



The Battle for Hearts and Minds Uncovering the Wars of Ideas and Images Behind the Global War on Terror: A Study of Media Performance and Influence, Propaganda, and Strategic Communication

Timothy S. McWilliams

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During the Global War on Terror, multiple wars of ideas and images played out as belligerents and various competing political interests sought to influence multiple public spheres toward their desired political goals. At the same time, the international media played a vital role in framing the issues, debates, and events in the arena of ideas that accompanied the conflict. These wars of ideas and images had profound effects on domestic and international public opinion, which not only influenced events and operations during the conflict, but also threatened the outcome. This study traces these wars of ideas and images from the prewar debates following September 11, 2001 through military action in Afghanistan and Iraq. It not only examines how belligerents and various competing political interests sought to shape public opinion toward their political objectives during the Global War on Terror, but also examines both media performance on the battlefield and the media's role in shaping public opinion, policy, and events during the war. As a foundation for understanding media's role in modern wars of ideas, this study also provides a crucial examination of media's influence on U.S public opinion and policy during important events in U.S. history, to include a fresh examination of media performance and influence during the 1968 Tet Offensive in Vietnam. This study is essential for anyone wanting to understand the wars of ideas and images that accompany military conflict and international crisis, the challenges of reporting combat, and the media's power to influence public opinion and policy. Thoroughly researched and meticulously cited, this important multi-discipline study significantly contributes to the history and understanding to today's conflicts.

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