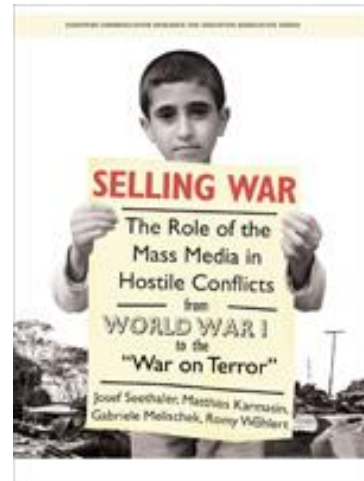


Josef Seethaler, Matthias Karmasin, Gabriele Melischek, and Romy Wöhlert (Eds.), **Selling War: The Role of the Mass Media in Hostile Conflicts from World War I to the “War to Terror,”** Chicago: Intellect Ltd., University of Chicago Press, 2013, 367 pp., \$35.50 (paperback).

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A young Middle Eastern boy with an innocent blank look on his face holds in his hands an image of the book’s title and the editors’ names. The cover is eye-catching. So is the concept: “selling war.” A quick search on Amazon.com shows 3,901 books related to “selling war,” many of which also focus on the relationship between war and media. The ongoing outbreak of regional wars following the breakup of the Soviet Union pushed scholars to reconsider war studies. As the public’s proactive exposure to war increased, the use of global media as a tool for information conveyance and participation also garnered more attention.



Selling War assembles articles that focus on the relationship between war and media to highlight that the tone, point of view, and medium used by reporters all impact the public’s perception of wars. For example, articles published by national news agencies evoke different public reactions than diaries of soldiers posted on social media platforms. The authors argue that the role of mass media will continue to change as the media environment and technology evolve.

Selling War is clear and logical, proceeding for the most part chronologically. The chapters are arranged into three groups. The four articles in Part 1 review the roots of interdependence that linked media and war during 19th-century European wars, World War I, World War II, and the Cold War. These chapters emphasize the role media plays in educating and formulating the public’s impression of wars by analyzing four different media that provide war information: newspapers, discourse, authorized news agencies, and field post correspondence.

Reinhard Stauber traces the role of mass media back to “the European wars of 1850s and 1860s, which gave the role of the mass press a sudden boost and placed newspapers at the center of public communication” (p. 20). At that time, newspapers extended the perception of war from that of a military event to an occurrence that sparked political, social, and historical awareness among the general public.

Moving forward, Diego Lazzarich observes the wars of the 20th century, focusing on war discourse. The rhetorical tone of war in public talks shifted during this time. In the early 20th century, nations used war to evoke citizens’ patriotism and desire for heroism. At the end of the 20th century, especially after two devastating World Wars, media reversed itself and tried to depict war as a neutral event or even as a positive transition for a country suffering from a tyrannous dictatorship. For example,

during the 1991 Gulf War, George Lakoff notes "the use of language that constantly underlined and affirmed the cold neutrality of military operations" (p. 48), and Lazzarich points out that "a new concept of war was thus born that would also be used in subsequent wars, which were legitimized as operations with the beneficial aim of exporting democracy" (p. 48).

Jürgen Wilke's case study on the mass media during the Third Reich describes how authority can control public opinion by consciously and systematically collecting and extracting information that serves its interest and then releasing only that information to the public. Given the relative isolation of information at the time, the German public was quite easy to incite and mobilize. But Wilke notes a contradiction: "a curious paradox between indifference and avoidance, on the one hand, and news hunger and the search for information, on the other" (p. 64).

Clemens Schwender discusses a popular type of medium in wars, the field post, which filled newspapers and magazines that circulated during World War II. Field post correspondence was written by soldiers and their families. Although limited by official censorship, these works showcased another (sometimes negative) view of war that supplemented the picture that government spokespersons and the official media depicted. Schwender notes, "These letters may be indicated in the context of endorsement of the newspaper material, but also—though more rarely—through expression of a negative view" (p. 87).

Part 2 consists of six chapters. First, Daniel C. Hallin and Magnus-Sebastian Kutz address government influence on the media during wartime and suggest how this influence reflected on public views of war. They indicate that decentralization of war coverage accelerated after the Vietnam War, and this cultural change contributed to the breakdown of the fragile cooperation between media and authority. In short, "The public tolerance for American casualties is lower today than it once was, and this is related to some of the changes in culture, and specifically in media culture" (p. 101). The phrase "justification of war" reflected the role of media during wartime, but political culture impacted this justification system.

Valérie Gorin tackles the more unusual issue of victimization. She considers the role of the media in addressing moral crises during wartime. She praises media for their increased interest in the soldiers in the field, but seeks greater attention for the victims of war, worrying that victims are too often stereotyped. Similarly, Romy Fröhlich focuses on victims of war, especially women and children. Fröhlich, like Gorin, takes a feminist perspective, insisting that war coverage always treats women as victims in need of help. For her, this phenomenon represents the "annihilation, trivialization and marginalization of women" (p. 174). Moreover, sometimes women are even used as tools for military and political purposes.

The other authors in Part 2 argue that the United States in recent decades has usually been the initiator of wars. In the Middle East alone, the United States lit the fuse of war at least four times—and then often added gasoline to the fire. Josef Seethaler and Gabriele Melischek summarize the effect of war on international relations. After explaining "self" and "others," they insist that these concepts provide a basis for respecting other countries' situations and "help to create a receptive public environment in other countries for one's own policy goals" (p. 194).

The six articles in Part 3 mainly deal with new trends in media-war relations in regional conflicts after the 1990s. Case studies include the War on Terror, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the Georgia-Russia war. The connection between media and war during this time features the dualism in judging the "reality," the strong focus on the "image rather than facts" (p. xiv), and the emergence of civilian observers.

Stephan Russ-Mohl addresses the role underlying economic parameters play in leveraging the relationship between media and wars. He points to *The New York Times'* annual expense for maintaining its office in Iraq, a figure that reached "more than three million dollars" (p. 229). This number illustrates that "maintaining a long-term presence of reporters is no longer affordable, beginning with the insurance costs for operations in war and disaster areas" (ibid.). He argues that lack of financial funding decreases media's independence from the government. Then media's "issue-attention cycle" starts to reflect the pace of governmental decisions. It also encourages the excessive focus of media on "attention rate," which increases the possibility of terrorist attacks on media reporters and employees because such attacks will generate media attention.

Philip Hammond and Brigitte L. Nacos both focus on the role of media in presenting the humanitarian side of war. Hammond indicates that media's notion of "humanitarian intervention" first emerged around 1990, a result of the search "for meaning and purpose of the Cold War on the part of western elites" (p. 239). In the latest War on Terror, media have become even more proactive in this intervention. For example, *The Economist* directly "offered some advice on how to achieve 'success in the propaganda war'" (p. 249) by using humanitarian aid as a tool. Nonetheless, Hammond praises the media for focusing more on the humanitarian environment of citizens during wartime. Nacos' conclusion is more negative. She examines U.S. news coverage after the post-9/11 scandal involving the torturing of suspected terrorists. She reveals that even the entertainment media worked on legitimizing this antihumanitarian behavior by desensitizing the public's reaction by including scenes of torture in Hollywood's movies. Nacos argues that this "pro-torture trend in the entertainment offerings was thought to bolster the support for tough antiterrorism measures that included curbs on civil liberties and human rights values in the name of greater security" (p. 336).

Cordula Nitsch, Dennis Lichtenstein, and Roman Hummel study the Georgia-Russia conflict from different angles. Nitsch and Lichtenstein stress the diversity of information in public discourse. After researching news coverage from both traditional print media and online news media, they conclude that in these two media "not only the rank order of the frames differs but also the percentages of the actors quoted" (p. 308). They believe this difference offers controversial views of war events that lead the public closer to the truth. In contrast, Hummel concentrates on the framing strategy of journalists who have limited resources. For example, when covering the conflict in Georgia, journalists visited the only tented camp in the city of Gori, ignoring the far greater number of displaced people elsewhere. They adopted the frame that "'real refugees' live in tents" (p. 322).

Unlike the other authors in *Selling War*, Nel Ruigrok, Wouter van Atteveldt, and Janet Takens use figures, graphs, and statistics rather than just prose to express their ideas. These authors studied U.S., British, and Dutch news coverage at specific times to focus their analysis. Their "studies show that major

dramatic events increase the amount of media coverage to a great extent. Besides the increased attention paid to it, the event might also change the way in which the issue is portrayed in the media" (p. 262). For example, "news coverage has a more episodic than thematic framing after the Second Intifada" (p. 284).

Selling War is a worthwhile textbook suitable for use in undergraduate classes. Its organization and writing are clear and coherent. The connection of war and media is always relevant. Each chapter has a brief summary of key points and further study questions. A section of further readings is provided. However, as an anthology, the transitions between articles are sometimes strained. When reading this informative handbook, it is best to treat every article separately.

The striking point of this book is the use of victimology in studying the relation between war and media. Romy Fröhlich's article is the best manifestation of this thread. She considers the imbalance between the number of male and female field correspondents. The victimology of war shows that this situation stems from the conservative stereotype of women as weak and suffering from masculine violence. Valérie Gorin also studies war victims and humanitarian crises during wars. Observers who assess the relation between war and media often overlook war victims. Fröhlich and other authors add to our insights about this topic.

Perhaps inevitably, *Selling War* focuses mainly on case studies related to earlier wars compared to the number of analyses based on more recent ones, including the "War on Terror" as a result of 9/11. Similarly, although some articles note the impact of the Internet and other new media on the shift in traditional relation between media and war, and media and public opinion, most of the analyses still rely on data and commentaries from newspapers and television programs, underplaying the Internet and social media data.