

Propaganda in warfare argumentative essays examples

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Throughout centuries of fighting, the fundamental basis of warfare remains the ideological or militaristic conflict between two opposing sides. While the means, methods and strategies of warfare have changed dramatically in the last four hundred years, governments and militaries have always needed to find a way to ensure that morale remains on their side and encourage antipathy towards their opponents. To that end, propaganda was created - the biased historical and cultural narratives created by cultures and governments to vilify their opponents and uplift their own military forces. Propaganda has survived four centuries of change through its durability and malleability throughout time - military leaders and nations can utilize a variety of media to supply the people with pro-military and nationalistic messaging. Napoleon's cult of personality throughout Europe, the tactics of the French Revolution and RMAs, the "total war" jingoism of World War I, the use of film in World War II, and propaganda's use in today's military conflicts are all indicators of the growing and constantly changing nature of propaganda throughout the last four hundred years of history.

Some of the earliest, most prominent examples of European wartime propaganda include Napoleon's efforts at building up public support for his campaign throughout Europe. Napoleon's methods were particularly innovative; while he utilized the press and other normal avenues of propaganda to extol the virtues of his cause, Napoleon capitalized on his own image to create a cult of personality around himself, "[strengthening] his always precarious legitimacy by the continued invocation of patriotic-revolutionary symbols". One way in which this was done was through medallions, which he commissioned to commemorate many of his battles

(such as the Five Battles Series) - by wearing them, in inflated his sense of success and prestige, which thus made him more admirable as a leader. Even in these early forms of propaganda, war leaders knew to attract the public using innovative and varied methods to catch their attention and earn their loyalty.

Propaganda has proved particularly effective as a means of facilitating and fomenting revolution. During the French Revolution, propaganda was used on both sides to motivate the troops by appealing to obedience, or to instill vigor and passion in revolutionaries by pointing out the evils of the state. The Old Regime, in particular, suffered greatly from misusing propaganda, or not using it enough; instead, officials used fear "without propaganda," as they were "incapable" of actually using propaganda effectively. However, because of this, their armies were always restricted in size and mobility, as troops would be more likely to desert without sufficient motivation and the supervision of superior officers. In this way, propaganda can often be seen as a more effective tool than armies, as the state of mind of the people fighting in a war is heavily determined by exactly how they were motivated to do so. While these efforts were important and noteworthy, propaganda in the state it is known today began in earnest around the time of World War I. The forces on both sides of the conflict constructed incredibly large and intricate propaganda operations to involve the people in their support of their pet side of the war. Propaganda was also used to deliberately obfuscate any gaining or loss of ground - "in the war of position, nations magnified any loss of terrain for propaganda purposes" during the First World War, as the relationship between public morale and practical progress in the war was

very strong. At the same time, German withdrawals were capitalized on by Allied propaganda, allowing them to exaggerate those movements as defeats. From that point on, propaganda itself became a double-edged sword, known for obfuscating facts as much as it was inspiring its people to help its nation win a conflict, and inspiring resentment of citizens toward its host countries for getting them involved in wars using it.

In many ways, propaganda reached its apex with World War II, becoming the catalyst for the conflict itself. Nazi Germany was heavily inspired by Britain's successful propaganda tactics in the First World War, and used them to instill a sense of nationalism and righteous vengeance in their own people during the 1920s and 1930s. Germans made particularly effective use of the RMA here, utilizing each new triumph of the Wehrmacht over the Allies in the 1940s as fuel for their propaganda machine. Hitler's immensely successful war strategy was contingent not just on military might, but on the ability to inspire "a leap of faith from [his] followers" using inspirational propaganda that highlighted the alleged supremacy of the Aryan race as well as the military might of Germany. It was because of his command of propaganda and inspiring nationalist zeal that Hitler's military might and authority over the German people in World War II was so complete.

The United States also used equally aggressive propaganda to motivate troops and the general war effort during World War II. This was even the case in instances when goals and objectives overreached beyond what was actually needed - in the final years of the Second World War, "American propaganda had portrayed the United States as irrevocably bound to the unconditional surrender of Japan," even though this was not anticipated by

the Coordinating Committee. It can even be argued that this propaganda was too aggressive, preventing America and Japan from communicating with each other and finding a peaceful solution to the war “ well before mid-August 1945.” This demonstrates the double-edged sword that wartime propaganda has been for the last four hundred years; while it is an effective means of motivating the people, it can often lead to vitriol and animosity that prevents both sides from coming to peaceful solutions in the name of nationalism.

Throughout the history of warfare, nations have always used propaganda to convince their people of the righteous nature of their cause. Even today, propaganda remains a useful tool for warfare, with many new technologies providing even more varied ways or governments and militaries to advertise the righteousness of their cause. Along the way, various methods and media have been used as the canvas to ensure that citizens side with them against their enemy, and provide material and emotional support for the fight.

Propaganda has been shown to be extremely effective in inspiring troops and citizens to fight for their cause, becoming an integral part of many famous conflicts and central strategies of noted military leaders, from Napoleon to Hitler. From the early days of colonial Britain, to the morale strategies of the French Revolution, to the propaganda machine of Nazi Germany and beyond, propaganda of all kinds will always be used as a social tool of warfare.

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