

# Turkey's Propaganda in its Psychological War to Mislead the Public Opinion



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## Introduction

In the propaganda psychology impact, this fact is being said: who did not die with a bullet, he would be poisoned with a word or would be shocked with a photo (authentic or fake), there is no innocent word or another less innocent, and there is no neutral photo or another biased in the linguistics or photography. Instead, there are systematic up-to-date processes based on scientific foundations and theories that invest psychology, sociology, politics, and economy, to implant a hybrid ideology, or spread stereotyped ideas within individuals and groups, this is what the American writer, Shiller as, "the melting pot", calls.

Thus, Napoleon Buna Bert praised the psychological war when he said: The war of minds is stronger than the war of weapons, and the mind always prevails over the sword".

Previously, in the wake of the traditional ways of invasion and launching wars, the hidden psychological tactics have been functioned, such as distributing the scary legendary and building towers from the skulls of victims, depending on the whistles of death and distributing spies amongst the enemy's ranks. In aiming at striking the psychology, social, and military construction of the rival, and forcing him on submission and surrender.

Contrary to what the media world has witnessed from an accelerating transformation of information technology, a visual glamour, the emergence of the new digital server, and providing scientific researches (personal, psychological, in particular), the modern war primarily has become a psychological one in the first place. In addition, the imitation of both sides (psychological-neurological) of the victim is its building block, while its domain is the mind, and the individual has been under the effect of the hierarchal flow of the textual and visual material as well that "Gatekeeper theory" launches based on its purposes and agendas. Especially, with the diversity and advancement of misinformation, and the ways of coercive persuasion (brainwashing), and the breakthrough of personality, and what had followed of transformation of every approach in controlling the audience's values and beliefs to science by itself.

In the wake of what previously had been mentioned, we will analyze scientific methods and the strategies and soft psychological techniques that are being used by the media, in the mobilization of public opinion. Alongside interpreting the communication-based role in creating consensus, and the lost herd, and what they are needed of developing an (internal and external) hybrid opinion that serves the agenda of the sending party of the media content.

As a result, we found the propagandist experience of the Turkish media is the best choice to go through it, which had various repercussions largely on the social, political, and intellectual stability of communities. In addition, it also had advanced roles in affecting the individuals' identity and affiliation on both internal and external levels. Therefore, many psychological and social studies and media papers works have tackled it as a topic of explanation and analysis.

Firstly, strategies of propagandist recruitments of the media outlets

The mobilization of public opinion and its rallying throughout domesticating it with an enormous flow of propagandistic content is considered a successful equation to consolidate an idea or instill a belief. Besides affecting the audience's beliefs and views and his/her tendencies and its momentary choices, it works, largely, in tricking individuals and keeping them in psychological exhaustion, and self-punishment.

Therefore, we can do citing with fundamental techniques, which have a deep impact that turkey use in its media war to change the tendencies of the public opinion, which are represented in three strategies:

**Firstly: recruiting the dependent and local media**

**Secondly: the soft invasion throughout drama and series**

**Thirdly: The strategy of construction and a symbolic interaction**

**Firstly: recruiting the dependent and local media**

In the following part, each one of these strategies is going to be researched and covered, and supporting it with practical visions and samples from the social atmosphere that enriches the content of the researched topic.

**Firstly: recruiting the dependent and local media**

Professionals and experienced people who have efficiency in their field come together on the fact that each profession has its values, ethics and principles, and humanitarian criteria that cannot be touched and exceeded, and derivate out of its general line, and in the media world, these controls are becoming more stringent, the responsibility of journalists and media organizations increase. They must respect the needs of communities, and the values and ideas of its individuals who might become soldiers within moments; they implement the instructions and directions of the operator of the communication process, especially when the mechanism of psychological leaning is done during the combination of attraction and seduction tactics.

Therefore, the ancient and new media platforms recruiting a comprehensive media strategy to terrorize the enemies and to take

control over communities, and by investing in broadcasting hours, launching vocabulary, and immersing the audience with violent and erotic scenes, it aims at recruiting supporters in exchange for money and work positions, subsequently, changing them to pawns and sleeper sells

Working for the interests of the backers' policies and those who guide the media outlets.

On this basis, Turkey moved to recruit various media outlets in favor of its policies, at different times, and it abused a wide margin of the editorial space and time in media outlets to pass on its political agenda and transnational party's propaganda. By taking advantage of the need of some media outlets to the material support and the legal cover to ensure its continuity, therefore, the moral war's circulation allocated a huge budget to ensure the continuation of these media outlets' broadcasting. On the other hand, Turkey invested in vital relationships with some countries; such as Qatar, Azerbaijan, to achieve what its military hard power could not. Moreover, and the current Turkish government has resorted to stifling opposition's voices, imposing a lot of editorial restraints and political conditions on the media outlets that broadcast from its territory. Especially, the Syrian opposition media and many of media platforms, which changes its approach from the enlightenment of the public opinion and increasing its awareness to marketing the Turkish propaganda and policy.

In this part for media recruiting, Turkey depended on additional fundamental elements in obtaining the advocacy and controlling the public opinion, and weakening the moral spirit of the counterparty, and it was represented in:

1- Attacks on the rivals using their language (TRT channel in the Kurdish language, for instance, against the Kurds and their history in Mesopotamia region.

2- Taking advantage of the status of fear, anxiety, and frightening, which the inhabitants, predominantly Kurds, of the border territories with both Iraq and Syria, are suffering from. Subsequently, it tries to push them to immigration or psychic surrender by surrounding them with propaganda videos, rumors, and fake news.

3- Inciting tensions and differences amongst some nationalities and ethnicities, and trying to polish the image of the Turks as the best solutions to guaranty the rights of the marginalized groups.

Thus, while the Turkish propaganda invades the mind of the audience to mislead them throughout the displayed media content on some local channels such as (TRT radio and TV, Anadolu Agency, Star journals, and Gunesh), it also hires the media rhetoric issued by the abroad media; it sticks to it in the terms of the goals and the publication policy.

Qatari's Al-Jazeera Channel is a good example with regard to propaganda recruiting of the abroad media, which played a negative role different from the goals that have been sought against the previous dictatorship governments. Al-Jazeera Channel turned into a propaganda machine in favor of Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood Movement due to the deluded content that is broadcasted on the Syrian war. It produced media rhetoric that incites violence and sectarian and ethnicity fight, rather than exploiting Syrians need to information and the absent news from state's media to be a basic source to implant ideas, reconstruction political values, and tendencies.

Turkey took advantage to penetrate strongly into the Syrian audience's mind and psychology in this context, especially in the Syrian opposition's controlled areas. People feel kind of psychic alienation and disappointment due to the decrease of the international and western support for them, therefore, Turkey desired to make them feel, on media at least that it is the only friend and sister state, and the savior of their popular revolution.

Certainly, this is what Ankara has done throughout this category of the audience by Syrian media outlets of the same social atmosphere and local language and at the forefront of these outlets (Orient TV, Syria TV, Aleppo Today TV, Al-Qasioun TV, Al Jisr, and so on..), which received material support and guided political instructions in one way or the other from the Justice and Development Party(AKP), in exchange for keeping on the pace of the news flow of the media content that serves its interests in the region.

In this regard, we can remember the events that took place and live covers, and breaking news. What had been prepared from a unilateral media cover and a frame of mind that preferred the executioner to the victim before the Turkish Army's incursion with its affiliated local factions in Afrin region and Serekaniye and Gre Spi cities? The process of movie directing had been made for the bloody events there, with a prototype Turkish plot based on the flow of fake

news, and fabricated photos and videos, and deluded performances that are out of its geographical and time context. The purpose of that was to make disruption and to weaken the moral spirit amongst the civilians and military forces.

In return, these media outlets ignored any forms of balance and objectivity of the media content during news bulletins, for instance, the Al-Jazeera channel did not show any media news that covers and touches upon the ethnic cleansing, demographic change, and forced displacement. Alongside, serious violations committed against the local inhabitants in the occupied areas by the Turkish forces, although of the human rights' (local and international) reports provided with statistics proved its credibility. On contrary, these media outlets showed untrue reports from anonymous sources and broadcasted propaganda videos that glorified military operations that were being conducted by the Turkish affiliated factions against Kurdish areas. Due to these media outlets' mismanaging and their reactions to events had made deadly mistakes, in turn, this led to a tool, which served the official state media, especially with regard to the Islamic tendency that covered the protests during the first few months of the Syria crisis.

### **Secondly: the soft invasion strategy throughout drama and series**

The hard and bloody means do not work anymore in forcing and submitting the rivalries in the technology era and visual impact; whether they are individuals or groups, instead, temptation abilities and the soft containing throughout series and drama have become the most efficient in convincing and building the public opinion. Therefore, it deserves to be described as "the eligible power to substitute silently convictions and beliefs" according to what the Indian leader, Jawaharlal Nehru said, concerning the media effects in changing convictions and beliefs, and building new others in a soft and attracting way.

Prof "Josef Nay" in his thesis titled had also expressed this type of propaganda of media impact on audience:" the soft power" when he said," We are not just destroying our enemies, but also we make them do what we want according to what serves our interests". In the wake of what had been mentioned of quotes about the impact of the soft power, we can find that the Turkish state had made big

steps in the marketing world of its artistic propaganda (movies, series) within the 2003-2012 period.

The Turkish movies and series was able to succeed over Indian and Korean movies and series because of getting benefit from various factors that are common with the peoples of the Middle East, such as similar norms and traditions, sharing geographic borders, Islamic affiliation. By addressing many communities with stories and artistic works that goes back originally, to the popular and cultural legacy of the non-Turkic people, to make it easier to control it by embodying with a social atmosphere. Thus, each individual finds him/herself as a part of this guided artistic work, and he/she would be able to integrate with it.

Moreover, it was able to study the needs and desires of the eastern audience and to take advantage of the scientific studies; this enabled them to infiltrate the audiences' psychic and social structure, throughout those in charge of the Turkish cinema production. By exploiting the sexual repression, individuals underestimating themselves, and feeling of anxiety and instability, alongside the enmity and social isolation. The majority had lost trust with their political regimes, in order to frame mold the events with the Turkish heroism that depicts the indigenous people and dependent, and the fact that the Turks are the only loyal and the nation's savior.

By contrast, those in charge of making the Turkish propaganda went to forging the facts and creating a negative prototyped imagination that contradicts the facts and affects negatively on the social raising norms, and what correlates with it of changing pieces of knowledge and attitudes such as "the Good Earth" series. Through which Turkey tried to make antagonistic internal and external public opinion to the struggle of the Kurdish movement in the Kurdish region of Turkey, and describing its individuals with terror, subsequently inciting peoples against them.

But, concerning the historical facts that had witnessed the turning points of some nations of the Middle East, the Turkish propaganda's war machine throughout the Turkish Channel "TRT"'s adoption of the " the Resurrection Ertugrul". It embodied the Turkmen role in rising the Islam, with the marginalization of the significant Arab role and the other nations in the Islamic history, throughout the

audience's enthusiasm, the attraction of the background music, and well-organized artistic scenario.

In line with what has been said, and in order for propaganda to have the greatest impact through soft power, communicators have scientifically benefited from some theories of media effect. Especially those that need a period to make an influence on attitudes, beliefs, and convictions, which is called "long-term effect", just as the "vaccination" theory, which in the end produces "good audience" according to them. An individual who looks with suspicion at the history of his nation, his people, and his society, and this characterized by dullness and irresponsibility, after he boasts of the artificial heroism of the Turks. We refer here to the attractive show of the songs, and the theme songs of the displayed series, which integrates genuinely and with a plan between the characteristics of Eastern (Islamic) and the Western, and due to the irrational effect. It even pushed much active youth with the drama shows to ask for the Turkish invasion against their own countries to save them from poverty, injustice, and spread the peace.

The factor that further enhanced the chances of a soft impact of the Turkish drama on the internal and external audience is the viewership it gained, which was estimated at 700 million views, which is rated behind the United States of America in viewership.

The category of teenagers was the most watched and most affected. Especially in the aspects related to the impact of dubbed Turkish series on teenagers, who are the weakest link, and the most far from their spontaneous nature, their true selves, and their behaving in an artificial manner, therefore research and surveys centers conducted studies in this regard and reached the following results:

Twenty three % of participants began asking for a higher level of individual freedom awhile after their watch of the dubbed Turkish series. Twenty three % of the teenagers confirmed that those series had affected their lifestyle, in which they started to imitate their preferred celebrities in their looks, they also tried to learn how to prepare Turkish dishes or at least taste them by buying from the restaurants that serve these Turkish dishes. While 14% announced obviously that, their hours of sleeping had considerably dropped. Subsequently, their ability to study and process, memorize, and retrieved information when needed. Whereas 28% of teenagers began to consider having a love relationship or marriage from the



people whom they love, and 4% of the total participants have become more passionate and sensitive.

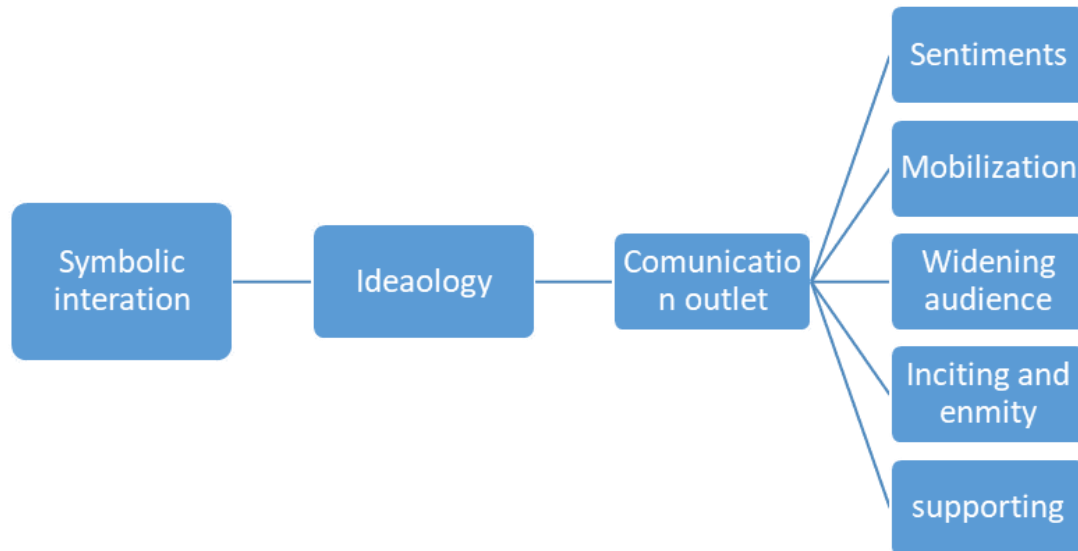
However, despite the fact that the Justice and development party pushed to play on passing its ideology throughout the visual effects, to silence the opposition voices inside Turkey on one hand, and to increase imposing its hegemony abroad, and affecting the political and social stability of many its competing countries, and they allocated a big financial budget for the sake of its success, on the other hand. But, there has been a major setback to the Turkish drama in terms of watching recently, as well as its financial revenues have been lowered after many Arabic channels had stopped showing the dubbed Turkish series because of the tension between Ankara and many Arab capitals during the last few years. This issue have caused a setback in the financial revenues of the Turkish drama; during 2020 the Turkish industry had only achieved 15\$ million dollars, whereas five years ago, it used to achieve an estimated 80 million dollars annually.

### **Thirdly: The strategy of construction and a symbolic interaction**

The media with its various outlets affects human beings' ideas, values, and behaviors, too. These media outlets have a magical power to make an impact on the people's subconscious and implant ideas that it introduces in their daily behavior, it also changes their perspectives about the world around them, and it might make a total substitute of the values and implant new values instead throughout forming a prototype imagination concerning many issues.

This strategy is one of the most significant manners that Turkey functions in the values and conviction reconstruction and achieving practical functions touch upon the political mobilization issues for is current regime inside and abroad the country.

The process of “construction and symbolic interaction” that the promoting media outlets to the Turkish policy are based, largely, on using the religious and nationalist symbols and meanings, which induces the audience's emotional side. It tries to reconstruct the audience's tendencies and mobilizes it to widen the popular block to increase the supporters of the AKP party, and this can be briefed in the following form:



Proceeding from the foregoing, and for the propaganda war machine to have a deeper impact, Turkey manipulates many files with religious and national dimensions, especially those that constitute issues of public opinion, and mass reactions gather around them. It bears popular symbolism for many, and pushes them to violence and aggression to defend its principles, are the most heated and sensitive issues and files that have been exploited by the media and propaganda arms of Turkey in the region. The Palestinian issue, the state of war with Israel, as well as the file of the Muslim Uyghur's in China, the Turkmen in Iraq, and other files that are comprehensive and influential in the popular community. Through which Ankara is trying to delude public opinion that it is its official sponsor. It seeks to serve its political propaganda in obtaining many privileges by manipulating the emotions of common people and provoking the affected groups with an aggressive, hysterical manner that does not often serve the causes they believe in.

In this context, the populist speeches of the current Turkish president, the media marketing of some terms, and the temporal and spatial symbols that are important to many, are being wrapped up by the moral dimension of a pragmatic character, which is in fact, different from the course of things.

### **Turkish reproduction of the Nazi experience in creating a hybrid public opinion**

The comparison has many identical aspects, even if the circumstances and timing were different. Just as Hitler inspired the hearts and minds of the world with his enthusiastic speeches, his

emotional body language. In addition, his focus on manipulating the Germans' emotions and their need to rise from the ruins of the economic catastrophe that inflicted on Germany after World War I. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is following in the same footsteps, endowing himself with a halo of sanctity and reverence. He carries in his personality the madness and recklessness of the Third Reich, and he finds in himself the new Islamic sultan, who has the ability to revive the Ottoman Empire again. In this context, he exploits the whims of the extremist Turks, to mobilize - in appropriate circumstances- the masses of his party of hardliners and beneficiaries. He seeks primarily to export a positive image to his competitors and opponents, that he has popular capabilities to mobilize and incite, and recruit them against the circle of fire that surrounds him at home and abroad. The propaganda circle the moral war apparatus under the Turkish president's control usually focus on taking advantage of the changes of life and the current data through speeches, slogans, enthusiastic songs and chants that glorify his person. He tries to combine politically the nationalist tendencies of the Turks, and to co-opt the Muslim Brotherhood's adherence to religious singularity in power.

Exactly, this is what Nazi Germany pursued previously in its expansionist wars to dominate the world, even if the goal differed, but the path is the same, and in the end, it produced an old state without men power that is still suffering from its effects to this day.

If we go back a little three years ago, the Turks employed in their military campaign against the Kurds in the Afrin region, the propaganda methods promoted by the German Minister of Propaganda and Psychological War Joseph Goebbels, by spreading rumors and fake news in popular circles, and marketing stereotypes. This deforms the reputation of fighters, and legal and symbolic figures in the Kurdish popular milieu, and the aim was to weaken the morale of individuals, whether civilians or military, and influence on their emotions, behaviors, and attitudes. Despite the fact that these methods have different effects, influence from one person to another according to the level of his loyalties, and affiliations. They are similar to what those in charge of Hitler's propaganda used when they adopted the "us and demons" approach, using of the psychology of mass communication to launch a misleading political campaigns to brainwash, confuse opponents, and manipulate public opinion.

Of course, the chapters of this psychological war were fed by the same traditional methods used by many countries, led by Germany during World War II, such as dropping warning notices, using aircraft, sound mines, loudspeakers, and recruiting the fifth column to sow discord and aggression and disrupt the internal front of the Kurdish regions.

Based on that, the Turkish propaganda and moral directing department exploit the state of instability and political chaos to create a state of paralysis in the joints of life. By depending on the intelligence and military tactics that were used by ISIS to fall the armies. This propaganda content was adopted based on the mechanism of intimidation, enticement, and repetition, the visual-audio dazzling persuasion.

### **Making of consensus and the lost herd**

In fact, with the escalation of the state of hostility and tension that Turkey experiences with its external surroundings and its challenges of security, political, and diplomatic crises. Ankara's options have become more focused on creating a supportive media atmosphere from local people, and others abroad, who do not hesitate to support its slogans, people are like a silently lost herd that follows the others.

We can quote here what the American Journalists, "Walter Lippmann" said about the ways of creating deceptive public opinion, when he indicated that the public is subject to propaganda that it does not believe in under the influence of linguistic and visual dazzling means. Thus, psychological control is carried out in a deliberate hierarchy over the recipient, controlling his interests, and making him in the "spiral of silence" through cumulative and comprehensive variables, and homogeneity in presentation and media marketing.

Accordingly, we find that Turkish soft tools top the list of psychological methods that have been carefully developed to create a well-studied argument and a profound effect on the value, intellectual, and psychological structure of a significant segment of its internal and external audience. It pushes them to incite aggressively against its opponents, and "making the consensus, confused and lost herd," and this is what it did in Egypt and Iraq

during the protests, where it was able to penetrate the hearts of a wide range of individuals by addressing their emotions.

This is what helped Turkish propaganda the most in moving from misleading the inside to invading outside the borders. Thus, modifying tendencies causing a change in some of them, which is playing on of emotions, subsequently, the lack of space to think rationally. In addition to the vacuum of a weak sense of loyalty to their state, lack of faith in its national symbols, and the decline of confidence in their political systems by individuals and groups (especially young, impulsive ones, as well as the lower one in terms of culture and awareness, and unemployed people). Owing to the absence of features of good governance, and strategic policies that guarantee self-protection from the arrows of media war, and the failure of regimes and governments to give the required importance to investing brilliant minds, and young energies to build, and reform.

### **Fifth column Mobilization**

In recent decades, the term "fifth column" - its name goes back to the Spanish Civil War - has risen a lot to refer to spies and secret local agents who form the local support for conspiracy, and plotting in the favor of the parties for which they work.

Given its importance in decisiveness, Turkey enlisted this device as one of the most prominent psychological tools to penetrate the opponents' lines. The psychological operations department in its propaganda apparatus was able to entice the Syrian mercenaries in those areas it seeks to annex. By aiming at causing confusion and panic in the internal structure, and providing Turkish weapons with accurate coordinates to target the effective figures and vital military, security, and civilian sectors in the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, whether targeting by drones or heavy artillery.

Firstly, this weapon, which is capable of resolving many battles, and negatively affecting the home front by spreading rumors (electronic flies), and chaos, is bought, and its loyalty is earned through money paid, secondly, illusory promises of obtaining ranks and positions in the structures of institutions that will be subject to the new management. Perhaps the meetings that were held in Turkey's areas previously under the name of "Saving Afrin", and today under the slogan "Saving Kobani" is nothing but a continuation of Turkey's purchase of some of the formations that it finances and recruits to legitimize its policy in the region. A good example to this kind of

dependence on the outside, the "Syria's Kurds Independent League", and its negative remuneration role in Afrin.

However, the matter does not stop there. In addition to implanting paid agents, the media agencies that support Turkish policies pass many lies, by exploiting professional weakness, and the absence of any media institutions affiliated with the Autonomous Administration in Syria, for example, from units and teams to verify content before publishing it, and the absence of any role of effective counter-propaganda. On the contrary, many activists and media figures in the body of this administration have become prey by sharing false news and fabricated images, which have had and are still having an effect that may match the effectiveness of spies in exhausting the psychology of the public.

Usually, the goal of local publishers is to gain fame and false scoop at the expense of respecting career ethics and a commitment to the social responsibility of the media outlets. Frequently, hearing any sound turns into a violent explosion, targeting by drones, or monitoring false news about military mobilizations into a proactive media material. It is being posted within moments on social media platforms, without verifying the accuracy of the information and the source or the validity of the image, and its credibility, and this is what serves - in one way or another - at the service of the Turkish psychological war. Especially since the feedback mechanism on the part of the receiving public becomes negative, stereotyped, and harmonizes with the Turkish novel aimed at morally falling the audience.

## **The Conclusion**

Based on what was previously mentioned, the power of psychological warfare and the effectiveness of its propaganda tools in influencing and controlling the public's convictions and behaviors. Whether that is through the recruitment of media outlets, or through secret local agents, and the modeling of events, and the stereotyping and marketing of negative images appear to us, within a framework consistent with pre-defined lines. Nevertheless, in the end, the chances of this psychological impact depend largely on our awareness of the media's strategies for influencing and controlling minds and emotions, and our ability to deny incorrect material, falsify it, and confront it with concrete logical arguments and evidence. In addition, bringing media psychologists whom their task is to reveal

the methods that achieve psychological protection for the public, and the communicator from the evil of false information. In addition to the importance of providing workers in the field of media with the knowledge that qualifies them to work with professionalism, morals, science, and management. Therefore, it protects them from the dilemma of publishing any propaganda that serves the purposes and strategies of the enemy. In this field, we can benefit a lot from the results of conducting research and scientific studies by researchers and academics. Especially those that analyze psychological warfare methods and ideological propaganda, and examine their emotional and mental appeals aimed at intimidating rivals, and thus we arrive at securing a solid home front capable of confronting the enemy's methods of moral warfare, controlling minds, and raising suspicion in their own selves.