

CFP - Close Encounters in War Journal Issue n. 6 - Close Encounters in War and Propaganda: The Battles for Hearts and Minds

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Call for Publications

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Subject Fields:

Cultural History / Studies, Diplomacy and International Relations, Film and Film History, Journalism and Media Studies, Popular Culture Studies

As the war following the invasion of Ukraine rages with a deluge of air strikes, sieges and ground operations, the world holds its breath witnessing the conflict's narrative being shaped by the global media as well as international politicians. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky tells his people how to view the war, helping them to make sense of the conflict and, more importantly, building the belief in Ukraine's ultimate success. Russia, too, has a specific narrative of the war aimed at building support for the military operation which is described as "denazification" and "demilitarization" of Ukraine, but never as an invasion.

This parallel war to win hearts and minds is not new in the history of warfare. In fact, it is a rather crucial aspect of any conflict, but it has certainly become critical since the Twentieth century, with the technological development of media which has allowed to bring the news to every home. Besides strengthening morale, the aim of any war propaganda campaign is also to demoralize the enemy and break their will to fight. Because of its use over the centuries, the term "propaganda" has gained very strong negative connotations, evocative of some kind of sinister activity.

In the Twentieth century, propaganda has come to be seen mostly as manipulated information. In the United States in particular, the Committee on Public Information, also known as Creel Committee, in the Great War had created an unprecedented propaganda campaign, distorting perceptions, unleashing hate and sometimes even persecution against Germans in America. In the Thirties and Forties, the creation of refined and very efficient propaganda machines under the totalitarian regimes established in Europe between the wars strengthened its perception as an anti-democratic tool and a threat to individual freedom. The Third Reich's Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda in Nazi Germany was headed by Joseph Goebbels and spread its message through art, music, radio and film, which had a key role in disseminating ideas on the superiority of the German military power and on antisemitism.

Propaganda, broadly defined as "the expression of opinions or actions carried out deliberately by individuals or groups with a view to influencing the opinions or actions of other individuals or groups for predetermined ends and through psychological manipulation" (Koppes&Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 2000, pp. 49-50), seemed to correspond more to the enemy's approach. Allied information policies came to be known instead as psychological operations, with the creation of the Psychological

Warfare Branch which had the specific purpose of countering the enemy's message and promoting alternative Allied interpretations of current events. This approach became a vital strategic contribution to winning the war.

With the Cold War, these policies undertaken to counter the communist regimes' propaganda came to be known as 'public diplomacy', which deals with "the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents" (Cull, *Public Diplomacy*, 2006). In other words, it is persuasion through "soft power", to adopt the definition of former National Intelligence Council chief Joseph S. Nye. If "hard power" is the ability to induce other countries to change their positions through the use of military and economic power, "soft power" involves "the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals [...] attraction is much cheaper than coercion" (Nye, *The Paradox of American Power*, 2002, p. 15).

Issue n. 6 of the *CEIWJ* wishes to investigate the theme of "close encounters in war" in connection with propaganda, psychological warfare and public diplomacy. We want to study individual testimonies and experiences as well as cultural productions and diplomatic sources through a variety of historical periods and examine them through a range of theoretical and critical perspectives.

We invite, in accordance with the scientific purpose of the journal, contributions that focus on human dimensions and perspectives to this topic. We, therefore, seek articles that analyse the close encounters in war with propaganda, psychological warfare and public diplomacy from the point of view of human experience, in ancient, modern and contemporary periods.

The following aspects (among others) may be considered:

- Representation and perception of self and others;
- Language, public information and propaganda (clichés, conceptual distortion, derogatory expressions, rhetoric manipulation, etc.);
- Propaganda, public diplomacy and ideology (e.g. racism, nationalism, religious fanaticism, etc.);
- Ethical and moral problems of propaganda;
- The critique of propaganda through Micro-History and Oral History;
- False myths and invented traditions;
- Anti-propaganda attitudes: pacifism, criticism, non-violence, conscience objection, and sabotage;
- Propaganda, public diplomacy and diversity (gender, disability, ethnicity, cultural heritage, etc.);
- Pop culture, psychological warfare and propaganda (film, TV, journalism, and comics);
- Propaganda and personal narratives (diaries, memoirs, and letters);
- Literary fiction and propaganda;
- The relationship between propaganda and science;
- The impact of propaganda, psychological warfare and public diplomacy on local communities.

CEIWJ encourages inter/multidisciplinary approaches and dialogue among different scientific fields to

promote discussion and scholarly research. The blending of historical approaches with such disciplines as History, Cultural Studies, Philosophy, International Relations, Intelligence Studies, Literary Studies, Media and Film Studies, Psychology, Communication and similar will be warmly welcome. Contributions from established scholars, early-career researchers, and practitioners who have dealt with the close encounter with propaganda, psychological warfare and public diplomacy in war in the course of their activities will be considered. Case studies may include different historical periods and geographic areas.

The editors of the *Close Encounters in War Journal* invite the submission of abstracts of 250 words in English by **31 March 2023** to ceiwj@nutorevelli.org. The authors invited to submit their works will be required to send articles of 6000-8000 words (endnotes included, bibliographical references not included in word-count), in English by 16 June 2023 to ceiwj@nutorevelli.org. All articles will undergo a process of double-blind peer review. We will notify the results of the peer-reviewing in September 2023. Final versions of revised articles will be submitted by November 2023.

Contact Info:

Patrizia Piredda - patrizia.piredda@oxfordalumni.org

Simona Tobia - s.tobia@univ-pau.fr

Gianluca Cinelli - giancin77@yahoo.it

Contact Email:

ceiwj@nutorevelli.org

URL:

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