms and audience traffic go, there go the agenda and perceptions".

Monopolizing knowledge production standards. After World War II, the U.S. government invested heavily in knowledge production, attracting top global talent in large numbers and establishing many prestigious universities and research institutions. This created a comprehensive system for knowledge generation and independent innovation, yielding numerous influential research outputs that rapidly positioned the United States as a "superpower" in both social and natural sciences. To this day, the U.S. and Western countries have maintained dominant positions in global academic research, publishing, knowledge dissemination, and technological innovation, among others. By virtue of their monopoly on intellectual property rights and evaluation standards, they systematically reject knowledge from non-Western countries. As noted by Oxford University professor Simon Marginson, the U.S. exercises extraordinary global hegemony in higher education, academic research, and knowledge production: The Americanization of knowledge and university education sustains an Americanized global society, which in turn reinforces U.S. dominance in global political economy, cultural life, and military affairs through a mutually reinforcing process."

1.5 Underlying Motivations of U.S. Pursuit of Mind Colonization

The United States' drive to colonize the mind is designed to consolidate U.S. cultural hegemony, thereby reinforcing its political dominance and preserving its economic privileges.

Consolidating cultural hegemony. Colonization of the mind is designed to extend the United States' cultural hegemony globally and indoctrinate identification with American ideology. As a mind colonizer, the U.S. relentlessly glorifies itself, cloaking its values in a guise of "universality"—portraying its "national character" as something "universal" and repackaging "national interests" as "international morality", ultimately disguising "cultural colonization" as "value leadership". The U.S. presents itself as the "practitioner", "spokesperson", and "defender" of noble values, all to consolidate its central position in the ideological-cultural sphere, shape the "cognitive worship" of America, and cultivate "cognitive dependence" on the U.S.

Strengthening political hegemony. The fundamental purpose of America's ideological manipulation and cognitive shaping is to turn rules that serve U.S. interests into a universally accepted international system and order and, in this process, ensure its permanent enjoyment of various privileges. The U.S. attitude toward international rules, i.e., "use them when they fit and discard them when they don't", exposes its proclaimed "ideals" as false and the underlying "hegemony" as real. After World War II ended in 1945, under U.S. leadership, countries signed the UN Charter and founded the United Nations, gradually establishing many basic norms governing international relations and building the fundamental framework of today's international system and order. Following the drastic changes in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the U.S. has consistently attempted to turn the UN and the international system it represents into tools for maintaining Western dominance, especially U.S. global hegemony. In recent years, with the collective rise of the Global South, the U.S. has found this system increasingly restrictive to its privileges. It thus promotes "exceptionalism" and has withdrawn from international agencies to "extricate" itself from common rules that are universally observed by the international community. Meanwhile, it has come up with the "America First" doctrine to put U.S. interests directly before those of other countries. More over, by extending its practice of "long-arm jurisdiction", the U.S. is flagrantly placing its domestic laws above international law.

Protecting economic privileges. In its history, the U.S. repeatedly used "mind colonization" to pave the way for its aggression and plundering while cloaking these acts in "legitimacy". In the late 19th century, the Hearst media group echoed U.S. expansionist ambitions by playing up Spanish "atrocities" in Cuba and creating public opinion in support of the U.S. launching of the Spanish-American War and its subsequent grabbing of Caribbean markets. During the 1970s, the U.S. used its media to propagate the "Arab oil weapon threat" narrative to help establish the petrodollar system that tied dollar hegemony to global energy trade. In 2019, U.S.-funded NGOs incited public unrest in Bolivia, wielding the sword of "democracy" to overthrow a leftist government—a move strategically targeting the country's largest lithium reserves in the world. Today, the U.S., by continuing to employ this "public opinion first" strategy, has been suppressing Chinese enterprises like Huawei and TikTok in the name of "national security". All this is none other than moves to clear obstacles for American corporations to grab global markets.

Chapter 2:

The Operational System of U.S. Colonization of the Mind

U.S. activities to colonize the mind have a profound practical foundation and clear strategic planning, having gradually developed a comprehensive supporting system.

2.1 Strategic System: Historical Iterations and In-depth Development

The U.S. campaign to colonize the mind has been conducted with strong strategic intent and clear strategic planning. Through historical iterations, it has evolved into a multidimensional strategic system encompassing various forms of warfare on the propaganda, information, ideology, and cognition fronts.

2.1.1 Media Propaganda and "Propaganda Warfare"

From the two World Wars to the 1960s, the U.S. mainly employed newspapers and radio to "tell the American story to the world". It established external publicity media mouthpieces such as Voice of America, Radio Free Asia, and Radio Free Europe to launch a long-term propaganda war against the Socialist camp led by the Soviet Union. In terms of top-level design, the propaganda functions of institutions ranging from the Office of War Information to the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy and Psychological Strategy Board continued to be expanded and upgraded. In respect of communication channels, the input in external propaganda through radio broadcasts and newspapers was augmented. The content and narratives were focused on promoting the "freedom" and "prosperity" of Capitalist societies while attacking the corruption and poverty under Soviet "authoritarianism".

2.1.2 Information Control and "Information Warfare"

In the period around the 1970s, the rapid development of the mass media represented by television drove profound changes in the structure of information dissemination in the United States. The "information control—cognition" paradigm gradually replaced the "propaganda—cognition" model to become the new mainstream communication theory. Theories such as social psychology, game theory, and perceptual phenomenology were introduced into the analysis of international strategic situations and political decision-making processes, constructing a new theoretical framework for international politics and bringing about a sea change in U.S. national security concepts, which ushered its mind colonization into a stage of information control and "information warfare".

One of the success stories of the "information warfare" happened in the 1980s and

1990s when the United States succeeded in recasting Japan as the scapegoat for America's own economic woes, thereby creating public opinion as an enabling condition for the U.S. government to strong-arm Japan into the Semiconductor Agreement, the Plaza Accord, etc. The core concept of this stage was to influence and even shape public opinion through such means as information supply, interference, tailoring, shielding, and obstruction, thereby achieving the strategic goal of information control.

2.1.3 Strategic Dissemination and "Ideological Warfare"

After the September 11 Attacks, the U.S. launched a global counter-terrorism campaign and, under the banners of "combating terrorism" and "maintaining world peace", started to build a strategic communication system based on its diplomatic, security, military, and propaganda infrastructure. In 2010, then-U.S. president Barack Obama outlined in his National Framework for Strategic Communications report the need for U.S. deployment of multiple means—including public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations—to design communication contact activities for targeted audiences, the promotion of "universal values" both domestically and globally as one of the four core strategic interests of the United States, and the following emphasis: "...our long-term security and prosperity depends on our steady support for universal values." This marked the entry of U.S. external communication activities into the strategic communication phase.^① A success story of the U.S. ideological warfare during this period was the use of "color revolution" to overthrow Egypt's Mubarak government. Mobilizing all national resources to push for the infiltration of "universal values" to win the "war on the mind" became a new important objective of the United States' mind colonization drive.

2.1.4 Cognitive Moulding and "Cognition Warfare"

Shaping audiences' emotions, attitudes, and behaviors has long been an important objective in U.S. journalism, advertising, propaganda, and other related fields. The concept of "cognitive warfare" had emerged as early as the 1990s. However, it wasn't until the early 21st century, with breakthroughs in technological research in such fields as psychological science, neuroscience, brain science, and artificial intelligence, and other cutting-edge technologies, that "shaping cognition" became a truly relevant strategic objective. After 2016, the U.S. government elevated cognitive warfare to a new battlefield domain rooted in brain science and neuroscience research, emphasizing the brain's role as part of the war zone. In 2022, the National Security Strategy report raised cognitive warfare to strategic importance on par with physical combat, which marked the complete independence of the cognitive domain. In 2023, multiple congressional reports refocused on cognitive security. Thus, technology-driven cognitive manipulation became a new tactic for mind colonization by the United States.

^① Cheng, M., & Zhao, X. (2020). *The Historical Evolution of the U.S. National Strategic Communication Concept and Practice*. *News and Writing*, (2).

Unlike previous approaches to colonize the mind, "cognitive shaping" heavily relies on new technological advancements—particularly in AI, social networks, cognitive science, etc., making it possible to precisely influence the perceptions of target audiences. The goal of cognitive shaping directly targets "the right to shape minds" in an attempt to fundamentally alter the opponents' or target audience's way of thinking and value judgment through cognitive restructuring.^① The implementation of cognitive shaping is more covert and flexible, allowing rapid strategic adjustments based on objectives and scenarios. Social media offers an important space for U.S. cognitive shaping operations. Statistics show that the U.S. Central Command has long operated numerous Arabic-language fake accounts on X, releasing over 100,000 messages between 2017 and 2022. These accounts were put on a "whitelist" with priority recommendation privileges. In recent years, the widespread application of deepfake technology has created new convenience for U.S. cognitive warfare. In 2020, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) developed a deepfake tool capable of generating realistic videos of leaders. During the Venezuela crisis, a forged "resignation speech" by Maduro went viral on social media.

2.2 Organizational System: Multiple Bodies in Collusion and Conspiracy

Consistent with the way its external dissemination is operated, the U.S. colonization of the mind is also characterized by multi-center collusion and multi-body conspiracy in organization.

2.2.1 Government Leadership

The United States' colossal national propaganda apparatus serves as the central hub and command for mind colonization. From the Committee on Public Information (CPI) established near the end of WWI to national institutions that came into being after WWII, such as the National Security Council, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and Office of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), all have directly or indirectly participated in mind colonization. Today, under the guidance of the U.S. government, relevant decision-making bodies of the U.S. Congress, the National Security Council, and the U.S. Department of State regularly convene meetings. Based on the information provided by the intelligence system, they formulate specific themes and operational objectives, marshal and coordinate resources of all sorts, and collectively advance mind colonization through official means such as bill discussions, legislation enactment, and issuance of bans.

Since the onset of the 21st century, the U.S. government has further refined its strategic framework of mind colonization by centering on cognitive warfare. Firstly, it has

^① Li Yan, Cui Wenlong, & Gu Changni. (2024). *The U.S. Cognitive Security Strategy: Construction Context, Evolution Characteristics, and Impact Assessment*. *National Security Studies*, (5).

issued a series of policy documents emphasizing concepts like "battlefield shaping", "conceptual influence", and "strategic narratives", elevating "cognitive domain operations" to the same strategic level as physical combat. Secondly, it has intensified research on cognitive patterns and, based on the dual tasks of combating disinformation and preventing election interference, constituted multiple "influence operations" research departments to analyze how foreign influence alters American public perception and devise countermeasures for the U.S. to counter malicious foreign impacts. Thirdly, institutional development has been strengthened to enhance operational capabilities. In December 2016, then- U.S. president Barack Obama signed the Murphy- Portman Counter-Propaganda Bill, allocating additional budgetary resources to the Department of Defense to establish an anti-propaganda center and reinforcing ideological work through a further increase in input in government's power. Today, agencies including the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs of the Department of State, United States Agency for International Development, Congress, Public Affairs Office, and Bureau for Cyber-space and Digital Policy (CDP) have all been tasked with the function of mind infiltration and cognitive research.

After assuming his second term in office, Trump abolished the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and dissolved the U.S. Agency for International Media (AIGM). For some time, public opinion was of the belief that this U.S. administration appeared to be abandoning ideological export and focusing on domestic affairs instead. However, a closer examination reveals the core intention of this move by the Trump administration: cutting costs, boosting efficiency, and further targeting China for mind colonization activities. Regardless of how the specific department setup is to be restructured or whether the Democrats or Republicans are in power, the U.S. will never abandon its ideological colonization design.

2.2.2 Social Collaboration

Led by the U.S. government, various social entities, including media outlets, think tanks, and NGOs, actively engage in manipulating/controlling public opinion and shaping perceptions, forming a collective force for mind colonization. A common playbook trick involves the government first using third-party institutions like think tanks to package theories and conduct groundwork research before proposing policy recommendations. Subsequently, through media hype, expert underwriting, and endorsements by politicians, the interest groups' agendas are disguised as "social consensus". Finally, the policies are introduced and actions taken in the name of people's will.

The media serves as both a conduit for the flow of ideas and a stage for the contention of the minds. By consciously regulating the "volume" of voices and information flow from different groups, the U.S. media exports American ideology to the global community, sings praises of the virtues of the free world while criticizing the evils of "authoritarian states, and crafts an idealized image of a perfect America to arouse worldwide aspiration for this country.

NGOs are the key drivers behind the scenes. Founded in 1983, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is an independent non-profit organization in name, but it is in reality a "white glove" agency of the U.S. government, with its primary funding coming from Congressional appropriations. The organization's major objective is to advance global democratic development and shape the perceptions in target countries and among their populace by supporting the political groups, media outlets, and civil society organizations there. The "color revolutions" in Central and Eastern Europe, the Arab Spring in the Middle East, and the Occupy Central movement in Hong Kong that broke out just a couple of years ago were all closely tied to the influence of this organization. The NED model is not a unique case in point; the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), International Republican Institute, Human Rights Watch, and Freedom House, among others, also have a similar modus operandi.

Think tanks represent the staunch force actively operating up front. In recent years, a host of think tanks, at the behest of the U.S. government, have provided ammunition for the information warfare and cognitive warfare launched by the U.S. government through such methods as fabricating concepts, putting forward propositions, and publishing reports. To amplify their influence and grab eyeballs, they have gone so far as resorting to advanced technological means like deepfakes and Trojan viruses to craft what they call "heavyweight ideological weapons".

2.2.3 Coordination with Allies

The United States has built an alliance system based on shared values. What is emphasized in the "values-based alliance" is cooperation and coordination with the U.S. allies to launch public opinion campaigns, ideological containment, and rules-based blockades against their common adversaries. In early 2022, the U.S., NATO, Australia, and Japan jointly proposed establishing a U.S.-led cooperative system for cyber cognitive warfare.

In the global competition over internet governance, the U.S. has leveraged principles that are jointly accepted by Western countries, such as "the internet knows no borders" and "unrestricted information flow", to rally its traditional allies, including the EU, UK, and Australia. Meanwhile, hoisting the banner of "combating disinformation", it actively courted like-minded allies and partners on occasions such as the Summit for Democracy, G7 Summit, and NATO Summit, going all out to seek the rights to internet standard-setting, rule-making, and governance and, with this, to suppress what they call "authoritarian" countries like Russia and China.

The Five Eyes alliance cooperative mechanism is one of the important sources of intelligence for U.S. activities to colonize the mind. With the support of countries like the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the United States extensively gathers intelligence and fabricates cognitive ammunition. Furthermore, the Five Eyes alliance collaboratively launches cognitive offensives against its adversaries by means of intelligence disclosure, moral condemnation, legal accountability, joint sanctions, etc.

2.3 Value System: "Universal Values" for Deception

A series of American values like capitalist democracy, freedom, equality, human rights, along with individualism, egoism, materialism, and hedonism, constitute the crux of the U.S. drive to colonize the mind. They also make up what the U.S. concentrates on promoting in its attempt to colonize the mind—by glorifying itself as representing the "universal values" to be applied globally. Yet, an increasing number of countries and peoples have come to realize that behind the glossy packaging of these American values are, in reality, ideological invasion and cognitive manipulation designed to maintain U.S. hegemony.

2.3.1 Democracy, Freedom, Equality, and Human Rights

Democracy, freedom, equality, and human rights are the common values and goals pursued by human society. What the United States and Western countries believe, however, is that capitalism is the best system for human society and that only a capitalist market economy can ensure the realization of values such as democracy, freedom, equality, and human rights. Yet, facts prove just the opposite: The capitalist market economy, by its nature, serves the private ownership system and a minority of people; these values are bound to remain superficial and undeniably hypocritical in essence. In the United States, freedom and equality have been eroded by capitalist privileges, with marginalized groups like Americans of African descent, Native Americans, and women excluded for a long time. Even after the civil rights movement, problems such as systemic racial discrimination and social stratification remain acute. American democracy has long been proven to be a democracy of money, capital, and the privileged few. In recent years, the so-called human rights in America have been shattered by a series of severe social issues, including discrimination against Americans of African descent and immigrants on the basis of gender. Despite this, the U.S. still frequently uses democracy, freedom, equality, human rights, etc. as pretexts to meddle in other countries' internal affairs, provoke geopolitical conflicts, and maintain its hegemonic dominance.

2.3.2 The American Dream

The "American Dream" was once the most concentrated embodiment of American-style values. In its past, countless American politicians, social activists, and writers had invariably spared no effort in weaving the "American Dream" to convince people that the U.S. was one of the few countries in the world characterized by equality, freedom, and democracy and that in the United States, anyone could achieve a better life and realize his/her dream through hard work and striving. For over two centuries, the "American Dream" had attracted countless young dreamers to abandon their homeland to reach America's shores after enduring hardships in hopes of creating their worth on this "fair and just" soil. However, the harsh realities of serious wealth disparity, racial dis-

crimination, social stratification, etc. have repeatedly exposed this illusion. People discovered that in this money-centric society, success stories of personal ascent and material abundance are but infinitely exaggerated versions of "survivorship bias". The "American Dream" is a sugar-coated cognitive manipulation tool, a glossy packaging for exporting American values. A survey published by ABC News and Ipsos, a polling agency, in January 2024 revealed that fewer than a quarter of Americans believed in the existence of the "American Dream"^①

2.3.3 Freedom of speech

Freedom of speech is also one of the sign boards of American values. Even though freedom of speech is explicitly written in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, in reality, partisan rivalry and corporate interests have repeatedly undermined its very essence under this banner. The American public does not feel genuine freedom of speech and has seen through and become increasingly bored with politicians' hypocritical slogans and promises. In 2022, the Knight Foundation released the "Free Expression in America Post-2020" study, hailed as "the most comprehensive public opinion research on free expression available". The report found that political polarization and partisan strife had severely eroded freedom of speech in the U.S.; this was particularly manifest in discussions on political issues. In March 2022, The New York Times published an editorial titled There is a Freedom of Speech Problem in America, pointing out that the US society is caught in a cycle of left and right attacking each other and that freedom of speech in the US is a thing of the past.

On the international stage, the United States frequently manipulates global public opinion under the guise of "freedom of speech", adding "rationality" and "moral sense" to its foreign policies. It uses freedom of speech to practice double standards, creates a smokescreen, and claims that other countries are spreading "false information" while it publishes various distorted and discrediting reports based on false information.

On May 4, 2022, U.S. Senator Rand Paul said bluntly at a Senate hearing, "Do you know who the greatest propagator of disinformation in the history of the world is? The U.S. government."

2.4 The propaganda system: multi-channel indoctrination

On the strength of its advanced global news and information dissemination networks, the United States spreads its values and ideology worldwide around the clock, ensuring that its colonization of the mind reaches every corner of the globe.

^①Jared Sousa, "American dream far from reality for most people: POLL", 2024年1月15日, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/american-dream-reality-people-poll/story?id=10633956>

2.4.1 Traditional news media institutions

Since its founding, the U.S. has cultivated a cohort of long-established, powerful, and highly influential news media brands. Outlets such as the Associated Press, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, the "Big Three" television networks, CNN, and Fox News are all heavyweights on the global mass media scene. Despite major shifts in the international media landscape and repeated realignments within the U.S. media industry, these legacy institutions have their clout undiminished, still serving as effective tools for the U.S. to set international agendas and shape global narratives. In the dissemination of major global events, the U.S. media, often leveraging their close ties with the government and military, tend to secure early and even exclusive, monopolistic access to the source of information, gaining an edge in dissemination.

2.4.2 Transnational media conglomerates

The U.S. also commands a vast array of multinational media giants with extensive operations, substantial capital, and outsized influence. These conglomerates dominate the production and distribution of global cultural products—from publishing and film to entertainment—making them instrumental tools of ideological colonization. In 1996, the U.S. revised The Telecommunications Act to ease the regulation of media ownership, triggering a wave of large-scale mergers and acquisitions in the media industry and rapidly consolidating resources into the hands of a few corporate titans. Nearly three decades later, 90% of U.S. media companies are controlled by six conglomerates: General Electric, News Corp., Disney, Viacom, Time Warner, and CBS. Backed by immense financial power, these media conglomerates have gained end-to-end control over the entire chain—from news gathering, content production, and distribution to advertising and marketing. Their holdings of media resources span television, newspapers, radio, print, film, videos, and streaming platforms, enjoying access to a huge group of global users.

2.4.3 New internet-based dissemination platforms

The U.S. advantage in dissemination is further embodied in its control over internet-based media, platforms, and companies. By controlling critical resources such as global internet root servers and domain names, the U.S. dominates the overall operation of the World Wide Web. Through legislative and many other means, the U.S. government keeps a tight grip on domestic internet tech giants and wields unchecked power over a huge amount of online information. Platforms like Facebook, X, YouTube, and Instagram—the world's most popular social media platforms—provide new space and facility for the U.S. to construct information cocoons and shape user perceptions through algorithms and lies. A study by the University of Southern California reveals that 9% to 15% of active Twitter users were social bots that generated and disseminated massive

disinformation.

2.5 Content system: multiple forms of covert infiltration

U.S. capital has been deployed to establish multinational corporations, seize control of academic institutions, and manipulate media conglomerates on a world scale, thereby embedding American lifestyles, value perceptions, and aesthetic standards into various cultural products for global promotion.

2.5.1 Creating pop culture to "attract the general public"

By building a pop culture industry chain, the U.S. integrates ideological infiltration into entertainment consumption, forming a mass entertainment network that spans film, television, gaming, and commercial brands. Elmer Davis, head of the U.S. Office of War Information during WWII, noted, "The easiest way to inject a propaganda idea into most people's minds is to let it go through the medium of an entertainment picture when they do not realize that they are being propagandized."

To get public support for U.S. entry into WWII, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt appointed a coordinator to liaise between the U.S. government and the film industry, enabling direct government intervention in Hollywood productions while continuing to strengthen oversight and guidance of film content. After WWII, through the Marshall Plan, the U.S. used Hollywood films for ideological dissemination in countries including Germany and Italy. In Allied victors like France and Britain, it forced open local film markets as a condition for financial aid, helping Hollywood films to dominate these markets. For as long as several decades thereafter, American films—commanding over 70% of the global market—served as an important means to colonize the mind. Countless films centering on "heroism" crafted an image of the U.S. as the "righteous defender of the world order" and cultivated awe for American military power. After 9/11, Hollywood once again became a powerful propaganda tool for the U.S. war on terror, with the industry and military forming a mutually beneficial "military-entertainment complex" and each party partaking of what it needs.

With the advancement of digital technology, video games have also become an important tool for manipulating the mind. The America's Army game series, developed under the guidance of the U.S. military with over \$30 million of funding, simulates realistic combat as the core game and has attracted about 20 million players worldwide. This narrative model, "downplaying war's brutality while blurring the lines between military action and entertainment", conditions players to accept the premise of "inherent U.S. military righteousness".^① Additionally, toy IPs including Transformers construct the narrative framework of "good versus evil" through film tie-ins to promote the superiority

^① Kunlun Zhi: Built on Lies, Xinhua Publishing House, April 2025.

of American values. Meanwhile, brands like Coca-Cola and McDonald's use the "American lifestyle" as a vehicle to gradually erode indigenous cultural identities through their global expansion.

2.5.2 Dominating academic education to "cultivate elites"

To entrench American ideology worldwide, the United States leverages its leading position across academic disciplines to propagate Western knowledge systems and cultural values among intellectual elites in various countries and regions through education, training, academic exchanges, research funding, and faculty deployments. It aims to cultivate a vast, globally dispersed "pro-American" contingent among elite circles globally.

Early on, the U.S. had positioned cultural exchange as the "fourth dimension of foreign policy". Since 1948, the U.S. government has invested heavily in the Fulbright Program—viewed as a "model investment in long-term U.S. national interests"—sponsoring college students, scholars, cultural elites, and academic groups worldwide to study, visit, and research in America. By the late 20th century, the program had provided financial support to over 250,000 scholars from 140+ countries and regions. Many returnees assumed important positions in governments, parliaments, universities, and militaries, actively disseminating American cultural ideology, with some even becoming core figures in local opposition movements.

For a long time, the U.S. has also monopolized the construction of academic theories and the formulation of evaluation metrics, going all out to allure global intellectual elites toward "Western-centric" perspectives to learn from and emulate the West. Around the end of the Cold War, backed by international monopoly capital, the U.S. kept exporting theories like post-industrialism, monetarism, and "shock therapy", misleading the Soviet Union and other countries toward economic collapse. Today, the U.S. and its allies still control the world's top academic journal citation indices and university rankings, dominating the global knowledge production system with Western standards.

2.5.3 Manipulating discourse for "self-glorification"

Self-glorification and the vilification of others are the two most commonly seen sets of narratives in the U.S. efforts to colonize the mind. In this regard, holding to double standards in treating oneself and others is one of the important narrative logics in mind colonization.

Self-glorification. Through discursive manipulation, the United States has woven many perfect "myths" into its history. In the important educational documentary *America: The Story of Us*, the North American continent is portrayed as the "land of ultimate opportunity" and "a vast territory of untapped wealth" while the first colonists are glorified as "courageous pioneers and trailblazers" who "fought for freedom, turned dreams into reality, and built a nation through hard work". Yet the other side of the coin—colonial atrocities, war crimes, and genocide—is entirely submerged in this

"glossy" narrative. Discursive control also produced tailor-made nice pretexts for the U.S. in its global expansion. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as imperial powers were sharpening their knives to carve up China, the U.S. advanced its "Open Door Policy", demanding "equal commercial and industrial trading rights for all foreign countries in China" and hiding its strategy of pursuing hegemony in the Far East under the banner of moral righteousness—leaving other powers and even the Chinese authorities with little room for outright rejection. Elevating the United States' foreign policy to the height of "international righteousness", the "Open Door Policy" is a quintessential example of how the U.S. constructs discourse to serve its interests.^①

Stigmatizing others. The U.S. also employs discursive tools it controls to construct stigmatizing narratives about "others," portraying them in negative images as barbaric, authoritarian, totalitarian in dire need of salvation. During the Cold War, to systematically negate the Soviet-led socialist camp, the U.S. labeled Communism as "Red Colonialism", denounced the USSR as a "world warmonger", and branded Cuba with tags such as "totalitarian state", "police state", "rogue state", and "state sponsor of terrorism". After the Cold War, the U.S. continued to amplify ideological confrontation by creating a "democracy vs. authoritarianism" binary narrative. It depicts countries with non-Western systems—particularly Socialist countries—as "repressive regimes" that "suppress freedom" and "violate human rights". Countries like Iran, Iraq, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have been dubbed "axis of evil" while China's peaceful development has been smeared as a "threat" to the so-called "rules-based international order" (which is, in reality, U.S.-dominated).

Double standards. Applying "double standards" to interpret and address international issues represents one of the most quintessential U.S. political strategies and serves as the most important narrative logic in its mind colonization endeavor. Typical cases abound: while refusing to join the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea itself, the U.S. accuses other countries of violating the convention; while refusing to sign multiple international human rights treaties, it presumptuously lectures others on their matters relating to human rights; while wantonly exploiting its technological superiority for global surveillance, it falsely accuses others of "endangering cybersecurity"; while triggering financial and economic crises through its lax regulation, the U.S. shifts the consequences and responsibilities abroad. Such acts of double standards have been seen through by the international community.

2.6 Technological System: Cognitive Manipulation with Digital Hegemony

From the use of radio waves and analog signals to the digital internet and now a new round of communication revolution led by artificial intelligence, the United States has

^① 冯峰,湛园庭:《美国塑造国际话语权的历史经验》,《红旗文稿》,2018年第22期。Feng Feng & Chen Yuanting, "Historical Experience of the United States in Shaping International Discourse Power", Red Flag Manuscripts, no. 22 (2018).

consistently leveraged its monopoly over advanced communication technologies to reinforce its "soft power" with "hard power," using its technological hegemony to advance its attempt to colonize the mind.

2.6.1 Monopolization of Communications Infrastructure

For a long time, the United States and its allies have maintained a stranglehold on the world's core communications infrastructure and have built the backbone of global information transmission as the physical foundation for controlling global information flows and enforcing colonization of the mind. In 1920, the United States initiated and hosted the first international radio communications conference after WWI, marking the beginning of its dominance over technical standards and discourse power in the field of radio communications. Ever since, the U.S. and its allies have maintained a first-mover advantage in modern communications technology, building, operating, and controlling such communications infrastructure as major communications satellites, submarine cables, and terrestrial fiber-optic networks worldwide. In recent years, with the energetic backing by the U.S. government, private corporation SpaceX is planning to deploy a "Starlink" constellation of roughly 12,000 satellites to provide internet services—ushering in a new generation of "global satellite internet communications system" under U.S. technological leadership.

Riding on its monopoly in infrastructure, the U.S. selectively cuts or disrupts target countries' channels of communication with the international community, creating a one-sided narrative environment in its favor, one that silences dissenting voices. In 1999, NATO brazenly launched strikes against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia without authorization from the United Nations Security Council. During the campaign, in order to cut off Yugoslavia's channels of expressing its voice to the outside world, the United States pressured Eutelsat to halt transmission of the satellite programs of Radio Television of Serbia (RTS). Shortly thereafter, Israel's Amos-I satellite also ceased carrying Yugoslav television signals. In the more recent Russia – Ukraine conflict, the U.S., capitalizing on its control over various kinds of communications infrastructure, also imposed a sweeping ban on Russian media while using the Starlink satellite network to secure Ukraine's ability to make itself heard by the outside world, steering the course of global public opinion. Such an iron-fisted control over communications channels is a critical enabler of the United States' mind colonization undertaking.

2.6.2 Monopolization of Social Platforms

The rise of social media and digital platforms has upended the traditional model of mass communication and opened a new frontier for the United States' mind colonization campaign. Leveraging the monopolizing power of digital giants such as Google, Metaverse and X, the U.S. maintains a firm grip on the key discourse platforms of global cyberspace. Operating on algorithms and technologies as the underlying operating logic, these platforms are capable of drawing on vast troves of user behavior data to

generate precise profiles and conduct in-depth analytics, thereby enabling highly personalized content delivery. While this property enhances the efficiency of information distribution, more importantly, it is also strategically harnessed by the U.S. to target the dissemination of its values and ideology, guide and even manipulate global public opinion, and shape the perceptions of specific groups—all in service of its overarching project of mind colonization.

A 2022 study jointly published by Stanford University and the social media analytics firm Graphika found that on multiple social media platforms, there existed networks of accounts posing as independent media outlets or fictitious personas. These networks employed deceptive promotional tactics to disseminate pro-U.S. narratives in regions such as the Middle East and Central Asia while mounting opinion attacks against countries like Russia, China, and Iran. At the same time, in order to preserve a "one-way output" model and forestall the counterflow of "hostile ideas", the U.S. has resorted to measures such as indiscriminately throttling reach, imposing content review, and blocking accounts—to besiege and silence the accounts of media outlets and individuals in target countries. In 2023, X was revealed as receiving daily ban lists from U.S. government agencies including the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency, directing the platform to ban large numbers of social media accounts labeled as "state-directed by foreign governments"—on the pretext of their "transmitting negative information".

2.6.3 Monopolization of Cognitive Technologies

Faced with future competition, the U.S. is actively integrating cutting-edge cognitive science and technologies—such as artificial intelligence and biotechnology—into its strategic architecture for mind colonization while steadily advancing its militarization in order to consolidate and bolster its dominance in the cognitive domain and seize the commanding heights of global competition for human cognition. In the realm of artificial intelligence, the U.S. has launched and drawn allies into "algorithm warfare" projects, forging partnerships with tech companies such as Google to employ AI algorithms in support of intelligent cognitive warfare. In biotechnology, the U.S. and its allies have accelerated research in neuroscience and related technologies, conducting large-scale brain – computer interface experiments involving implanted chips for brain control in an attempt to achieve cognitive intervention and behavioral control over members of its adversaries—laying the groundwork for deeper cognitive manipulation.

In addition, the U.S. has frequently politicized, weaponized, and ideologized technological issues, using "Chip Alliance", "Clean Network Program", etc. to construct exclusive technological "clubs" and entrench a new form of tech hegemony. The Executive Order on America's Supply Chains issued in 2021 stipulates that the U.S. should strengthen its cooperation with allies on supply chain resilience "premised on shared values" and that it must "strengthen security reviews of supply chains". That same year, the U.S. National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence proposed the creation

of an alliance for emerging technologies to counter so-called "malicious uses of technology" and the influence of "digital authoritarian states."^① These plans or actions, cloaked in the rhetoric of safeguarding "common security" and "shared interests", are in reality systematic campaigns of technological blockade and suppression against other countries by leveraging America's own technological advantages. The design is to monopolize the commanding heights and rule-making authority in future cognition-shaping technologies to build a fortified "moat" for the perpetuation of its colonization of the mind.

^① Zhang Jingquan, Gong Haoyu, and Zhou Diyan, "The Cognitive Warfare Strategy and Practice of the U.S. Alliance System," *Modern International Relations*, No. 4, 2023.

Chapter 3:

The Influence and Perils of U.S. Colonization of the Mind

The dissemination and exchange of cultural ideas is conducive to the promotion of progressive concepts, knowledge, and technologies. Admittedly, under certain temporal and spatial conditions, U.S. thinking, culture, and ideology were original and progressive, and positive in contributing to human development. Yet, viewed across the sweep of U.S. history and in light of its words and deeds, the United States has never been able to shake off the ugly and decaying core of "mind colonialism", which has brought incalculable calamities to countries around the world.

3.1 Eroding Ideologies and Subverting Foreign Governments

Ideological invasion is a major means by which the United States pursues mind colonization. The U.S. is skilled at implanting American values in enemy countries to achieve the goal of undermining consensus, causing fear and confusion, creating division, and ultimately subverting the governments concerned.

The "peaceful evolution" targeted at the Soviet Union began with ideological infiltration. Through such media as film, television, radio, and books, the United States inculcated concepts of bourgeois democracy, freedom, equality, and human rights in the minds of the Soviet public. Over time, the younger generations and the intellectual class in the Soviet Union increasingly embraced Western values and lifestyles, leading to a severe erosion of social cohesion. Meanwhile, the U.S. supported and funded opposition forces within the Soviet Union—including political dissidents, intellectuals, and cultural elites—providing them with finance, asylum, and propaganda platforms to help them build an opposition camp inside the Soviet Union.

These opposition forces used such means as publishing books, writing articles, and organizing rallies to discredit the Soviet Communist Party and government, and vilify Soviet history to deprive the people of their philosophical anchors. The U.S. also used various channels to contact, lobby, and even bribe senior Soviet officials and intellectuals, seeking to change their political stance and values—prompting them to begin to question and criticize the Socialist system and gradually turn toward Western notions of democracy and freedom. After coming to power, in particular, Mikhail Gorbachev introduced a series of reform measures, including political pluralism, economic marketization, and ideological liberalization. These measures, far from helping the Soviet Union out of its difficulties, only hastened its internal division and turmoil, ultimately leading to its fragmentation and disintegration.

Having tasted the sweet fruit of "winning without fighting" through mind coloniza-

tion, the U.S. grew ever more unscrupulous and blatant. As American writer William Blum observes in *Democracy: America's Deadliest Export*, since the end of World War II the United States has sought to overthrow more than 50 foreign governments and has brazenly interfered in the elections of at least 30 countries. Andrei Manoil, a professor in the Faculty of Political Science at Moscow State University, notes that in the wake of a coup sparked by "color revolution", the public may initially harbor illusions about the puppet regime installed in power, viewing it as a "reformer" or "hero". But such illusions will inevitably vanish, leaving the country trapped in a vicious cycle of government collapse, economic recession, and deteriorating public security — spiraling inexorably toward decline and disintegration.^①

3.2 Planting Cognitive Wedges and Provoking Regional Conflict

Out of its geopolitical and diplomatic needs, the United States often spreads political falsehoods and drives "cognitive wedges" between different interest groups — stirring up antagonism, inciting division, or engineering conflict to reap benefits, and even intervening directly to "discipline" those adversaries that refuse to fall in line.

To eliminate the Saddam Hussein's regime as a thorn in its side, the United States hyped up and trumped up the claim that Iraq possessed "weapons of mass destruction". In the lead-up to the 2003 U.S. military operation against Iraq, major media outlets such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, and CNN had mounted months of intense media barrage on the allegation that Saddam's government was in possession of such weapons. This pressure prompted the United Nations to dispatch a weapons expert verification team to Iraq for investigation, but no evidence was found whatsoever. After that, on February 5, 2003, Colin Powell, then U.S. Secretary of State, staged a "performance" that commanded worldwide attention before the United Nations Security Council in New York: holding up a small glass vial, he told the world in all seriousness that the white powder inside was the "anthrax" Iraq possessed — something capable of provoking fear comparable to that of a nuclear explosion. Thus, through such emotive imagery, an air of unassailable certainty, and falsified intelligence, the U.S. shaped a "consensus" that "Saddam was concealing weapons of mass destruction" and thus used it as the pretext for its military operation. Yet, after toppling Saddam's regime, U.S. forces scoured Iraq from top to bottom without uncovering the slightest trace of such weapons. It wasn't until a year later that Washington announced in a report that Iraq did not have "weapons of mass destruction" after all.

Planting "cognitive wedges" to mislead the international community and serve its own interests is a long-standing U.S. ploy. Evidence that has come to light in recent years shows that the CIA, U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Agency for

^① Liu Yang, "Exclusive Interview: 'Color Revolutions' Bring Calamity to Nations and People — An Interview with Andrei Manoil, Professor at the Department of Political Science, Moscow State University", Xinhua News Agency, October 8, 2019.

Global Media, and National Endowment for Democracy have been key orchestrators of the manufacturing of such "cognitive wedges". Cloaked under banners such as "international cooperation", "foreign aid", "media exchange", and "cultural promotion", these bodies have carried out extensive "gray" and even "black" operations overseas, using fabricated information to mislead public perception.

3.3 Undermining Spiritual Independence and Cultivating Pro-U.S. Forces

Subjected to the prolonged influence of U.S. ideological colonization, certain elite groups in developing countries have been effectively "brainwashed," losing their philosophical independence and national self-confidence, and succumbing to a kind of "cultural domestication" syndrome. Inwardly, they revere the U.S.; in speech, they flatter it; in conduct, they fear it. They maintain close material, intellectual, and emotional ties with the United States, harboring an almost inexplicable worship of it. To them, the United States is the standard and the model. They advocate wholesale acceptance of American values, embrace U.S.-style political and economic systems, and pursue a developmental path of "Americanization". They invoke the United States at every turn, follow its lead in all matters, and in some cases even forfeit the most basic dignity of a human person or nationhood. A few years ago, the U.S. repeatedly staged across the world acts of peaceful evolution, color revolutions, or even worse, the forcible subversion of other governments. All this would not have been possible without these figures' eagerness to ingratiate themselves and act as guides for the plots.

Some countries, having been subjected deeply to the harms of colonization of the mind for a long time, have formed the servility of "conformity and obedience" to the U.S. values and the habit of "tolerance of and concessions to" U.S. hegemony and bullying. They acquiesce to U.S. hegemony as the "privilege of the strong" in the fond belief that compromise, concessions, and obedience can bring them U.S. "mercy" instead. "In early 2025, the U.S. launched the so-called "reciprocal tariff" wars around the world. Faced with the Trump administration's blatant bullying and naked intimidation, some countries simply surrendered without putting up a fight. An examination of the root cause reveals that it lies in the mentality of "fear of the U.S." that has been formed after long years of obedience.

3.4 Forcibly Implanting Western-Style Paths and Interfering with Independent Development

In the field of economic development, the U.S. has often aggressively implanted by force in the developing countries at large academic ideas from the U.S. and the West in an academic cloak and under the banner of "science", making it difficult for these countries to find a path of independent and autonomous development that suits their

national conditions, and even leading them into a development trap beyond redemption.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, in response to the global challenges of economic development, the U.S. has been boasting the "Neoliberalism" theory with the concoction of the "Washington Consensus", emphasizing liberalization, marketization, and privatization while negating public ownership, socialism, and state intervention. To market these theories, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have used tied loans as bargaining chips and, through signing agreements, forced numerous countries in Latin America, the former Soviet republics after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and countries in the Middle East into accepting and implementing this series of theories, pushing them onto the path of American-style development. Practice has proved that this set of political and economic theories based on U.S. and Western settings does not fit in with the realities of the developing countries.

For example, after swallowing the neoliberal economic policies in the 1970s, Chile was plunged into serious inflation and trade imbalances, with its GDP plummeting, industrial capacity shrinking rapidly, and the Peso depreciating sharply. As a result, tens of thousands of workers at state-owned enterprises lost their jobs and the private banking system collapsed completely.

Zhu Andong, a scholar of world economics at Tsinghua University, believes that politicized and paradigmatic Neoliberalism is an integral part of the theoretical system of global integration promoted by international monopoly capital from the U.S. and the West. The goal is to meet the needs of capitalist development from national monopoly to international monopoly and to safeguard the interests of the U.S. and its companies whereas the recipient countries of U.S. neoliberal economic thinking end up as losers.

3.5 Dismantling Cultural Confidence and Exacerbating the Clash of Civilizations

Colonization of the mind means instilling blind confidence in U.S. culture around the globe, dismantling confidence in local cultures, dissolving the subjective cultures of target countries, eroding global civilization diversity, and exacerbating the antagonism and clash among civilizations.

Cultural aphasia. Perennially impacted by American-style civilization, some developing countries have lost their national subjectivity and pride, suffering from rampant national nihilism. From the elite class to the general public, they imitate and even subsequently follow the U.S. and the West in every way, from thinking and ideas to food, clothing, housing, and transportation. This is the phenomenon of "post-colonial aphasia" as described by many scholars. In the field of academic output, this aphasia manifests itself in a deep attachment to Western theoretical paradigms. According to a study by the University of Cambridge in 2023, only 12% of the curricula at the top 100 universities in the world included non-Western knowledge systems. This pattern of academic mono-polarization has led to serious academic aphasia as scholars in the Global

South at large are forced to adopt Western theoretical frameworks to explain their indigenous phenomena.

Indian scholar Partha Chatterjee pointedly observed : Indian intellectuals are like academic compradors, importing European theories and processing them in our local experiences before exporting them to the Western academic market. This mode of knowledge production not only marginalizes local wisdom, but also reinforces the hierarchy of Western-centric knowledge.

Cultural implantation. Since the 1970s, the U.S. has continued to promote "human rights diplomacy" in Africa in an attempt to "implant" the culture of democracy in Africa and influence the continent at its roots of thinking. However, the "universal human rights" promoted by the U.S. center on the protection of civil and political rights, which is incompatible with the overall reality of poverty in African countries and fundamentally in conflict with the values of "collectivism" in Africa. "Universal human rights" have not only caused political chaos in many African countries, but also brought shocks to local value systems and hindered local human rights discourse development. African scholars have pointed out that the culture of human rights transplanted by the U.S. is, by implication, the expectation that Africans will become Westerners.

Cultural cleansing. The United States' cultural cleansing targeting the Native Indians nearly "purged" them from American memory. Historically, the U.S. committed genocide against Native Indians by means of massacres, dispersal, sterilization, and forced assimilation, resulting in the drastic reduction of their population from 5,000,000 in 1492 to 250,000 in the early 20th century. The Native Americans have long been ignored and discriminated against, Indian culture has been fundamentally undermined, and the inter-generational survival and inheritance of life and spirit are under serious threat. Today, information about Native Americans is systematically deleted from the U.S. mainstream media and popular culture. According to the report of National Indian Education Association, 87 per cent of state history textbooks do not touch on the history of Native Americans after 1900. The Smithsonian Institution and others state in articles that the content about Native Indians taught at U.S. schools is rife with inaccurate information and fails to truly describe what has happened to the Native Americans. Former U.S. Republican senator Richard John "Rick" Santorum went so far as to claim publicly: We birthed a nation from nothing. I mean, there was nothing here ... candidly, there isn't much Native American culture in American culture."

Clash of civilizations. During the colonization of the mind, the U.S. has always consciously or unconsciously reduced the complex diversity of global civilizations to the "self" and the "other", and placed the "self" in a superior position while adopting a condescending attitude toward the "other". This is a manifestation of the deep-rooted ideas of "white supremacy", "American centrism", and "civilization hierarchy". Out of the need to protect its geopolitical interests, the U.S. often shapes the normal differences among civilizations into fundamental and irreconcilable conflicts of values, and even deliberately stirs up conflicts between religions, ethnic groups, and regions, ultimately

bringing the world into its preset conflicting order framework based on U.S. values, and continuously creating and managing the "civilization fault lines" on a global scale.

At the turn of the century, the US-led NATO airstrikes against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia changed the trajectory of millions of people's lives and inflamed national tensions to the point of irreconcilability. As Serbian historian Aleksandar Gudzic said, in socialist Yugoslavia, "undemocratic" in the eyes of the U.S. and the West, Serbs and Albanians had been able to understand each other with practically no communication barriers, but 25 years after the U.S. introduction of Western democracy and with the Americans' enthusiastic "help", Serbs and Albanians have completely broke off communication, and misunderstandings between the civilizations had been further exacerbated.^①

^① 25th Anniversary of the NATO Bombing of Yugoslavia | Flame of Hatred in Kosovo, CCTV News, March 20, 2024, <https://news.cri.cn/20240321/6dd6e38e-34ee-8a85-9d97-2f73ba972886.html>.

Conclusion:

Breaking the Shackles of Mind Colonization and Promoting Inter-Civilization Exchanges and Mutual Learning

In recent years, countries in the Global South have been awakening at an accelerated pace and increasingly calling for breaking off the U.S. shackles of colonization of the mind, achieving the independence and autonomy of the mind, and promoting exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations.

As a pivotal member of the Global South, China, drawing on its own development experience and the shared aspirations of peoples worldwide, has put forward a series of visionary proposals: the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI), the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), and the Global Governance Initiative (GGI). This series of propositions offer fresh pathways and innovative approaches for nations to break free from ideological dogma, cast off intellectual dependency, and embark on truly independent paths of development.

Independence of the mind is a prerequisite for independent development. Only by having a deep understanding of the dangers of the U.S. colonization of the mind can the vast majority of developing countries cast away the blind beliefs in U.S. values; only by getting rid of dependence of the mind on the U.S. and the West can these countries achieve independence and autonomy of the mind; only by completely breaking off the U.S. and Western shackles of the mind can these countries blaze a new trail for the development of their civilizations.

Cultural confidence is the foundation of national strength and prosperity. Both developing and developed countries need to enhance their confidence in their national culture, history, and development. Cultural confidence is the most basic, extensive, and deep-rooted form of confidence. It constitutes the most fundamental, profound, and durable strength for a nation's development. A nation with cultural confidence can stand firm, remain stable, and go far.

Exchanges and mutual understanding are an effective instrument for inter-civilization coexistence. No civilization is an isolated island separated from the rest of the world. Only through exchanges and mutual learning to make up for each other's deficiencies can civilizations continue to evolve. The civilization of each country or nation is the one and the only, with its unique value of existence as well as its own merits and shortcomings. Boasting of one's "civilizational superiority" and believing one's own civilization to be superior to that of others is disrespectful to other civilizations and will only impede the overall progress of human civilizations. The clash of civilizations should be replaced by their integration; the ice of confrontations should be melt away by exchanges and mutual understanding.

History has proved time and again that any model of thoughts and standard of civili-

zation imposed on others will eventually go bust and that any attempt to manipulate others' cognition and control their minds is doomed to failure.

The wheels of the times are rolling forward irreversibly. When the shackles of colonization of the mind are completely shattered, a single spark of mutual learning among civilizations can start a prairie fire, a new form of global civilization featuring pluralistic coexistence will emerge from the cocoon, and a community with a shared future for humanity that shares weal and woe will shine with greater brilliance!

Writer's Note and Acknowledgments

This think tank report, entitled "Colonization of the Mind—The Means, Roots, and Global Perils of U.S. Cognitive Warfare", was written by a research team headed by Fu Hua, Director of the Academic Committee of Xinhua Institute, with Lü Yansong, Editor-in-Chief of Xinhua News Agency, serving as the Deputy Team Leader and Ren Weidong, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Xinhua News Agency, as the Executive Deputy Team Leader. The research team consists of Liu Gang, Xue Ying, Wen Jian, Chen Yi, Li Feihu, Li Xuedi, Li Cheng, Chen Yina, He Xiaofan, Ma Qian, and Jin Bowen. The English checkers and proofreaders of the report include Yang Qingchuan, Wang Haiqing, Huangyin Jiazi, and Chen Jian.

The project commenced in January 2025, with the work on interviews, research, drafting, revisions, and proofreading completed after more than six months of work. During this period, the team carried out in-depth research on the evolution of U.S. foreign policy, the country's intellectual and cultural development, and its international communication strategies. The team organized field studies through the relevant domestic and overseas branches of Xinhua News Agency, established connections with pertinent ministries and commissions, and conducted important interviews with renowned experts and scholars from institutions such as the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the PLA Academy of Military Sciences, and the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations. The research team also made extensive visits to major domestic technology enterprises to have a comprehensive grasp of the past and present of the U.S. colonization of the mind on a global scale. During the preparation of the report, the research team also convened multiple seminars by inviting scholars and industry experts from relevant fields for studies and deliberations on specific topics and for their views and suggestions.

During the report's preparation and publication, the research team received assistance and guidance in many areas by distinguished scholars and experts, including Wang Honggang, Director of the Institute of Peace and Development Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; Chen Gang, Dean of the School of Journalism and Communication, Peking University; Zhang Wenzong, Deputy Director of the American Studies Institute, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations; Jiang Fei, Vice President of the University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; Ji Zhonghui, Director of the Strategic Communication Research Center, University of International Studies. We register our sincere gratitude to them all.