

20th Century Ideologies & Propaganda: Prototypes and Stereotypes.

ENEMY MAKING POLITICAL STRATEGIES

COURSE STRUCTURE

1. The Otherness and the Enemy Making: General issues
2. The “Necessary Enemy”: Opening a Debate
3. Enemy Making - Concepts and Strategies.
4. Hostile Imagery and Visual Mechanisms

1. The Otherness and the Enemy Making: General issues

- The perception towards the Other has always been a combination between fascination (in discovering the difference and the delights of the immersion of the discoverer/ conqueror into a “new world”) and suspicion or anxiety (as Jean Delumeau highlighted in his anatomy of Western fears (Jean Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident, xiv e - xviii e siècles, une cité assiégée*, Paris, Fayard, 1978))
- The concept was determined within philosophy (starting with Hegel) in relation with the problems of identity and defined itself through the area or segment of *difference* towards the subject, in opposition with the essence of the Self.
- The *otherness* involves tension by definition, the stable coordinates of one’s perception of the self being confronted with the *difference*.

The Enemy

Emerging from a complex anthropologic as well as cultural history (the scapegoat type rituals), the explanations of the survival and cultivation of the “necessary enemy” pattern were reduced in contemporary research mostly to the *psychological* (the need for targets for externalising frustration, “fears and hostilities”, 556) and the *political* one: “leaders create enemies to mobilize the nation around common aims or to profit from the arms industry (Freeland 1972; Edelman 1983; Wolfe 1983, 1984; Chomsky 1985)” (556).

The persistence of the characteristics as well as the independence of the role of the enemy from specific political contexts (which on their turns are not independent, using the “enemy” as an essential propaganda image) was observed by different researchers.

It is an old adage that people need foreign enemies and, by implication, that if they lose one enemy, then another will soon be found to replace it. In the words of Finlay, Holsti, and Fagen (1967,7),

- "It seems that we have always needed enemies and scapegoats; if they have not been readily available, we have created them. Consequently, *"the role of the enemy is more fixed than those filling the role"*.

- The idea that enemies serve a function for societies and for individuals has attracted the attention of scholars from a wide range of disciplines and perspectives (Freeland 1972; White 1984; Volkan 1985, 1988; Wolfe 1983, 1984; Silverstein 1989; Silverstein and Holt 1989; Spillmann and Spillmann 1991; Keen 1991; Barash 1994). (Murray and Meyers, 1999: 555).

Jerome Frank (1967, 1968, 1980) wrote of the ubiquitous “image” and “face” of the enemy: this image is remarkably similar no matter who the conflicting parties are.

- “Enemy images mirror each other-that is, each side attributes the same virtues to itself and the same vices to the enemy. We are trustworthy, peace-loving, honorable and humanitarian; they are treacherous, warlike and cruel. (1980, p. 951) (Stein, 1985: 254)
- A “good enough enemy” is one capable of stabilizing the internal group world by serving as an available repository for group-externalizations.

Soviets and Americans alike denounce each other, allocating full responsibility for a relationship in the behavior (misbehavior!) of a single member.

Each is unaware that the face of the enemy bears the mask upon which we may discern the secret of our own hearts. Each is likewise unaware that national unity (a shibboleth and goal in both) depends upon the *indispensable enemy*. (Stein, 1985: 251-252)

Once chosen, the Enemy image is unambiguous, predictable and accessible to be associated with all the negative features *not* recognised by the group as its own. This pattern is afterwards constantly “cultivated” (Stein, 1985: 255) by the discourse of propaganda a “ritualised rhetoric” (Herrmann, 1985: 669) containing “fixed expressions, exaggeration and imposition of evaluation .

The impact of the language was reinforced by various common propaganda techniques, such as distortion of truth (up to the point of lying) and fallacious appeals to authority” (Witkowska, 2008: 123).

The image of the *other* is in typically a distorted image (even unintentionally) by distance and differences (“the Other is most often a real person or community, *observed however through the deformed filter of the imaginary* [emphasis added]”, Boia, 2000, 117).

However, the distortion is much amplified (in an organised, institutionalised manner, by propaganda) within totalitarian regimes.

- “In international relations and foreign policy research, the enemy image and the associated spiral model of interaction have dominated the psychological tradition.

Stereotypes surround the “necessary enemy” construct making it functional, recognisable and a “user-friendly” product.

The starting point was represented by a radical antagonism between the recognisable elements defining the “self” (symbolised through keywords and key-images) and those, equally familiar through a process of simplification and repetition, defining the *enemy*.

- “Regardless of techniques, the creation of a black and white reality was a common characteristic in the propaganda.” (124).

Murray J. Edelman (1988) identifies as recurrent a list of features applicable to the enemy image rhetoric construction, as independently of the political system as a typology of a generic political “enemy”.

The few procedures used by this rhetoric (resulting in a list of “strategic images”, as Herrmann and Fischerkeller – the authors of a theory on “enemy image” call them - 1995: 415) reveals that the simplification or reduction was well articulated and more effective through the direct appeal to basic psychological reactions.

Thus, the generic “enemy” – labelled in a very general manner, in the Soviet case “the Americans”, the U.S., the imperialists etc. and made stable through repetition and stereotype - is described as radically opposed to “our” positive characteristics with insistence on its subhuman characteristics: dirty, uncivilised, violent (see Borbély, 2002).

The generalising and anonymous character (what Stein calls the “essentially undifferentiated *facelessness* of the enemy”, 1985: 255) is used in a double manner, first as to avoid empathy or any kind of identification with other similar human creatures (Stein speaks, for instance, of “our inability to see the Soviets as human”, 1985:255) and secondly to emphasise their hidden, mysterious (and therefore dangerous) manners of acting.

- “So long as the enemy is seen as *wearing the mask* which we have superimposed onto it, we inevitably must see a face we despise when we look upon the enemy. The enemy, in essence, wears our disavowed features: that is the psychic function of the enemy (255).

The second theory on the enemy image, as mentioned above, belongs to Herrmann (1985) and Herrmann and Fischerkeller (1995), applied precisely to the Cold War political antagonism and speaking of a binary approach to this generic, stable enemy construction (the two approaches being used alternatively, depending on the context of the moment within the Cold War).

- If someone hated a country or saw *great threat* from it, there would be a tendency to describe it as a *diabolical enemy* (Holsti, 1967; White, 1970: Cottam, 1977).
- If someone saw the opportunity to exploit a country, the balance process would probably produce a different stereotype.
- Historically, expansionists like Adolf Hitler did not picture their targets *as aggressive enemies, but rather as decadent degenerates*.

The degenerate picture not only balances better psychologically with aggressive designs, but also makes more sense for the propagandists if seizing opportunities is on their agenda.

The *degenerate, unlike the enemy, stereotype, describes the domination of others as part of a moral mission and duty to help the less capable* [emphasis added]. At the same time it promises success.

Both themes have advantages for mobilizing an army or people to back a leader's adventure. (Herrmann, 1985: 672)

Therefore, as usual when studying (group, ethnic etc.) identity, the stereotypes associated with the *Other*, speak equally or even more of the author of the discourse than on the subject of the discourse itself.

In Herrmann's conclusions, the use of the *diabolic*, threatening enemy (the warlike Americans versus pacifist Soviets) speaks of "defensive perceptions" or attitudes, while in other cases the use of the *degenerate* stereotype (U.S. as affected by crisis, decadence, illiteracy etc.) speak of "expansionist perceptions" (672-673) or attitudes: the "need" to impose the communist order and ideology so as to "save" the degenerative society.

Enemy Making. Opening a Debate.

- "Do we create enemies or find them?"
- Do we need enemies? If we didn't have them would we have to invent them to have somebody to blame for our problems?
- To what degree do we talk ourselves into war? Which comes first, propaganda or warfare?
- Do we need to see life as a struggle between good and evil?
- Do we need to be heroic?
- Can we have heroes without having villains?
- Are human beings by nature warlike or peaceable? Are we territorial, aggressive animals? Selfish apes? Does the problem lie in our animal heritage, in our genes? Have we progressed only because the most aggressive survived?
- What is peace? Is the idea of peace threatening? Boring? Static?
- Why is there evil in the world? Enmity?
- Each tribe and nation claims: "Our side is right." Can we love our country, our traditions and our values without falling into blind patriotism and ethnocentrism? Without making foreigners our enemies?"

(Sam Keen)

"Faces of the Enemy"

- Why do we automatically suspect people who are different from us? Is the unknown always evil, dangerous, fearful?
- What kinds of words, images, and metaphors do we use to characterize those we fear and hate? By contrast, what kinds of words, images, and metaphors do we use to describe those we love and cherish?
- Could soldiers kill without considering the enemy an atheist barbarian, sadist rat, or some lower form of life? Could we bring ourselves to kill people we considered as valuable as ourselves? Could we go to war without blaming the enemy for evil?
- If every nation claims "God is on our side," how are we to know who is right?
- Is there any such thing as a "just" war? Why or why not?
- How and under what circumstances can you reconcile the religious commandment "Thou shall not kill" with the political commandment "You must kill the enemies of our nation?"
- What distinguishes murder from warfare?
- If you were ordered to shoot Vietnamese women, children, and old people do you think you would obey? Why? Why not?

- One of the best ways to identify stereotypes of the enemy is to study editorial cartoons in newspapers. Who are the enemies? How are they portrayed?

(Sam Keen)

Anti-Soviet Enemy Making Propaganda

Cold War. Hostile Imagery

Due to the propaganda apparatuses on both sides, the fictions of the enemy and his infernal land (in opposition to the home paradise) replaced representations with misrepresentations and became major identity defining structures.

The previous reality of war was replaced by the mental experience of the anxiety, paranoia and hostile representations associated to the “imaginary war” - the term Mary Kaldor coined (1990) - focused on the

“ideological, cultural, imaginary and psychological levels, based on the articulation of an enemy image, whose political and psychological finalities were internal rather than external” (Borbély, 2002).