

Chapter 5

The Role of PSYOP in Shaping Cultural Values Under Post- Truth Conditions

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ABSTRACT

Psychological Operations (PSYOP) refer to the planned use of information to influence the perceptions, emotions, motivations, and behaviors of target audiences in line with national objectives, with cultural values constituting a central dimension of this process. In contemporary communication environments, this relationship has been reshaped by the post-truth condition, characterized by the declining authority of factual accuracy and the growing role of emotion, belief, and identity in public opinion formation. Under these conditions, PSYOP extends beyond information dissemination by shaping cultural narratives and symbolic references through which interpretations are formed. This chapter examines the phases of PSYOP, its transformation in the post-truth era, and the mechanisms through which it affects cultural values, including emotional manipulation, algorithmic amplification, and narrative construction, illustrated through case studies on ISIS propaganda and the Russia–Ukraine War.

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INTRODUCTION*

In general, PSYOP is an ability to influence the behaviors, motives, perceptions and emotions of a potential target group in favor of one's own national objectives through spreading selected information. In other words, PSYOP is planned activities and use of information in terms of politically, economically, militarily and ideologically to achieve a desired change in attitudes, beliefs, behaviors and emotions of foreign countries, governments, organizations and individuals (Curtis, 1989; Department of the Army, 2005; Kaprisma, 2020). Thus, the aims of PSYOP are directing potential target audiences in an intended way and penetrating the motives, emotions and behaviors of the target audience to make them act or avoid acting to realize one's own national objectives. To make the PSYOP process result in a successful outcome and the desired behavioral change in the target audience, the careful application of the seven phases of the psychological operation by the PSYOP analysts should be implemented.

Culture is a way of life encompassing eating habits, practices, religion, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, mindsets, customs and roles that members of a particular society internalize without thinking and questioning which are transmitted through socialization to one generation to another and are consolidated through the institutions of a particular society. These cultural values are at the core in the lives of members of a particular society regulating rules and norms affecting how they speak, behave and lead their lives. Therefore, it is not unexpected that cultural values influence and direct certain attitudes and reactions to certain incidents which result from common understanding and perceptions of members of a particular society. In contemporary communication environments, however, the interaction between culture, media, and psychological operations has been further transformed by the emergence of the post-truth condition.

In the contemporary post-truth context, the relationship between PSYOP, mass media, and cultural values has acquired a more complex and diffuse character. The post-truth environment marked by the diminishing authority of factual accuracy and the growing primacy of emotion, belief, and identity in shaping public opinion provides particularly fertile ground for psychological operations conducted through media channels. Under such conditions, PSYOP does not merely seek to disseminate selected information, (Arslan, 2021) but rather to shape interpretive contexts through which cultural values are understood and evaluated. By appealing to emotions, moral intuitions, and shared cultural narratives, mass media based PSYOP can influence attitudes and behaviors without relying on verifiable truth claims. This transformation amplifies the effectiveness of PSYOP by embedding influence within everyday cultural meanings, thereby reinforcing desired perceptions

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