The War for the Public Mind

Psychological Warfare

Nuño Rodríguez, Political Scientist and Analyst

Considerations on the Nature of Psychological Warfare

Psychological warfare is not something new; it has always been in use. It is simply that with the emergence of science, it has been theorized and applied more comprehensively thanks to the emergence of new communication technologies. Vikings and Mongols spread rumors and stories about their fierceness to intimidate their opponents before facing battle; the Romans used the humiliating defeat of Carthage to warn about what it meant to face Rome, with the peace imposed after humiliation in defeat becoming known as Carthaginian peace.[1] It was a clear psychological message for those who had the audacity to rise against Rome.

The matrix of psychological warfare is political warfare (PW). As defined by Paul M. A. Linebarger:[2] PW (also called "crisis diplomacy", "war of nerves" or "dramatic intimidation diplomacy") consists of framing national politics in such a way that it facilitates propaganda or military operations, either with respect to the direct po-

litical relationships of governments with each other or in relation to groups of people who possess a political character.[3] Linebarger goes on to say: "In the first World War, psychological warfare was employed chiefly by means of PW and through combat propaganda. . . . Allied psychological warfare was based preeminently on the PW developed by President Woodrow Wilson".[4]

Therefore, psychological warfare is subordinate to PW, and both must be defined and synchronized to achieve the desired objectives.[5] US Army Col Alfred H. Paddock Jr.[6] defines psychological warfare as "the planned use of communications to influence human attitudes and behavior. It consists of political, military, and ideological actions conducted to create in target groups behavior, emotions, and attitudes that support the attainment of national objectives."[7] Paddock further explains that psychological warfare includes those activities planned and carried out to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes and behavior of the enemy, the indigenous and neutral population, or foreign friendly groups to support the objectives of the nation.[8] British politician Lord Arthur Ponsonby wrote that psychological power is as important as the military and that the morale of civilians and soldiers should be controlled. Ponsonby pointed out that active rearguard actors should never be demoralized; you must exaggerate victories and extract hate out of defeats—all the while injecting propaganda in the public mind.[9] Ponsonby expressed that "When bias and emotion are introduced, human testimony becomes quite valueless. In wartime such testimony is accepted as conclusive. . . . The public can be worked up emotionally by sham ideals."[10] Paul Linebarger further defines psychological warfare as "comprising the use of propaganda against an enemy, together with such other operational measures of military nature as the effective use of propaganda may require. . . . Propaganda may be loosely described as organized non-violent persuasion."[11] Scot Macdonald, a professor at the School of International Relations at the University of Southern California, recalls that within psychological warfare, propaganda is essential, and the most effective propaganda combines entertainment, education, and persuasion: The entertainment part attracts the audience, while the education part prevents the underlying propaganda from being noticed, even if it has persuasive overtones.[12] Lt Col Manuel H. Gelfi states:

> "Propaganda is an art and, as such, must be in the hands of the artist. As an artist, you must have a series of conditions for the exercise of your art and first and foremost, you must have absolute knowledge and conviction of what you want, or of the cause or causes you defend. You cannot spread and even less, instill a cause, if who does it is not firmly convinced and has extensive knowledge of what you want to convey."[13]

Through these definitions, psychological warfare can be seen as induction leading to thoughts and behaviors via the manipulation of information that affects the emotions and moral state of all those audiences exposed to the propaganda message. All this to ensure that the thoughts and behaviors of the audience are favorable to the interests of the promoter of the psychological operation. Classic psychological warfare develops through the application of psychological techniques in the design of propaganda distributed through diverse communication channels.

Psychological Warfare as a Weapon in Conflicts

Since WWI, psychological warfare was perfectly organized, albeit not synchronized, between allied countries. The Committee for Public Information (CPI) was established in August 1917 in the United States. Its objective was the creation and dissemination of propaganda to justify the country's entry into WWI. It disseminated propaganda amongst both the American public and the populations of neutral or countries immersed in the conflict. Its methods of disseminating propaganda focused on creating news, publishing books, and producing cinematographic films. CPI was in coordination with the political and military organizations of the United States.[14] The American propaganda body had two sections: one public and one military. The CPI (also known as the Creel Committee for being under the direction of George Creel) was public, and the Propaganda Section (or Psychological Section) was an agency of the US Army under the direction of Capt Heber Blankenhorn.[15] Just after the Creel Committee was established, missions were opened in a good number of European and Latin American countries, as the committee's goal was to place American propaganda in all media systems of the host countries.[16]

The manager of American propaganda in Spain was Frank J. Marion, president of the Kalem company, an eminent figure in the American film industry.[17] Spain was one of the epicenters of German propaganda in Europe and, therefore, one of the objectives of the Creel Committee. French and British propaganda was under heavy observation by the censors, but Marion had no problem showing the propaganda films he brought with him; he was able to show them both in schools and in public squares. The propaganda enmeshed itself so much in the unfolding of the war that envelopes full of propaganda were being sent by the French and British embassies in Spain directly to the mass media, they soon started receiving invoices.[18] Marion was able to establish his propaganda in the Spanish media thanks to the Fabra news agency,[19] with which he collaborated throughout the campaign –injecting pro-American propaganda.[20] The painter Joaquín Sorolla also collaborated, sponsoring a tour in Spain exhibiting the paintings of Joseph Pennell. The propaganda was accomplished by pretending to be a cultural event in order to avoid

censorship.[21] For his part, journalist and writer Wenceslao Fernández Flórez drew in his novel *Los que no fuimos a la guerra* (Those of us who did not go to war) the atmosphere that was prevalent in Spain under the factions' psychological warfare.

At the beginning of WWI, the British had one of the best communication systems at the time, to include submarine communications cables. Despite being a communications system created for commercial purpose, it was easily transformed for military use. At the end of the war, the British propaganda system had been divided into two sections: the Ministry of Information (MoI), led by Lord Downhamy, with the aim of carrying out civilian psychological war outside of the United Kingdom (UK); and the National War Objectives Committee, to carry out civilian psychological warfare within the UK. The British were pioneers in coordinating PW with propaganda news and liaising politicians with the public relations efforts of the armed forces.[22] The crude manipulation of the news for propaganda purposes had many detractors, both in the UK and in the United States, but the manipulation of the information served to justify the war and to create favorable opinion groups.

In the UK, one of the main detractors of psychological warfare techniques and their associated propaganda was Arthur Ponsonby. Ponsonby denounced atrocity propaganda, one of the main tools used to capture the minds of those that favored the government's war policies. Atrocity propaganda detailed bloodthirsty stories about enemies; thus making it possible to radicalize the nation's population into pro-war positions, as well as to position neutral populations.[23] Professor of international communications Philip Taylor, like Ponsonby, details how the media in warring countries published stories about many unmentionable acts being performed by the enemy: establishing factories that used corpses to make soap, crucifying soldiers, raping nuns and children.[24] One of the basic principles of atrocity propaganda is that it demands more atrocity against those who supposedly have committed atrocious acts.[25] Atrocity propaganda generates hatred; it's the propaganda used to create enemies for your enemies. During WWI, this type of publicity was proven empirically in the media, and its effects were perfectly known for later uses; it was scientific propaganda.[26]

Germany was aware of what was happening in the field of psychological warfare but did not have the capacity to live up to their contenders. As US Army Sgt Herbert A. Friedman reflects on his website specializing in psychological warfare, during WWI the bulletin of the 18th German Army reported that, "In the sphere of leaflet propaganda the enemy has defeated us . . . not as man against man in the field of battle, bayonet against bayonet. No, bad contents in poor printing on poor paper has made our arm lame."[27] Adolf Hitler also realized the power of propa-

ganda in WWI. He dedicated a chapter of Mein Kampf to analyze the propaganda used in WWI, in which he praised British and American propaganda.[28]

US Army Col William Donovan was impressed with the ability of the British army to combine sabotage operations with propaganda, subversion, and guerrillas. They combined these activities in their executive agencies dedicated to PW and special operations. In World War II, US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, following the suggestion of Colonel Donovan, established the Office of the Coordinator of Information (COI), with Donovan as director in 1941. It was the seed of the future Office of Strategic Services[29] and the Office of War Information (OWI), responsible for organizing PW. In February 1944, General Eisenhower managed to unify the different agencies responsible for propaganda and PW under the Psychological Warfare Division.[30] Thus, the US already had centralized and specialized bodies to generate and apply propaganda.

The Normandy landings are a milestone in the collective memory of humanity. However, few people may be aware that, along with the soldiers, legions of propaganda content landed in Europe with the Allied army. From books to magazines, to countless Hollywood movies; the objective was to justify the military presence and the subsequent established order. The propaganda materials produced by the OWI and the MoI were aimed at the European civilian population, not enemy soldiers.[31]

For propaganda to have an effect, the social group on which it will be applied must be analyzed. One of the basic requirements of psychological warfare is to know the morale of the enemy. During WWII, eminent researchers such as Paul Lazarsfeld and Harold Lasswell developed tools for systematic analysis of foreign texts and broadcasts in order to provide intelligence services with tailored reports. These researchers expanded the analysis of the national cultural environment to investigate elements related to the individual and psychiatry.[32] During WWII, for the Americans, psychological warfare aimed to replace regular military operations through the use of mass media. For the Germans, it was a political and military strategy, a change in the way of waging war.[33] Joost Abraham Maurits Meerloo in his work *Total War and the Human Mind* explains the techniques used by the National Socialist regime in Holland to influence the emotions and skills of the population in the occupied territories. The first was to influence the Dutch population through propaganda—for those whom propaganda did not affect, to induce fear. Meerloo explains that the propaganda technique used was based on hypnosis, by continuously repeating simple slogans through the radio, the press, or posters on walls. The Germans thus sought the suggestion of emotions of the masses as a whole.[34] The national socialist government had noted the importance of psychology after WWI.

Linebarger believed that the media system of a nation would remain uncoordinated even in time of war and that a privately owned media system could be a good platform to apply psychological warfare through veiled censorship—preventing enemy propaganda from circulating within the internal frontlines. News could become propaganda if the source of the news had that intention. Psychological warfare is a very important diplomatic weapon since it is a basic element for strategic deception.[35] Linebarger stated that propaganda issued by the national media would be a decoy for foreign intelligence services and lists the volume of psychological warfare developed by the United States during WWII outside its borders:

> "Big jobs require big organizations. Eight billion leaflets were dropped in the Mediterranean and European Theaters of Operations alone under General Eisenhower's command. That is enough to have given every man, woman and child on earth four leaflets, and this figure, large as it is, does not include leaflets dropped in all the other theaters of war by ourselves, our allies, and our enemies. It does not include the B-29 leaflet raids on Japan, in which hundreds of tons of thin paper leaflets were dropped. Huge American newspapers were developed, edited, printed and delivered to our Allies and to enemy troops. One of these, Parachute News (Rakkasan), attained a circulation of two million copies per run; this was in the Southwest Pacific. . . . In getting at the enemy, the United States printed leaflets, cartoons, pamphlets, newspapers, posters, books, magazines. In black operations enough fabrications were perpetrated to keep the FBI busy for a thousand years. Movies in all forms (commercial, amateur, all known widths, sound and silent, even lantern slides) went out all over the world. Radio talked on all waves in almost every language and code; loudspeakers, souvenirs, candy, matches, nylon stockings, pistols you could hide in your mouth, sewing thread, salt, phonograph records and baby pictures streamed out over the world. Much of this was necessarily waste. In the larger waste of war it appears almost frugal when taken in relation to the results thought to have been achieved."[36]

It is clear that the United States took psychological warfare seriously in the conflict begun in 1941. It is a tendency that has been affixed to the way this country does PW. Paddock states that even in peacetime there are ongoing psychological warfare operations, with only 10 percent of psychological warfare operations carried out in the course of the conflict, and that the increase and importance of psychological warfare operations allow a distancing of combat units from the limitations of special operations.[37] Psychological warfare, the author suggests, must be free of ties for its development.

Psychological Warfare as a Peace Tool

On 25 April 1944, the then-general and future president of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, declared that "public opinion wins wars." In October 1945, General Eisenhower wrote to General McClure, director of the Psychological Warfare Division, that psychological war had won a position of honor in the Army arsenal.[38] It is clear that psychological warfare operations seek to transmit selected information to specific audiences to influence their behavior on government policy.[39] Psychological warfare stopped being just a weapon against the enemy and became a political tool of the government against the civilian population itself. In fact, it was the Truman and Eisenhower administrations that created propaganda institutions in peacetime. Propaganda through the "war of words" was an integral part of presidential policy and cornerstone of the construct of the Cold War.[40] With the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948, the first propaganda agency in times of peace in the US was legalized, allowing government propaganda to be applied to the news issued by private media, in order to justify American positions during the Cold War.[41] In 1952, the Center for PW was established;[42] in 1953 the OWI was dismantled and the US International Information Agency was established. OWI staff became part of either the State Department or the new agency. And thus, American public diplomacy came to have its own government agency and an entire film industry at its service.[43] Psychological warfare against the American population could be observed surging from the rearguard, through movies, comics, books, and cultural media; it had the same structure as communist propaganda.[44] The US House of Representatives, specifically the Committee on Anti-American Activities, had at its core Edward Hunter, a well-known journalist and fervent anticommunist, who claimed that communist psychological warfare was being developed in the United States and that intellectual elites were inculcating Americans with procommunist brainwashing. Hunter argued that one of the tactics used was the double-language and tactics described by George Orwell in his book *1984*.[45] The rationale used to justify domestic propaganda was provided by complaints similar to Hunter's. According to the Propaganda Analysis Institute, an institution created in the interwar period, Hunter's appearance can be framed as testimonial propaganda. This type of propaganda from American authorities has been documented several times during peacetime.

Psychological Warfare as Public Diplomacy

On the foreign front, the Marshall Plan in Europe promoted increased circulation of American newspapers and magazines.[46] Rampton and Stauber reflect on psychological propaganda operations carried out by the American government in the

1950s: To influence public opinion in the Middle East, books, pamphlets, movies, posters, music and various propaganda materials were published. As reported by the National Security Council (NSC), everyone responded to psychological reasoning.[47] Other authors have revealed different forms of propaganda by US authorities. For example, in El Salvador, colored comics were used to reach illiterate parts of society. In the comics, leftist guerrillas were shown committing atrocities and wealthy right-wing men abusing power.[48] The use of imagery to reach the most illiterate strata of society had already been used by the Creel Commission when it established the Film Department. Psychological warfare techniques and the creation of associated propaganda have always considered the national cultural and educational variables of the targeted population.

The concepts of propaganda and psychological warfare have been replaced with new concepts such as information warfare or psychological operations. It is a semantic distinction of mainly similar concepts.[49] However, the semantic evolution of psychological warfare has led to conceptual and practical nuances. The new concept that psychological warfare entails is strategic influence; this field includes public affairs, PW, public diplomacy, and psychological operations. Strategic influence is the combined use of all these factors.[50] One of the main functions of strategic influence is perception management. Perception management revived strategic influence during the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Robert Parry states that Reagan created a whole propaganda bureaucracy in order to manipulate the audience's perception of the issues in which the country was internationally involved. Perception management reversed the images emitted in the mind of the recipient, helping support presidential policies.[51] Walter Lippmann already explained how propaganda functioned as a filter between reality and the receiver.

Years later, the US continued voluminous psychological operations in the conflicts it had open across the globe. During the First Gulf War, the 4th Psychological Operations Group launched 29 million pamphlets on Iraqi forces to encourage desertion among the ranks of Saddam Hussein's army. At the same time, a radio program called The Voice of the Gulf[52] was developed, bombarding Iraqi troops with messages of happiness from suspected deserting Iraqi soldiers, propagating affability with Islam, along with a list of places going to be razed by bombs the next day; 75 percent of deserters said they deserted due to the influence of pamphlets and radio.[53]

After the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001, the Pentagon established the Office of Strategic Influence, which was intended to distribute information in targeted societies. However, subsequent complaints pointed to its role in a misinformation plan.[54] After the attacks, the American government prepared immediate response communication offices in London, Is-

lamabad, and Washington—a deployment of propaganda organizations, similar to those deployed during WWI by the Creel Committee. The objective was to induce the media in South Asia and the Middle East to adopt editorials that countered anti-American sentiment and were favorable to military action, highlighting bin Laden's link to the attacks on New York. Its duties included conducting psychological warfare operations directly on the population of Afghanistan through radio and TV broadcasts, along with the launching of anti-Taliban pamphlets.[55] The public relations firm Lincoln Group was responsible for translating the Pentagon's propaganda and including it, upon payment, in the different media of Muslim countries.[56] It is clear that PW is the trigger for information warfare, and this is a basic element of psychological warfare operations. In addition, since the attacks on the twin towers, the Pentagon has implemented a reporter-embedding program in military units. These are dedicated to filtering information and turning it into news, becoming a valuable tool for government propaganda.[57] In addition to journalists being embedded in military units, since the beginning of the twenty-first century the Pentagon had readied a Combat Camera team, made up by journalist soldiers, to record exclusive combat videos to later send to the most important worldwide news agencies.[58] The Second Gulf War deployed an immense campaign of psychological warfare developed by public relations professionals. The US Central Intelligence Agency hired public relations consultant John W. Rendon, a specialist in providing public relations assistance to America military operations, to organize smear campaigns of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.[59] Rendon defines himself as a warrior of information and perception who uses the media to defend public or corporate interests.[60]

Considerations

Psychological warfare has left the classic military environment and has been established in the periphery of conflicts and peacetime, having as audience the population in the rear, as well as enemy or neutral populations. The investment that was made in analyzing the methods to influence social masses psychologically allowed for the development of detailed ways to prepare propaganda and refine its application. The thorough knowledge of manipulation techniques was generated during the two world wars. The investment in psychological knowledge during that period has changed the rules of social life, both in the way of thinking and in the way of organizing.[61] The concept of psychological warfare has blurred its essence in a concept as broad as strategic influence. Psychological warfare has fully entered civilian life to set the patterns of thought and action of populations throughout the Western world and beyond. Public relations and the application of psychology via the media constitutes the abuse of propaganda, created and

manipulated as it suited the concept of the public mind at the moment. There is still one characteristic of psychological warfare: the recipients are the audience, whether they are a group or individuals. Psychological warfare has communication as a transmission channel and propaganda as its content. The purpose remains to influence recipients through tailored information. ❑

Notes

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2. Linebarger was a Doctor of Philosophy. He was also a professor of Asian Studies at John Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies. He specialized in propaganda techniques and psychological warfare. He served in the US Army during WWII. He was a key element in the creation of the Office of War Information. During the 50s and 60s he published various science fiction works under the pen name Cordwainer Smith.

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6. Dr. Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., has a bachelor's degree in Political Science from Park College, a master's degree and a PhD. He also holds a degree in History from Duke University. He was commander of the US 4th Psychological Operations Group and senior officer of psychological personnel in the office of the Secretary of Defense during the 80s.

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Nuño J. Rodríguez, Political Scientist and Analyst

Director and analyst at Quixote Communications, a political, diplomatic, public relations, and strategy consulting firm. Rodríguez is a graduate political scientist from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and specialized in Political Communication at the University of Amsterdam. He is an expert in intelligence and counterintelligence and has extensive knowledge in audiovisual language, narratives, and counternarratives. He has worked on research funded by the European Union on the influence of the media on society, for this reason he has developed analytical and critical capacities on the influence of the media system on the formation of patterns of behavior in society. He has also conducted research on psychological warfare, propaganda, and intelligence. Additionally, Rodríguez is a political analyst for different television programs with an international scope.