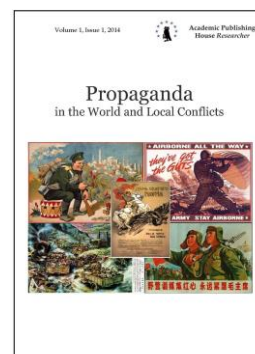


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Actual problem

The History of Military Propaganda: The Horizons of Related Research in the 21st century

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Abstract

This paper provides an analysis of 25 research studies on military propaganda indexed in the Web of Science database and published in the period 2004–2019, i.e. in the 21st century. The materials were systematized by year, publication venue, and research subject matter.

The author draws the conclusion that in the early modern period military propaganda was employed mainly in times of revolutions and wars of independence. This may be explained by the fact that the period's armies did not have the institution of military propagandists in place yet. It was only as late as the Crimean War that mass media were first used to shape public opinion among the populations of the countries at war.

In the modern period, the role of military propaganda grew significantly, with military propagandists getting set apart into a special military unit. In a time of war, mass media were subordinate to the local administration, which made it possible to create the conditions for keeping public opinion steady and preventing the “war weariness” phenomenon.

The development of digital technology and the Internet has facilitated communication among terrorist communities significantly. This has given researchers reason to explore the nature and manifestations of terrorist activity and seek out ways to counteract it. In the contemporary period, military propaganda is finding manifestation in terrorist activity, hybrid wars, and states' activity on countering domestic and international threats.

Keywords: military propaganda, early modern period, modern period, contemporary period, research, terrorism, cyber wars, hybrid wars.

1. Introduction

In today's fast-changing world, the history of military propaganda is increasingly becoming a subject of interest among the scholarly community. Researchers are not only delving into the historical past, with a focus on analyzing the propaganda of the early modern period, but are trying to gain insight into new trends in the area of military propaganda in the modern and contemporary periods as well.

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2. Materials and methods

2.1. The paper drew upon 25 publications on the history of military propaganda published in the period 2004–2019. To determine the vectors of research conducted by the scholarly community on the history of military propaganda, the author consulted the Web of Science database, searching for ‘military propaganda’, and drew up a sample spanning the period from 2004 to 2019. The sample included 25 research studies on the subject. Out of these, there were two papers presented at a conference and one book. By year, the publications were distributed as follows (Table 1):

Table 1. Publications’ Distribution across Years

Years	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
Number of research studies	1	2	4	4	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	3	2

As evidenced from Table 1, the extent of interest among researchers in the subject of military propaganda has varied over the last 15 years. Nonetheless, in recent years there has been an increasing interest in it.

In analyzing Table 1, it is worth understanding that the decline in number of publications in 2019 was associated with not all publications having been counted in. This can be explained by the fact that by the time this paper was completed (October of 2019), not all publications from the first half of the year (and, all the more so, those out in the fall) had been uploaded to the Web of Science. Overall, Table 1 clearly illustrates that in recent years there has been a significant increase in number of publications on the history of military propaganda, which may be due to both the events in areas of local conflict and the use of new propaganda weapons.

Thematically, the research studies were distributed as follows (Table 2):

Table 2. Research Studies’ Distribution across Thematic Areas

Research subject matter	Number of research studies
Research into the early modern period	4
Research into the modern period	11
Research into the contemporary period	10
Total	25

By publication venue, the research studies were distributed as follows (Table 3):

Table 3. Research Studies’ Distribution across Publication Venues

Publication venue	Number of research studies
Peer-reviewed journal	22
Conference	2
Book	1
Total	25

In terms of the analysis of the publications’ content, it is worth noting that this work’s thematic distribution of related research studies is the author’s personal choice. Without question, the problem field could include other thematic areas as well.

The author is not providing a deep analysis of all the 25 scholarly publications selected for the purpose, as this would be too voluminous for the scope of this paper. The idea, rather, is to gain an insight into what research niches related research is being conducted in in the 21st century.

The first major group of publications is made up of research studies on the modern period. The largest group of publications, it includes 11 bibliographical units. The fact that there are so many publications in this group (nearly 40%) can be explained quite simply – in the contemporary world, there are a number of local conflicts that have taken on a smoldering form and are characterized by the emergence of new forms of propaganda work. This group is followed by research studies on the contemporary period – 10 bibliographical units that are focused on contemporary issues in military propaganda. This group is almost as large as the first one in size, but it covers a much smaller historical period – just the beginning of the 21st century. This provides hope that the stock of research on this period will only grow going forward.

The publication topics will be examined in chronological order. This will make it possible to get a more comprehensive picture of how military propaganda has been employed in the world history and identify some of the key typical characteristics. The work is divided into the following three major chronological periods:

- 1) the early modern period – from 1640 to 1900;
- 2) the modern period – from 1900 to 2000;
- 3) the contemporary period – from 2000 to the present time.

2.2. The work's methodology is grounded in the principles of historicism and objectivity. Major consideration is given to methods of work with historiography. The author's internal textual criticism has helped determine the general and the particular in contemporary military propaganda.

3. Results

3.1. Early modern period

The first mention of the use of propaganda in a local conflict goes back to the Reapers' War, which took place in Catalonia in 1640. The war had its roots in the discomfort generated in Catalan society by the conscription of local residents into the Italian army of the Spanish King and the presence in Catalonia of a royal army made up of foreigners. Taking advantage of Spain's engagement in military action against France, the Catalans appealed to the French for help. As a result, this would help keep Catalonia out of Spanish rule up until 1652. An article by M. Rohrschneider, entitled 'The Word as a Weapon. Political Propaganda in the Insurrection of the Catalans, 1640–1652', examines the characteristics of political propaganda employed by the Catalans during this revolt ([Rohrschneider, 2005](#)).

Music and singing are known to have served as a vent for public feeling in times of revolutionary upheavals. This was the case during the French Revolution. Researcher F. Derne notes in his 'Singing as a Revolutionary "Weapon", and Echoing the Society in Auvergne' that the French people have never sung so much as they did during the revolution. Songs written in that period reflected the actual feelings of Auvergne residents at the time. Away from the harsh realities of warfare and free from all sorts of political unrest and the horrors of civil war, the local authorities sought to foster in the people a commitment to republican ideals. Accordingly, the arts, particularly music, must have been used as a propaganda tool in alignment with the public impulse and the state's interests ([Derne, 2005](#)).

In the early 19th century, several regions in South America witnessed wars of independence from colonial rule. To stabilize the situation, the colonial governments undertook a variety of measures to sway public opinion among the locals. M. Capelán provides in 'Music and Theater as War Weapons: Propaganda Pro-Fernando in Venezuela during the War of Spanish Independence' an insight into the implementation of a large-scale propaganda campaign in support of Fernando VII, in which a key role was also played by both music and theater. The researcher examines a pool of patriotic songs and religious works written at the time to gain insight into how the patriotic song evolved from a conspiratorial genre into a form of art sponsored by the government ([Capelan, 2016](#)).

Military propaganda was first employed during the Crimean War (1853–1856), the purpose being Great Britain's desire to discredit the Russian Empire. English newspapers were used to spread military propaganda with a view to positioning Russia as an enemy in the minds of the foreign general public. At the same time, certain Russian newspapers published patriotically oriented works too. In this context, issues of patriotic propaganda in the land of the Great Don Cossack Host have been explored by researcher A.Yu. Peretyatko ([Peretyatko, 2019](#)).

To sum up, in the early modern period, military propaganda was employed mainly in times of revolutions and wars of independence. This may be explained by the fact that the period's armies did not have the institution of military propagandists in place yet. It was only as late as the Crimean War that mass media were first used to shape public opinion among the populations of the countries at war.

3.2. Modern period

The modern period witnessed a significant number of military conflicts in which active use was made of military propaganda. A major military conflict in the early 20th century was World War I. During this military period, much of the responsibility for shaping public opinion was placed on mass media. A group of researchers led by E.Yu. Leontyeva have examined in a work entitled 'The Russian Provincial Press at the Beginning of the First World War as the Most Important Means of Forming and Maintaining Patriotic Feelings' the role of the periodical press through the example of a particular Russian city. Based on an analysis of daily print media in the city of Tsaritsyn, the researchers have found that the newspapers provided timely coverage of military events, religious ceremonies, local charity events, pro-mobilization sentiment, and manifestations of patriotism (Leontyeva et al., 2017). Through the example of the same city, a study conducted in 2016 by O.A. Karagodina examines the charitable activity of the town's population during World War I. It has found that a determining factor in its volume was coverage of charitable activity in the press (Karagodina, 2016).

A 2018 study by C.R. Lima, entitled 'Photomontage as a Revolutionary Agent', addresses the effect of photomontage on socio-political processes (e.g., the rise to power of the Fascist regime in Germany and propaganda efforts in Soviet Russia undertaken subsequent to the establishment of Bolshevik power) (Lima, 2018).

A paper by S. Wei, entitled 'News as a Weapon: Hollington Tong and the Formation of the Guomindang Centralized Foreign Propaganda System, 1937-1938', examines the process of centralization of foreign propaganda activity by the Chinese Nationalist Party between 1937 and 1938. The researcher establishes that foreign propaganda was an important war strategy for the Chinese Nationalist Party after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War (Wei, 2014).

In 1939, the USSR invaded Finland. This conflict was covered by the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS). By the end of the 1930s, TASS began to play an important role within the Soviet Union, with its activity being quite diverse. A paper by M.L.G. Spencer, entitled 'Signals from Stalin: The Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union in the Midst of the Soviet-Finnish War, 1939-40', examines the activity of TASS during the Soviet-Finnish War. The researcher notes that, eventually emerging as a tool of foreign policy and versatile propaganda weapon for the Soviet Union, TASS was employed by the Soviet government to limit the damage caused by global condemnation of the Soviet invasion (Spencer, 2013).

In 1945, Indonesia witnessed the outbreak of a war of independence. Fought against the allied Dutch and British forces, the conflict ended in 1949 with the Netherlands' recognition of Indonesia's independence. A work by H.A. Poeze, entitled 'The Fourth Weapon: Information, Propaganda and Public Resistance, 1944-1953', examines the use of information during the period 1944-1953 as a fourth weapon (Poeze, 2014).

In 2017, the journal *Israel Affairs* published a work by G. Goodman entitled "'Spokesmanship is a Weapon': Israeli Army News Management during the October 1973 War", which explores propaganda during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War (also known as the Yom Kippur War). The researcher examines news management by the Israeli army and the Israel Defense Forces' press activity during the war and describes some of the key ways in which the government and military sought to control and manage news reporting in the domestic and foreign media (Goodman, 2017).

Note that wide use of propaganda was also made as part of Operation Desert Storm. This subject has been explored by A.T. Thrall (Thrall, 2007), G. Carlyle (Carlyle, 2004), and A. Romarheim (Romarheim, 2004). It has also been investigated by J. Western in 'The War over Iraq: Selling War to the American Public' (Western, 2005). The researcher examines the influence of four critical factors that enabled the administration to frame the case for war in Iraq: (1) executive-branch information and propaganda advantages; (2) executive cohesion; (3) oppositional fragmentation; (4) the nature and history of the Iraqi regime.

In the modern period, the role of military propaganda grew significantly, with military propagandists getting set apart into a special military unit. In a time of war, mass media were subordinate to the local administration, which made it possible to create the conditions for keeping public opinion steady and preventing the “war weariness” phenomenon.

3.3. Contemporary period

Operation Desert Storm revealed that the coalition’s technical superiority is so overwhelming that the resistance of just about any army can be overpowered in quite a short period. This has forced certain political regimes change their tactics of how they resist the coalition. And that has resulted in terrorism becoming a major threat in the contemporary world, the point of departure being the events of September 11, 2001.

The development of digital technology and the Internet has facilitated communication among terrorist communities significantly. This has given researchers reason to explore the nature and manifestations of terrorist activity and seek out ways to counteract it.

For instance, the issue of inciting terrorism through the Internet has been explored by A. Douai. In his “Technology and Terrorism: Media Symbiosis and the “Dark Side” of the Web”, the researcher notes that to propagate mass panic and thus influence policies, terrorists exploit the media’s ability and willingness to publicize indiscriminate violence, creating “media spectacles of terror”. On top of that, the Internet has allowed terrorists to evade detection, communicate, recruit, and organize (Douai, 2015).

In 2010, Proceedings of the NATO Advanced Research Workshop on Old Threats, New Channels – The Internet as a Tool for Terrorists contained a report by E. Hacoheh, entitled ‘Digital Hate: Terror, Anti-Semitism and Racism on the Internet’. The report drew attention to digital hate on the Internet as a phenomenon that propagandizes terrorist, anti-Semite, and racist activity (Hacoheh, 2008).

Issues related to recruitment of terrorists and countering this activity in the cyber world have been explored by scholars A.R. Alzoubaidi, D. Prodan-Palade, and S. Ekici. In their work, entitled ‘Terrorist Recruitment and Counter Measures in the Cyber World’, the researchers note that in the contemporary world terrorist organizations are increasingly employing the Internet to spread their propaganda and promote extremism. The paper identifies a set of key tools for recruiting terrorists in cyberspace and examines a set of legal tools and methods for countering this type of activity on the Internet. It discusses how cyber systems can be secured and thus become safe for the cyber world environment (Alzoubaidi et al., 2016).

A paper by Y. Saramifar, published in March of 2018 in The Journal of Material Culture, views the AK-47 as an indispensable weapon used by Hezbollah militants. The researcher notes that, despite its lethal potential, the AK-47 has largely been an object of humor and fun among the militants (Saramifar, 2018).

Another contemporary conflict that the media was used as a weapon in is the 2006 Israel–Hezbollah War. This subject has been explored by M. Kalb and C. Saivetz in their report ‘The Israeli-Hezbollah War of 2006: The Media as a Weapon in Asymmetrical Conflict’, presented at the 2007 US–Islamic World Forum. Based on an analysis of global mass media and interviews with diplomats and journalists, the researchers have established that in the context of the above conflict the press went from the stage of an objective observer to that of an ardent advocate, becoming, in essence, a weapon of modern warfare (Kalb, Saivetz, 2007).

A new trend in the organization of contemporary military propaganda is the use of social networks. For instance, a study by A. Kohn, published in 2017 in Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies, views Instagram as a propaganda tool. The researcher exemplifies this via Instagram photos posted on the official website of the Israel Defense Forces (Kohn, 2017).

The characteristics of military propaganda in Syria have been explored by G. Simons in his ‘News and Syria: Creating Key Media Moments in the Conflict’. The researcher insists that news is not an accidental occurrence, in terms of either subject or timing. The above work provides an analysis of articles on specific issues such as the reaction to the chemical weapons attack of August 2013 and the allegations of “industrial killings” by the Syrian government, appearing in the mass media. In the researcher’s view, these two cases suggest that the timing and nature of these specific news events are not as “random” and coincidental as would seem at first glance (Simons, 2016).

In the contemporary world, military propaganda is being employed in virtually every armed conflict. Hybrid wars are no exception – here they can use cyber-attacks as a propaganda tool. Researcher Woo Pyung-Kyun examines in his work ‘The Russian Hybrid War in the Ukraine Crisis: Some Characteristics and Implications’ Russia’s hybrid wars in Ukraine, starting in 2014. The scholar draws a parallel, claiming that the Russian government has already used this weapon before – in Georgia and in Transnistria (Pyung-Kyun, 2015).

One of the latest major conflicts – the one in Ukraine – has been explored by O. Boyd-Barrett in his ‘Ukraine, Mainstream Media and Conflict Propaganda’. Based on the events that took place in Ukraine from February to October of 2014, the researcher examines the various ways in which information warfare can be waged today between nuclear powers (Boyd-Barrett, 2017).

Thus, in the contemporary period military propaganda is finding manifestation in terrorist activity, hybrid wars, and states’ activity on countering domestic and international threats.

In the early 21st century, a key characteristic of research on military propaganda was the conduct of historical-comparative research. For instance, F. Maâtoug tries to determine in ‘The United States and War Propaganda: From the Spanish-American War in Cuba (1898) to the Invasion of Iraq (2003)’, published in 2008, the general and the particular in American war propaganda (Maatoug, 2008).

4. Conclusion

In the early modern period, military propaganda was employed mainly in times of revolutions and wars of independence. This may be explained by the fact that the period’s armies did not have the institution of military propagandists in place yet. It was only as late as the Crimean War that mass media were first used to shape public opinion among the populations of the countries at war.

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