

MANIPULATING IMAGES AND KEYWORDS AS WAR PROPAGANDA

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Abstract: *propaganda is used as means of influencing the opinion while the war, for example, orally, in texts or in songs. With the advent of modern media such as radio, film and television, as well as the Internet, access to which nowadays has become much simpler, the importance of propaganda and also its scope has incredibly increased. The aim of war discourse is to construct specific mental models by taking into account the system of views of the potential interpreter. This article compares various manipulative techniques and frameworks used as war propaganda in mass media.*

Keywords: *war propaganda, manipulating images, white propaganda, grey propaganda, black propaganda, keywords in propaganda, atrocity propaganda.*

“In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies”
Winston Churchill

Most writers on the subject of war propaganda don't fail to quote this classical metaphor of the great British statesman personifying what kind of truth, and propaganda, is actively exploited by the fighting sides. It appears that a real picture of events gets distorted by both sides, by the aggressor and the defender. While the aggressor's falsified arguments can hardly be anything else than a flagrant lie packaged in the propaganda disguise, the truth distortion on the defender's side aims at hiding a real scope of the defeat sustained as well as embellishing the state power's failure to prevent the invasion or meet it with a better preparedness of the armed forces.

While it is a universal feature of the war propaganda to correct and sometimes even create the information provided by the mass media, it is obviously an honorable end behind the propaganda of the country which is waging a patriotic, liberating war to defend its freedom and sovereignty. This is to say that, for all the generic affinity of the propaganda employed by different sides, one cannot put the defender's propaganda and aggressor's one on the same footing.

Widely circulated in the professional medium is the following definition of propaganda: “*Propaganda consists of the planned use of any form of public or mass-produced communication designed to affect the minds and emotions of a given group for a specific purpose, whether military, economic, or political.*” [5]. It is often used in the literature without attributing it to its author, an American scholar Paul Myron Anthony Linebarger, who in his book *Psychological Warfare* qualifies it as an everyday definition of propaganda. The author also gives a narrow definition of the war propaganda which reads as follows, “*Military propaganda consists of the planned use of any form of communication designed to affect the minds and emotions of a given enemy, neutral or friendly foreign group for a specific strategic or tactical purpose.*” [5].

Linebarger specifies also three kinds of propaganda by its source (as well as by some other criteria): “*White propaganda* is issued from an acknowledged source, usually a government or an agency of a government, including military commands at various levels. This type of propaganda is associated with overt psychological operations. *Grey propaganda* does not clearly identify any source. *Black propaganda* purports to emanate from a source other than the true one. This type of propaganda is associated with covert psychological warfare operations” [5].

Manipulating images. In war propaganda images and keywords operate as chief tools of bringing a designed effect on a targeted group of people. “*Visual messages which accompany verbal argumentation can be so drastic that rational argumentation becomes almost impossible.*” [Frans H. van Eemeren, in 7]. The distortion of visual information is done in a number of ways – in the form of caricatures employing the national stereotypes to the extreme, in the form of leaflets with pictures designed to inspire panic and terror in the enemy, in the form of misplacing a photo from an actual location of its taking, in the form of arbitrary corrections made into the original image.

The latter form has become a widespread practice in modern journalism. There have been many instances of image manipulation in the photojournalism. “Often even subtle and discreet changes can have a profound impact on how we interpret or judge a photograph, making it all the more important to know when or if manipulation has occurred. < ... > Image manipulation software has affected the level of trust many viewers once had in the aphorism, the camera never lies. Images may be manipulated for fun, aesthetic reasons, or to improve the appearance of a subject but not all image manipulation is innocuous...” [8].

Over the last decades the modern world has endured a number of grave regional and local conflicts which were real wars with a full-scale use of weaponry, armed forces, seizure of territories, changing of state borders, millions of refugees, human losses, destruction of the former regimes. The mass media coverage of the local wars and the so-called color revolutions waged recently in the Balkans and in the Middle East has not been free

from a massive manipulation by images and keywords. It is what a number of sources feel obliged to acknowledge and make it known to public. “Although today all viewers are used to the fact that all visual representation can be relatively easily manipulated (e.g. we are used to watching sci-fi movies where anything is possible), we can be easily manipulated by images on a sub-conscious level without actually realizing it.” [6]. This quoted observation is further strengthened in the article by an illustration of the three photos one of which, a resulting one published in *The Los Angeles Times*, was forged by way of combining separate elements from two different photos. The resulting picture does not show an English soldier’s gun aimed at an Iraqi with a baby in his hands approaching the soldier. Instead, the gun’s other direction from another photo was chosen. For this manipulation, motivated as it was by the ethical considerations, the journalist was dismissed from his work. [see 6].

Keywords in war propaganda. “It is well known that in war, the first casualty is truth - that during any war truth is forsaken for propaganda.” This quotation belongs to Harry Browne, an American writer, and it metaphorically captures some of the core components of propaganda which are manipulation, mind-control, brainwashing, misinformation, half-truths, lies, deception and psychological operations. This vision of propaganda is again strikingly captured in the title “*To Sell a War*” given to a documentary film aired in 1992, as part of the CBC programme *the fifth estate*. Propaganda operates largely by way of spreading falsehoods. “Falsehood is a recognized and extremely useful weapon in warfare, and every country uses it quite deliberately to deceive its own people, attract neutrals, and to mislead the enemy.” [4].

The worst kind of war propaganda appears to be *atrocities propaganda*. It is defined as “a term referring to the spreading of deliberate fabrications or exaggerations about the crimes committed by an enemy, constituting a form of psychological warfare.” [1]. Though the mass media by far and large turn out to be an instrument of spreading falsehoods and fabrications related to atrocity, they can at the same time be credited with exposing atrocity lies. An example of exposing a flagrant lie used as an element of war propaganda is the infamous testimony given by a 15-year old daughter of the Kuwaiti Ambassador to the U.S. concerning her witnessing the Iraqi soldiers’ atrocities in Kuwait. The Nayirah testimony (under which name it came to be circulated in press) has been regarded as false by the *Chicago Tribune*, *Huffington Post* and numerous other publications.

“Media disinformation in relation to war is categorized as war propaganda, which constitutes a criminal offense under international law.” [6]. The list of the keywords pertaining to war propaganda can be correctly compiled by grouping the corresponding lexical units into certain categories – general, historical, particular events, world wars, regional wars, false flag alien invasions and the like.

The world journalism covering the regional conflicts and wars has enriched the forms of their coverage by the new coinages like *embedded reporting*, *embedded journalist*, *report*. They denote a reporter’s coverage from within the army involved in military operations. In some way, this form of reporting and preparing feature articles can withstand the practice of manipulation in the mainstream media.

We shall present some of our findings of the keyword lexics related to war propaganda in the Table form.

Table 1. Manipulation keywords in local wars

Propaganda keywords exploited in the media coverage of the regional wars and conflicts	“moderate terrorists”, “humanitarian war”, crowd, “liberators” (to name the rebels), instigators, turmoil, assault, unrest, martyrdom, Holocaust, “ethnically cleansed”, hatred, bloodshed, genocide, victimization, credibility, public interest, “avalanche of human rights violations”, ...
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Table 2. Manipulation keywords in alien threat campaigns

Propaganda keywords exploited in the media coverage of the false flag alien invasion	extraterrestrials (ETs), alien threat, a space invader, “They’re out there”, long-term planetary war, weapons-spending, UFO abductions, human extraterrestrial encounters, egregious cases, scripted memories, extraterrestrial disclosure community, psychological warfare, slave trade, slave planets ...
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Based on our findings and the given paper, we have to write, in conclusion, that war propaganda is a dangerous thing compared to a weapon in its effective manipulation of the people’s minds, persuasions, commitments, beliefs, decision-making. The repetitive character of its often slanderous messages “may cause various degrees of anxiety, fear, panic and pain, all close conceptual relatives or consequences of terror.” [3]. Propaganda campaigns employ words, sounds and images to falsify and distort, often to a large degree, a real picture of current and past events. The modern time history has proven this in dozens of great and smaller, local wars and conflicts. That is why it is important not to lend oneself easily to any slogans and campaigns proclaiming hatred, violence, intolerance, hostilities to those who do share your views.

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