

## **CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS: Chapters for *Representing/Communicating the US in Local and Global Turmoil: From Wars to Contemporary Challenges***

Mark Finney, [mfinney@ehc.edu](mailto:mfinney@ehc.edu)

This book is among a slate of others being considered for adoption as a series by editors Victoria Ann Newsom (Olympic College) & Lara Lengel (Bowling Green State University) entitled Conflict, Culture, Communication from Lexington Books.

### Premise

Views of the United States from a conflict standpoint can vary widely depending on the specific conflict, region, and the time period in question. Different countries and individuals may hold different perceptions of the US based on their own geopolitical interests, historical experiences, and cultural perspectives.

There are a wide range of communication subfields that interact with conflict and peace perceptions about the United States - intercultural communication, rhetoric, critical cultural communication, media studies, global communication and social change, philosophy, theory, and critique, etc. Similarly, scholars have identified different contexts within which the US conflict and peace perceptions unfold. For example:

Ally vs. Adversary: The US has both allies and adversaries around the world. US allies generally view the country positively and often support its actions in conflicts. These allies may share common values, security interests, and diplomatic cooperation. Adversaries, on the other hand, may view the US as a source of conflict due to geopolitical disagreements or perceived interventionism. Xing (2011) found that rhetoric on US-China relations is largely shaped by the cultural orientations and national interest of each country.

Interventionism: The US has been involved in numerous conflicts throughout its history, often leading to the perception of American interventionism. Some countries may view US actions as unwarranted interference in their internal affairs, while others may appreciate US intervention in support of democracy, human rights, or regional stability. From a critical standpoint, US interventions have come at a great detrimental cost to many communities and countries in the world. Especially considering the US colonial legacies, such as slavery, treatment of indigenous peoples, racial hierarchies, impact on religious diversity, etc., that continue to have real world effect today in the form of economic, legal, and political systems, land dispossession, language and culture, and regional identities. Myers & Hayes (2010) found that during the Iraq wars, people's attention to the news predicted accuracy in one's beliefs about the number of casualties, but not opinions about the US intervention, suggesting that accuracy of one's knowledge mediates the effect of attention to the news on public opinion.

Regional Conflicts: Views of the US can be heavily influenced by specific regional conflicts. In the Middle East, for instance, the US is often seen as a significant player due to its involvement in conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. These views can range from appreciation for US support to criticism for its role in the region's instability. Proxy conflicts, affinities and secondary support for conflict parties substantially affect how the US is perceived from within regional conflicts, even when not directly influenced by the United States.

Public Opinion: Public opinion about the US in various countries can differ significantly from the official stance of their governments. People in some countries may have positive or negative views of the US based on their country's foreign policies, leadership, politics, cultural and economic exports. What then are the underlying reasons that move the needle of public opinion from one end of the spectrum to the other?

Humanitarian Efforts: The US is often involved in humanitarian efforts during international conflicts. These efforts, such as providing humanitarian aid, disaster relief, and peacekeeping missions, can influence how the US is viewed, with a generally positive perception when it provides assistance in times of need. How then are conflict stakeholders resolving the US role as humanitarian provider through communication?

Multilateral Institutions: The US plays a prominent role in international organizations like the United Nations and NATO. Views of the US in these contexts can be influenced by its cooperation or conflicts with other member states.

Historical Context: Historical events, such as World Wars, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, have shaped perceptions of the US in different parts of the world. Some countries and peoples may hold historical grievances, while others may view the US as a force for good. This context is perhaps the most significant one given that US economic might sometimes glosses over the importance of paying attention to historical specificity of a conflict and its stakeholders. How this contextual significance is communicatively registered or not is an important area of contribution for this volume.

As perceptions are highly nuanced and subject to change over time, public opinion, government policies, and regional dynamics all play a role in shaping these views. Communication cross-currents within the above mentioned contexts are important registers to gauge the current position and future implications of the US in the world and the various roles it plays in international events.

This book will therefore be influenced by two important questions which have received less attention than they deserve: How do people, engaged in conflict with one another, come to understand their opponents and what roles do institutions, such as, media, international multilateral organizations, national ideological parties, etc., play in the formation and maintenance of beliefs about the others? This book takes the United States as its thematic center, and countries/communities with which the United States has conflict as the spokes. Each author in this volume will examine a contemporary or recent conflict involving the United States and, instead of centering representations in the United States, examine the representations of the United States - representations that cast the United States as the other. We believe that the scholarly questions and answers being developed in this book will make useful contributions to the development of knowledge about international conflict situations and conflict resolution, communications studies and international relations. Though designed for scholars, the chapters should be accessible by undergraduate and graduate level courses concerned with representation and conflict management.

The editors seek contributions from authors who are experts in communications, conflict studies, area studies and other related disciplines, to write chapters examining these conflict situation representations of the United States. We seek to create a collection of chapters representing a wide range of conflict situations and areas of the world from diverse sub-disciplines within communication studies. We are especially interested in inviting authors who are from or have a great deal of knowledge and experience in the countries about which they write.

Prospective authors should produce a proposal of 2000 words, highlighting their conceptual and methodological approaches and the anticipated outcomes of their study. Appropriate thematic topics for this book might include:

- Conflicts in which the United States are directly involved
- Conflicts in which the United States are indirectly involved
- Conflicts centered around economic issues
- Conflicts centered around environmental or land issues
- Conflicts centered around cultural, religious and hegemonic issues
- Conflicts in which the United States' involvement is or is not productive

Though not exhaustive, we are especially interested in contributions highlighting the following conflicts involving the United States:

- Refugees and the aftermath of US involved conflict;
- US involvement in the Middle East including Israel-Palestine, Iraq, Syria, etc.
- Iran, and the representations of politico-religious conflict;
- Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, Filipinos, and the representations from American protectorates and territories;
- Africa, and the representations of economic and other exploitations;
- Latin, Central, South and North America, and representations related to geography, dominance, overt and covert conflict.

We kindly request that proposals be submitted via email to Mark Finney ([mfinney@ehc.edu](mailto:mfinney@ehc.edu)) and Sudeshna Roy ([roys@sfasu.edu](mailto:roys@sfasu.edu)) by Friday, March 1, 2024.

#### References

Myers, T. A., & Hayes, A. F. (2010). Reframing the Casualties Hypothesis: (Mis)Perceptions of Troop Loss and Public Opinion about War. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 22(2), 256–275. <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1093/ijpor/edp044>

Xing, L. (2011). From “ideological enemies” to “strategic partners”: A rhetorical analysis of US-China relations in intercultural contexts. *Howard Journal of Communication*, 22(4), 336-357.