

ACADEMIC JOURNAL VOL.1.0- ISSUE 1

**OXBRIDGE<sup>®</sup>**

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

**A COMMON GROUND  
FOR  
INTERDISCIPLINARY  
SCHOLARSHIP**





## *Psychology of Communication and the Psychological Codes of War*

**Asst. Prof. Dr. Ferhat Atik**

Faculty of Communication,  
Department of Communication and Media Management,  
Girne American University,  
Kyrenia, Cyprus

### **ABSTRACT**

This study argues that war is shaped not only by political, economic, and geopolitical factors, but also by individual unconscious drives, collective psychology, and the historical traumas of large groups. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Sigmund Freud's theory of Eros (the life instinct) and Thanatos (the death instinct) provides a conceptual framework for understanding the emergence of aggression and destructive impulses in human beings (Freud, 1920/1990). In this sense, war cannot be interpreted solely as a product of rational self-interest; it is also an expression of deeply rooted destructive tendencies embedded in human nature (Levy, 2007).

Vamik Volkan's concept of "chosen trauma" refers to the preservation, within collective memory, of severe historical experiences such as defeat, occupation, or genocide (Volkan, 1997). These traumas are transmitted across generations and become constitutive elements of group identity. Political leaders may reactivate such historical wounds in order to strengthen emotional cohesion within the group and to construct a psychological ground for mobilization toward war (Volkan, 2006). In this way, unresolved suffering from the past can be instrumentalized in the service of contemporary political conflicts.

Albert Einstein's ethical and humanistic perspective offers a universal lens through which these dynamics can be critically assessed. Einstein emphasized that violence and war do not lead to sustainable solutions, but rather undermine the shared existence of humanity (Einstein, 1933/2007). This view foregrounds the importance of moral responsibility and a culture of peace in international relations (Howard, 2013). The theoretical framework outlined in this study is examined through contemporary cases such as the Syrian civil war, the Russia–Ukraine conflict, and the Israel–Palestine dispute. Sectarian trauma in Syria (Phillips, 2016), historical belonging and imperial nostalgia in the Russia–Ukraine war (Kuzio, 2017), and intergenerational narratives of victimhood in the Israeli–Palestinian context (Milton-Edwards, 2008) illustrate how collective memory and psychological codes continue to shape contemporary conflicts. Ultimately, understanding the causes of war requires more than political and economic analysis; it necessitates a deeper exploration of individual psychology, collective memory, and the ways in which leaders mobilize these dimensions.

**Keywords:** War; psychoanalysis; collective unconscious; chosen trauma; leadership; boundary psychology; group identity; Einstein; Freud; Volkan



## **2. COMMUNICATION PSYCHOLOGY**

Communication psychology, as a field that reveals the deep psychological layers of human interaction, plays a crucial role in understanding the complexity of interpersonal and social relations. Communication is shaped by the interaction of conscious and unconscious processes (Freud, 1920). Human interaction is not constituted solely by spoken language; it is equally formed through silence, gesture, and implicit meaning, all of which carry both conscious intentions and unconscious themes. In this sense, the perception, interpretation, and transformation of messages are directly linked to psychological dynamics.

Especially in periods of large-scale social trauma such as war, communication ceases to be a simple exchange of information and becomes a central medium through which collective sensitivity, fear, and meaning are organized. During such traumatic times, patterns of communication undergo radical transformations (Galtung, 1996). Discourses of war frequently evoke intense emotions such as fear, uncertainty, anger, and hostility. The psychological impact of these communicative forms can leave enduring traces in the mental structures of both individuals and societies. The way people communicate with themselves and with others becomes an inseparable component of understanding the psychodynamic dimensions of trauma.

The psychological codes of war are expressed through unconscious messages, symbols, and language. These codes play a decisive role in the construction of identities, in the definition of belonging, and in the shaping of conflict narratives. For this reason, grasping the psychological dimension of communication is vital for understanding how war affects the human psyche and for creating the conditions necessary for social healing and the building of peace.

### **2.1. Definition and Scope**

Communication psychology is an interdisciplinary field designed to analyze the complex interactions of individuals and societies (Hermann, 1980). It demonstrates that communication is not limited to spoken or written words, but is deeply intertwined with emotional layers, unconscious processes, and symbolic expressions. The primary aim of communication psychology is to understand how individuals perceive themselves and the world around them, and how these perceptions shape behavior and social relationships.

Accordingly, the domain of communication encompasses not only verbal expression but also body language, vocal intonation, symbols, and unconscious messages. Moreover, communication psychology offers an in-depth analysis of power relations, communication barriers, and the psychological effects that emerge within communicative processes. Forms and contents of communication evolve in accordance with social structures, thereby revealing the significance of cultural and sociopolitical contexts.

In times of war, communication transcends the function of propaganda and becomes a powerful mechanism in the formation of identities and in the activation of complex psychological codes that deeply affect the human psyche. Communication psychology thus becomes an essential tool for understanding the link between inner psychological worlds and social structures, and for analyzing the emergence of psychological codes and the development of war psychology.



## **2.2. Communication Processes**

Communication processes lie at the core of the complex dynamics that exist between individuals and societies. Every interaction generates a flow of meaning, emotion, and information, and a deeper understanding of these processes enables a more profound comprehension of human nature itself. At a basic level, the interaction between sender, receiver, and message varies according to cultural context (Kriesberg, 2003). The sender encodes intentions through symbols and gestures, while the receiver interprets these signs within the framework of personal perception and belief systems.

The accuracy and impact of a message depend on the quality of communication channels, cognitive processes, and pre-existing attitudes. Mutual understanding and empathy are therefore indispensable for effective communication. Although these processes are theoretically defined, in practice they assume a highly complex and multidimensional character. Social dynamics, power relations, cultural differences, and social norms shape communication, yet communication is not merely the transmission of information; it is also a process through which social values and identities are continuously reconstructed.

Misinterpretations, prejudices, and communicative conflicts may obstruct this process. In times of war, these dynamics become intertwined with psychological mechanisms that sustain and intensify conflict. Communication strategies and patterns of misunderstanding play a decisive role in shaping events and in constructing collective memory. Thus, communication is not simply an exchange of messages, but a journey into the depths of the human psyche.

## **2.3. Communication and Psychological Effects**

The complex structure of war and the profound impact of communication reach into the darkest layers of the human psyche. The communicative environment of war can contribute to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (Volkan, 2001). This process inflicts enduring wounds on the psychological structures of individuals and societies, and communication channels play a critical role in how such wounds are formed and transmitted.

Disruptions in communication during war disseminate fear, uncertainty, and hopelessness, leaving lasting imprints on collective consciousness. Each moment of communication can either weaken psychological resilience or contribute to its restoration. Media narratives that shape the language and imagery of war further intensify these psychological consequences by influencing public perception and emotional response.

Because collective memory and the collective unconscious are structured through communication, they provide indispensable tools for deciphering the psychological codes of war. These codes reinforce identities, senses of belonging, and shared destinies, offering insight into how societies internalize the experience of war. The establishment and maintenance of meaningful communication are therefore essential for mitigating psychological damage and for fostering recovery. Conscious and ethically grounded communication strategies become key instruments in overcoming trauma and in strengthening intersocietal dialogue.



### **3. WAR AND SOCIAL TRAUMA**

The social trauma generated by war leaves indelible traces not only in the inner worlds of individuals but also in the collective consciousness of societies. The continuous remembrance of war and the intergenerational transmission of its memories create a wound within collective memory that continues to bleed over time. The communicative consequences of this trauma profoundly alter interpersonal relations and patterns of expression. In an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, individuals begin to question the intentions of others, which leads to deep doubts regarding reality, trust, and social interaction.

Such an environment produces fractures, ruptures, and, eventually, conflicts in communication. Post-war communicative processes are often marked by defensive and aggressive attitudes, weakening social bonds and deepening divisions. Social trauma shapes emotional states, threatens self-identity, and plays a decisive role in the reactivation of collective memory. At this stage, communication functions simultaneously as an expression of trauma and as a potential instrument of healing, while paradoxically also contributing to the persistence and dissemination of traumatic experience. The devastation inscribed in collective memory by war leaves lasting marks on the nature and dynamics of communication, forming a complex network that deeply influences the psychological well-being of both individuals and societies.

#### **3.1. Psychological Dimensions of War**

War creates a field of impact that inflicts wounds upon both individual psyches and social structures, evoking intense emotions such as fear, helplessness, and anger. Prolonged conflicts leave traumatic imprints in both the individual and collective unconscious. One of the most visible manifestations of these imprints is the rise in post-war adjustment disorders and psychological disturbances. Such conditions weaken fundamental feelings of security, belonging, and identity, thereby negatively affecting communication processes.

Distrust increases emotional distance and the tendency toward conflict, pushing individuals toward defensive postures rather than open expression. Social trauma thus becomes a psychological burden transmitted across generations. These traumatic traces embedded in the collective unconscious may pave the way for renewed cycles of violence and conflict (Volkan, 1997). Communication dynamics reveal how deeply war engraves itself within psychological structures, as unconscious defense mechanisms shape interaction patterns and emotional responses.

#### **3.2. The Concept of Social Trauma**

Social trauma constitutes a complex psychological condition that wounds not only individuals but entire societies. Trauma is fundamentally a collective experience (Galtung, 1996). Its roots lie in catastrophic events such as war, genocide, forced migration, economic collapse, or natural disasters. These experiences become embedded in collective memory, forming a heavy psychological legacy transmitted across generations.

One of the most striking manifestations of social trauma is widespread psychological disintegration within communities.



### **3. WAR AND SOCIAL TRAUMA**

The social trauma generated by war leaves indelible traces not only in the inner worlds of individuals but also in the collective consciousness of societies. The continuous remembrance of war and the intergenerational transmission of its memories create a wound within collective memory that continues to bleed over time. The communicative consequences of this trauma profoundly alter interpersonal relations and patterns of expression. In an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, individuals begin to question the intentions of others, which leads to deep doubts regarding reality, trust, and social interaction.

Such an environment produces fractures, ruptures, and, eventually, conflicts in communication. Post-war communicative processes are often marked by defensive and aggressive attitudes, weakening social bonds and deepening divisions. Social trauma shapes emotional states, threatens self-identity, and plays a decisive role in the reactivation of collective memory. At this stage, communication functions simultaneously as an expression of trauma and as a potential instrument of healing, while paradoxically also contributing to the persistence and dissemination of traumatic experience. The devastation inscribed in collective memory by war leaves lasting marks on the nature and dynamics of communication, forming a complex network that deeply influences the psychological well-being of both individuals and societies.

#### **3.1. Psychological Dimensions of War**

War creates a field of impact that inflicts wounds upon both individual psyches and social structures, evoking intense emotions such as fear, helplessness, and anger. Prolonged conflicts leave traumatic imprints in both the individual and collective unconscious. One of the most visible manifestations of these imprints is the rise in post-war adjustment disorders and psychological disturbances. Such conditions weaken fundamental feelings of security, belonging, and identity, thereby negatively affecting communication processes.

Distrust increases emotional distance and the tendency toward conflict, pushing individuals toward defensive postures rather than open expression. Social trauma thus becomes a psychological burden transmitted across generations. These traumatic traces embedded in the collective unconscious may pave the way for renewed cycles of violence and conflict (Volkan, 1997). Communication dynamics reveal how deeply war engraves itself within psychological structures, as unconscious defense mechanisms shape interaction patterns and emotional responses.

#### **3.2. The Concept of Social Trauma**

Social trauma constitutes a complex psychological condition that wounds not only individuals but entire societies. Trauma is fundamentally a collective experience (Galtung, 1996). Its roots lie in catastrophic events such as war, genocide, forced migration, economic collapse, or natural disasters. These experiences become embedded in collective memory, forming a heavy psychological legacy transmitted across generations.

One of the most striking manifestations of social trauma is widespread psychological disintegration within communities.



Beyond physical destruction, trauma produces communication breakdowns, pervasive mistrust, and a profound sense of hopelessness. It transforms singular events into shared psychological codes that shape collective identity and belonging. When communication channels are disrupted, the expression and processing of trauma become increasingly difficult, obstructing recovery. Consequently, understanding social trauma and its communicative dimensions is vital for safeguarding societal psychological health and for designing effective interventions.

### **3.3. Trauma and Communication**

The relationship between trauma and communication leaves deep imprints on collective memory. Every war and conflict reshapes communicative patterns through disruptions and distortions that perpetuate and intensify trauma. On an individual level, trauma stimulates fear, helplessness, and uncertainty, leading to communicative withdrawal, sudden emotional reactions, and ambiguity.

At the societal level, trauma generates divisions and conflicts within communication systems, making empathy and mutual understanding increasingly difficult (Hermann, 1980). Fear and uncertainty reinforce barriers that activate emotions such as anger and guilt, altering both the content and form of communication. Reconstructing collective memory and restoring communicative integrity therefore become essential components of healing and reconciliation. In this sense, trauma-informed communication practices play a crucial role in social recovery and peacebuilding.

## **4. FREUD'S PERSPECTIVE**

Freud's approach to the psychology of war offers a profound analysis of how traumatic experiences shape the unconscious (Freud, 1920). He demonstrates that the losses, fears, and violence encountered during war activate latent conflicts in the unconscious, leaving enduring traces on personality structures and communicative styles. According to Freud, the social turmoil that follows war is largely molded by the secondary effects of recurring traumatic themes embedded in the unconscious.

Anxiety and loss intensify the use of defense mechanisms, encouraging psychological strategies such as withdrawal, repression, and emotional numbing. War, therefore, is not merely an external historical event but a complex process that produces deep transformations within both individual and collective psychic structures. Understanding the movements of the unconscious becomes essential for the reconstruction of post-war societies, as communication is reshaped through the processing and reorganization of these inner dynamics. Freud's perspective thus provides a conceptual foundation for deciphering the psychic codes of war and for re-establishing communicative integrity in its aftermath.

### **4.1. Freud and the Psychology of War**

Freud's contribution to war psychology lies in his emphasis on the decisive role of the unconscious in the formation of traumatic experience. Severe collective traumas, such as war, inscribe lasting marks upon the unconscious, transforming into deep psychic codes that shape both personal and social identity. Defense mechanisms become central in coping with such experiences (Freud, 1920). Fear, anger, and helplessness provoke inner conflicts that, through unconscious processes, intensify tendencies toward aggression and projection.





Rather than confronting trauma directly, individuals often resort to repression or displacement, which in turn affects social communication. At the collective level, these mechanisms reshape emotional climates and communicative norms. Freud's analysis reveals that war trauma is not only remembered cognitively but is also preserved affectively within the unconscious, influencing patterns of interaction and collective memory. His framework thus offers a powerful lens for understanding the psychological roots of violence and the unconscious dynamics that sustain conflict.

#### **4.2. The Unconscious and War**

The role of the unconscious in wartime illuminates the intricate structure of the human psyche and the extent to which communication is intertwined with unconscious dynamics. In Freud's view, war represents a manifestation of repressed conflicts and instinctual drives residing within the unconscious. Emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt accumulate beneath the surface and shape communicative behavior in subtle yet pervasive ways (Freud, 1920).

In the chaotic environment of war, collective defense mechanisms suppress and redirect these emotions, often resulting in projection, dehumanization, and the erosion of empathy. Trust and solidarity weaken, while hostility and exclusion gain prominence. Communication thus becomes a medium through which unconscious anxieties and desires are externalized. The study of these processes demonstrates that the psychological impact of war extends far beyond conscious awareness, penetrating deeply into the unconscious and restructuring social interaction.

#### **4.3. Freud's Social Theory**

Freud's social theory provides a comprehensive psychological framework for understanding war and collective trauma. He argued that unconscious instincts and defense mechanisms, which are fundamental to individual psychology, also operate at the societal level. Social norms and communicative patterns can be interpreted as expressions of these unconscious forces, becoming particularly visible during large-scale conflicts (Freud, 1920).

Traumatic experiences are inscribed in collective memory and transmitted through shared symbols, narratives, and emotional codes. These unconscious structures shape intergroup relations, often generating cycles of hostility and repetition. Recognizing and working through such latent psychological codes is therefore essential for post-conflict recovery and social reconstruction. Freud's theoretical legacy thus underscores that war is not only a political and military phenomenon but also a profound psychological process rooted in the deepest layers of the human mind.

### **5. EINSTEIN'S PERSPECTIVE**

Einstein's reflections on war and peace introduce an ethical and humanistic dimension to the psychological analysis of conflict. For Einstein, war cannot be understood solely through strategic or political calculations; it must also be examined in terms of its devastating impact on the moral and psychological foundations of humanity. He emphasized that the deepest cause of war lies in the failure of genuine communication and mutual understanding between individuals and societies (Einstein & Freud, 1933).





From this viewpoint, communication is not merely an exchange of information but a medium through which emotions, values, and the collective unconscious are transmitted. When dialogue collapses and is replaced by fear, prejudice, and dehumanization, the psychological ground for violence is prepared. Einstein believed that scientific progress and intellectual responsibility should serve the cause of peace, providing humanity with tools not only to understand nature but also to transform its own destructive tendencies.

His approach highlights the necessity of ethical reflection in international relations and underscores the role of communication in healing social trauma. The wounds left by war in collective memory can only be addressed through a culture of dialogue, empathy, and critical consciousness. In this sense, Einstein's thought offers a normative framework for interpreting the psychological codes of war and for envisioning a communicative order oriented toward peace rather than domination.

### **5.1. Einstein and Human Nature**

Einstein, in his correspondence with Freud, acknowledged that human nature contains both creative and destructive potentials (Einstein & Freud, 1933). He argued that the same intellectual capacities that enable scientific and cultural advancement can also be mobilized in the service of violence and annihilation. This ambivalence reveals a fundamental tension within the human psyche: the coexistence of reason and aggression, empathy and hostility.

According to Einstein, when critical thinking and ethical responsibility are suppressed, societies become vulnerable to ideological manipulation and mass psychologies that legitimize war. The absence of self-reflection and dialogue leads to rigid belief systems that function as collective defense mechanisms, protecting individuals from anxiety while simultaneously fostering intolerance and dehumanization. In this context, the erosion of communicative openness does not only damage interpersonal relations but also poisons the moral fabric of societies.

Understanding human nature therefore requires acknowledging its inner conflicts and cultivating forms of communication that can transform destructive impulses into constructive social energy. For Einstein, peace is inseparable from the development of self-awareness, empathy, and rational discourse. Only through such psychological and communicative maturation can societies confront their own violent tendencies and move toward a more humane future.

### **5.2. Reflections on War and Peace**

War and peace constitute two fundamental poles of human history, shaped by recurring cycles of conflict and reconciliation. War inflicts not only material destruction but also deep psychological wounds that alter emotional structures, identity formations, and collective memory. Peace, by contrast, represents a fragile yet vital condition grounded in trust, dialogue, and mutual recognition.

Einstein maintained that lasting peace cannot be imposed through force; it must be constructed through understanding and ethical responsibility. The psychological roots of war—fear, the desire for power, and unresolved collective anxieties—can only be addressed through communicative processes that foster empathy and critical reflection. In this sense, peace is not merely the absence of violence but the presence of meaningful communication and shared moral commitment.



The analysis of the psychological foundations of war and peace thus reveals that conflict is sustained not only by material interests but also by symbolic narratives and unconscious identifications. Transforming these narratives requires a reconfiguration of collective memory and identity through dialogue. Such a transformation is indispensable for breaking cycles of hostility and for establishing a culture of peaceful coexistence.

### **5.3. Science and Communication**

Einstein regarded science as a potential instrument of peace, provided that it is guided by ethical awareness and communicative responsibility. Scientific knowledge, when transmitted through transparent and honest communication, can contribute to social understanding and cooperation. However, when detached from moral considerations, the same knowledge can be appropriated for destructive purposes.

The expansion of communication technologies has intensified the circulation of information and images, profoundly influencing collective perception and emotional life. In contexts of war, these technologies can either amplify fear and hatred through propaganda or support reconciliation by enabling the dissemination of truth and critical perspectives. Thus, communication becomes a psychological battlefield in which meanings, identities, and moral orientations are contested.

For Einstein, the task of science and intellectuals is not only to explain the world but also to contribute to its ethical transformation. Responsible communication, grounded in truth and empathy, constitutes a central mechanism for reducing the psychological conditions that sustain violence. In this framework, the alliance of scientific rationality and humane communication emerges as a cornerstone for overcoming the psychological codes of war and for building a sustainable culture of peace.

## **6. VAMIK VOLKAN'S CONTRIBUTION**

Vamik Volkan is one of the most influential scholars in the study of large-group psychology, collective trauma, and the transgenerational transmission of memory. His work demonstrates that wars and mass catastrophes are not confined to historical time but are preserved within the psychic structures of societies and carried forward through what he conceptualizes as “chosen traumas” (Volkan, 1997). These traumatic memories become embedded in collective identity and shape patterns of communication, perception, and emotional response.

According to Volkan, social groups store unresolved losses, humiliations, and experiences of victimization in the collective unconscious. These memories are symbolically represented through myths, rituals, narratives, and political discourse, and they remain psychologically active even decades or centuries later. In periods of political crisis, leaders may reactivate such memories in order to mobilize group emotions, reinforce in-group cohesion, and legitimize hostility toward perceived enemies. In this way, communication becomes the primary medium through which dormant psychological codes are reawakened and transformed into political action.

Volkan's approach emphasizes that war is not only a struggle over territory or power but also a struggle over memory, identity, and meaning. The persistence of collective trauma shapes how groups interpret threats, construct boundaries, and define the “other.” From this perspective, communication psychology becomes indispensable for understanding how historical wounds are narrated, transmitted, and emotionally charged within social discourse.



### **6.1. Small Groups and Trauma**

Small groups constitute a critical interface between individual psychology and large-group identity. Volkan argues that trauma is not only experienced individually but is also processed, symbolized, and transmitted within primary social units such as families, communities, and ethnic or religious groups (Volkan, 2001). These groups function as containers of affect, memory, and meaning, allowing traumatic experiences to be shared, interpreted, and internalized.

Within traumatized groups, communication is often marked by ambivalence: solidarity and emotional fusion may intensify, while suspicion, projection, and aggression toward outsiders simultaneously increase. Loss, mourning, and unprocessed grief can lead to rigid identity boundaries and defensive communication styles. Silence, denial, or repetitive storytelling become ways of managing unbearable emotional content.

Such dynamics demonstrate that trauma reshapes not only individual psychic structures but also the communicative norms of groups. The language of victimhood, heroism, and threat becomes central to group cohesion, while empathy for the “other” is weakened. Consequently, small-group communication plays a decisive role in either perpetuating cycles of hostility or enabling processes of mourning, differentiation, and reconciliation.

### **6.2. Collective Memory**

Collective memory represents a deep psychological reservoir in which a society stores its shared experiences, values, and symbolic representations. For Volkan, collective memory is not a neutral archive of the past but an emotionally charged structure that actively shapes present identities and future orientations (Volkan, 1997). War, displacement, and mass violence leave enduring imprints within this memory, transforming historical events into foundational myths and psychological reference points.

Through narratives, commemorations, and media representations, collective memory is continuously reconstructed and transmitted across generations. These processes influence how societies interpret current conflicts, define moral boundaries, and assign roles of victim and perpetrator. In this sense, memory functions as a psychological code system that organizes perception and communication.

When collective trauma remains unresolved, memory may become frozen in a state of repetition, reinforcing feelings of grievance and entitlement. Conversely, when it is symbolically worked through, memory can support processes of mourning, integration, and ethical reflection. Communication thus becomes the primary medium through which collective memory is either rigidified or transformed, shaping the psychological conditions for either renewed conflict or sustainable peace.

### **6.3. Volkan’s View of War and Society**

Volkan’s theoretical framework reveals that war is deeply rooted in the dynamics of large-group identity and the unconscious need for psychological continuity. He emphasizes the role of “chosen traumas” and “chosen glories” in constructing collective self-images and in legitimizing political narratives (Volkan, 2001). These symbolic structures provide emotional coherence but also foster polarization by intensifying the distinction between “us” and “them.”



In periods of social instability, collective anxieties are projected onto external enemies, and historical wounds are reactivated through political rhetoric and media discourse. Communication becomes saturated with symbols of threat, humiliation, and revenge, transforming psychological memory into ideological mobilization. Thus, the past is not merely remembered; it is psychically relived and strategically instrumentalized.

Volkan's contribution underscores that the psychological codes of war are embedded in language, symbols, and narratives that circulate within society. Understanding and transforming these codes require communicative processes that allow for mourning, differentiation, and the recognition of shared human vulnerability. Only through such psychologically informed communication can societies move beyond the repetition of trauma and toward a more integrated and peaceful collective identity.

## **7. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CODES OF WAR**

The profound psychological consequences of war leave enduring traces in both individual and collective psychic life, gradually forming a complex network of symbolic and emotional codes. These psychological codes, embedded in the unconscious, articulate the universality and timelessness of war through images, narratives, and collective representations (Freud, 1920). Beyond physical confrontation, war also constitutes an arena of inner conflict and psychological struggle. Fear, trauma, anger, and resistance are inscribed into the unconscious and transmitted through symbolic forms that shape perception and meaning.

Such codes become part of collective memory and identity, influencing how societies interpret past suffering and present threats. Messages and symbols generated during wartime are internalized and passed on across generations, forming a psychological legacy that structures communication, emotional response, and social boundaries. Feelings of insecurity and vulnerability disrupt everyday communicative practices and weaken social bonds, while defensive mechanisms and ideological narratives attempt to restore coherence and control.

Analyzing these psychological codes is essential for understanding not only the external dynamics of conflict but also its inner, subjective dimensions. Their recognition and transformation constitute a crucial step in processes of post-traumatic healing and social reconstruction, as well as in the strengthening of communicative and therapeutic mechanisms oriented toward peace.

### **7.1. Defining Psychological Codes**

Psychological codes can be understood as the deep, often unconscious structures that organize perception, emotion, and meaning within individuals and societies. These codes permeate cultural patterns and collective representations, shaping how reality is interpreted and how identity and belonging are constructed (Volkan, 1997). Operating largely outside awareness, they guide emotional reactions, moral judgments, and patterns of communication.

In the context of war, such codes crystallize around experiences of loss, threat, humiliation, and survival. They provide a symbolic grammar through which conflict is narrated and justified, embedding memories of suffering within collective identity. These unconscious patterns thus function as organizing principles of social memory, influencing intergroup relations and the construction of enemies and heroes alike.



Recognizing these codes enables a deeper understanding of the psychological dynamics underlying conflict and offers a pathway toward transforming destructive narratives into more integrative and humane forms of meaning.

## **7.2. War and Identity**

War profoundly disrupts and reshapes identity, reconfiguring existential boundaries and intensifying processes of differentiation between “self” and “other” (Bar-Tal, 2007). In periods of conflict, suppressed emotions resurface, identity fragmentation emerges, and crises of belonging deepen. Individuals and groups reinterpret themselves through narratives of victimhood, heroism, and sacrifice, encoding these meanings into collective memory.

Historical and cultural symbols associated with war become central to identity construction, transforming personal and communal self-understanding into emotionally charged representations. Even after the cessation of hostilities, these internalized identity models continue to influence attitudes, perceptions, and communication, sustaining long-term psychological effects.

Thus, war is not only a struggle over material resources or political power; it is also a symbolic and psychological contest over meaning, recognition, and belonging. Through communication and unconscious processes, identities are reconstructed, defended, and sometimes rigidified, shaping the emotional landscape of post-conflict societies.

## **7.3. The Psychological Foundations of War**

At the deepest level, war activates complex unconscious dynamics that leave lasting imprints on both individual and collective psychology. Trauma intensifies feelings of fear, anxiety, and insecurity, prompting the mobilization of defense mechanisms such as denial, projection, and idealization (Freud, 1920). These mechanisms influence communication by hardening positions and reinforcing polarized worldviews.

In conditions of extreme uncertainty and loss, identity defenses become closely intertwined with survival strategies, and communication often takes the form of emotionally charged, fear-based narratives. The collective psyche internalizes symbols and values that provide coherence and resistance, yet these same structures can also legitimize aggression and perpetuate cycles of violence.

These psychological foundations reveal that war is not merely an external event but a profound transformation of inner life. The psychic codes formed under conditions of conflict continue to resonate long after physical violence has ended, shaping memory, identity, and communication. Understanding and addressing these deep structures is therefore indispensable for any enduring process of reconciliation and peacebuilding.

## **8. COMMUNICATION AND VIOLENCE**

The relationship between communication and violence reflects the deepest tensions within the human psyche. Violence is not merely a physical act; it is also an expression of communicative breakdowns, misinterpretations, and the erosion of empathy. Human interaction is structured around the exchange of emotions, intentions, and expectations. Yet under conditions of fear and insecurity, trust deteriorates and aggression becomes a dominant mode of expression.



In periods of conflict, distorted communication and the absence of genuine dialogue often constitute the psychological infrastructure of violence. As Kriesberg (2003) notes, violence is closely linked to failures in communication and to the inability of parties to recognize one another's subjective realities. The psychological structure of violence is multilayered and complex. Emotions such as anger, resentment, and hatred, when combined with communicative barriers, generate self-reinforcing cycles of hostility that threaten social cohesion. In this context, the quality of communication becomes decisive. Dialogical practices grounded in empathy, active listening, and symbolic recognition can interrupt violent dynamics, whereas dehumanizing language and threatening rhetoric intensify them. Communication thus functions either as a catalyst for escalation or as a medium for de-escalation and reconciliation.

At the societal level, the normalization of violence is often reinforced through media discourse and propaganda. Manipulative narratives shape collective perceptions, legitimize aggression, and inscribe hostility into social memory. For this reason, ethically grounded communication strategies and psychological awareness are indispensable for addressing the psychosocial roots of violence and for fostering a culture of peace.

### **8.1. The Psychology of Violence**

Violence can be understood as an externalization of inner conflict (Galtung, 1996). It emerges from the interaction of fear, frustration, powerlessness, and the desire for control. In both individuals and groups, unprocessed trauma and perceived threats activate unconscious defense mechanisms that manifest as aggression. War environments intensify these dynamics, weakening reflective capacities and amplifying primitive emotional responses.

From a psychodynamic perspective, violent behavior often serves as a means of regulating unbearable affect, restoring a sense of agency, or projecting internal anxieties onto an external enemy. These processes are embedded in collective narratives that define moral boundaries and justify destructive action. Consequently, violence becomes not only a behavioral pattern but also a symbolic language through which psychological tensions are communicated.

Understanding the psychology of violence therefore requires an examination of unconscious motivations, emotional regulation, and the communicative contexts in which aggression is normalized or challenged. Such an analysis reveals that the roots of violence lie as much in psychic structures as in political or social conditions.

### **8.2. Communication Strategies and Violence**

Communication plays a decisive role in either escalating or mitigating violent conflict. Aggressive rhetoric, stigmatizing labels, and absolutist narratives intensify polarization and legitimize hostility. Conversely, communication strategies grounded in empathy, recognition, and dialogical openness can transform antagonistic relationships. As Kriesberg (2003) emphasizes, empathy and perspective-taking are among the most effective tools for reducing violence and fostering constructive engagement.

Ethical communication requires attentiveness to language, tone, and symbolic meaning. Threatening or humiliating expressions activate defensive reactions and reinforce cycles of retaliation, whereas inclusive and respectful discourse can create psychological safety and open spaces for negotiation.





In crisis situations, carefully designed communicative interventions may prevent escalation by addressing emotional needs and misperceptions before they solidify into rigid enemy images.

Thus, communication strategies are not merely technical instruments; they are psychological mechanisms that shape emotional climates and social realities. Their conscious and responsible use constitutes a fundamental component of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

### **8.3. Violence in Social Communication**

Violence is also embedded in symbolic and discursive forms of communication. It is transmitted through language, images, and narratives that define social hierarchies and legitimize exclusion (Bartal, 2007). Power relations, persuasive techniques, and ideological framing shape collective emotions and perceptions, often fostering fear, hostility, and moral disengagement.

In societies marked by unresolved collective trauma, communicative patterns may perpetuate historical grievances and reinforce intergroup boundaries. Polarizing discourse and manipulative symbolism contribute to the reproduction of violence by normalizing antagonism and suppressing alternative perspectives. Media representations and political rhetoric play a particularly influential role in this process, as they organize collective memory and emotional orientation.

To counteract these dynamics, social communication must be reoriented toward dialogue, critical reflection, and mutual recognition. The cultivation of communicative practices that acknowledge suffering, complexity, and shared humanity is essential for transforming symbolic violence and for constructing a sustainable culture of peace.

## **9. SOCIAL COMMUNICATION AND WAR**

Social communication touches the deepest wounds of the human psyche and constitutes a fundamental dimension in understanding the impact of war on individuals and societies. In zones of conflict, communication is not merely an instrument of confrontation; it is also a medium of meaning-making, survival, and, potentially, healing. Media representations, political discourse, and everyday narratives shape how war is perceived, remembered, and emotionally processed (Hermann, 1980).

Through propaganda and strategic framing, communication channels can intensify polarization, construct rigid in-group and out-group boundaries, and deepen collective anxiety. Messages circulating in the public sphere do not only inform; they organize emotions, define moral positions, and embed traumatic experiences within collective memory. In this sense, communication becomes one of the primary arenas in which the psychological reality of war is produced and reproduced.

At the same time, communication holds the potential to restore meaning and solidarity. While fear and hopelessness may be amplified through certain narratives, alternative forms of discourse can strengthen empathy, resilience, and a sense of shared humanity. The erosion of trust and mutual understanding, however, creates communicative ruptures that fuel cycles of violence and misunderstanding. For this reason, the development of ethically responsible and psychologically informed communication strategies is indispensable for social recovery and reconciliation in post-conflict contexts.



### 9.1. MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

During war, media functions not only as a source of information but also as a powerful psychological actor that shapes collective perception, emotion, and identity. Propaganda, disinformation, and symbolic framing are employed to mobilize populations, legitimize violence, and construct simplified moral binaries. Volkan (2001) emphasizes that such communicative practices reinforce large-group identities and intensify feelings of threat and victimhood.

Media narratives influence how suffering is interpreted, whose pain is recognized, and whose humanity is denied. Through repetitive imagery and emotionally charged language, collective memory is structured in ways that may either perpetuate hostility or, alternatively, support processes of mourning and understanding. Thus, communication technologies become tools that can either normalize aggression or promote critical awareness and ethical reflection.

The psychological impact of media discourse is therefore inseparable from the dynamics of war. Responsible journalism and transparent communication are crucial for preventing the escalation of hatred and for sustaining a public sphere in which dialogue, rather than demonization, can prevail.

### 9.2. War Propaganda

War propaganda represents a systematic attempt to influence collective consciousness by activating unconscious fears, desires, and identifications (Freud, 1920). By appealing to emotions such as pride, humiliation, anger, and anxiety, propaganda constructs symbolic enemies and idealized self-images. These narratives simplify complex realities and offer psychological coherence in times of uncertainty, but at the cost of critical reflection and moral ambiguity.

Through repetitive slogans, images, and myths, propaganda inscribes particular interpretations of history and identity into collective memory. It mobilizes large-group emotions by reactivating chosen traumas and by presenting contemporary conflicts as continuations of unresolved historical struggles. In doing so, communication becomes a weapon that targets not only rational judgment but also the deepest layers of the psyche.

Resistance to propaganda therefore requires psychological awareness and communicative literacy. The capacity to question emotionally charged narratives and to recognize unconscious manipulations is essential for reducing the psychological conditions that sustain war and for fostering a more reflective and humane public discourse.

### 9.3. Communication Networks and War

In the contemporary world, communication networks have transformed the temporal and spatial dimensions of war. Digital media, social platforms, and global news systems circulate images and narratives at unprecedented speed, intensifying emotional reactions and shaping collective consciousness in real time. These networks amplify both trauma and solidarity, fear and compassion, depending on how information is framed and interpreted.

The constant exposure to violence and suffering can produce desensitization, anxiety, and secondary traumatization, while simultaneously creating new forms of identification and moral engagement.



Communication networks thus operate as psychological environments in which meanings, identities, and emotional responses are continuously negotiated.

Understanding war in the age of global communication requires attention to these symbolic and affective processes. The psychological codes of conflict are no longer confined to battlefields; they circulate through screens, languages, and images, becoming part of everyday consciousness. Consequently, the ethical and psychological responsibility of communication has never been more critical for the prevention of violence and the cultivation of a culture of peace.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis presented in this study demonstrates that war cannot be adequately understood through political, economic, or strategic parameters alone. At its deepest level, war is a psychological and communicative phenomenon rooted in unconscious drives, collective memory, identity formation, and symbolic meaning-making. The theories of Freud, Einstein, and Vamik Volkan converge in showing that aggression, trauma, and large-group anxieties are not accidental by-products of history, but structural components of the human psyche and of social communication systems.

From Freud's perspective, war activates the death drive and mobilizes unconscious defense mechanisms that shape both individual behavior and collective narratives. Einstein adds an ethical and humanistic dimension, emphasizing that the collapse of genuine communication and moral responsibility paves the way for organized violence. Volkan, in turn, reveals how "chosen traumas" and transgenerational memory transform historical suffering into living psychological codes that continue to organize group identity and political mobilization.

Communication emerges throughout this framework as a double-edged force. It can transmit fear, hatred, and dehumanization, reinforcing the psychological infrastructure of violence through propaganda, symbolic exclusion, and identity polarization. At the same time, it holds the potential to enable mourning, empathy, and the symbolic working-through of trauma. Whether communication functions as a weapon or as a healing medium depends on its ethical orientation, psychological depth, and capacity for self-reflection.

The psychological codes of war—embedded in language, images, myths, and collective emotions—constitute a hidden grammar that shapes how societies perceive enemies, justify destruction, and transmit unresolved conflicts across generations. These codes operate largely at an unconscious level, yet they decisively influence political behavior, media discourse, and intergroup relations. Ignoring them means allowing history to repeat itself in ever-new symbolic forms.

Therefore, any sustainable peace project must address not only material conditions and institutional arrangements, but also the unconscious structures of communication and memory. A psychologically informed communication culture—grounded in empathy, critical awareness, and ethical responsibility—becomes a prerequisite for breaking cycles of trauma and violence. Only by decoding and transforming the deep psychological scripts that govern collective perception can societies move from repetition toward reconciliation, and from inherited fear toward a shared horizon of meaning and coexistence.



## REFERENCES

- Bar-Tal, D. (2007). Socio-psychological foundations of intractable conflicts. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 50(11), 1430–1453. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764207302462>
- Einstein, A., & Freud, S. (1933/2007). *Why war?* (H. J. Stenning, Trans.). London: Routledge.
- Freud, S. (1920/1990). *Beyond the pleasure principle*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Galtung, J. (1996). *Peace by peaceful means: Peace and conflict, development and civilization*. Oslo: International Peace Research Institute.
- Hermann, M. G. (1980). Explaining foreign policy behavior using the personal characteristics of political leaders. *International Studies Quarterly*, 24(1), 7–46. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2600126>
- Howard, M. (2013). *War and the liberal conscience*. London: Hurst.
- Kriesberg, L. (2003). *Constructive conflicts: From escalation to resolution* (2nd ed.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kuzio, T. (2017). Putin's war against Ukraine: Revolution, nationalism, and crime. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 25(2), 165–181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2017.1306695>
- Levy, J. S. (2007). Preventive war and democratic politics. *International Studies Quarterly*, 51(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2007.00430.x>
- Milton-Edwards, B. (2008). The Israeli–Palestinian conflict: A people's war. *Third World Quarterly*, 29(5), 911–926. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590802106070>
- Phillips, C. (2016). *The battle for Syria: International rivalry in the new Middle East*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Volkan, V. D. (1997). *Bloodlines: From ethnic pride to ethnic terrorism*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Volkan, V. D. (2001). Transgenerational transmissions and chosen traumas: An aspect of large-group identity. *Group Analysis*, 34(1), 79–97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/05333160122077730>
- Volkan, V. D. (2006). *Killing in the name of identity: A study of bloody conflicts*. Charlottesville, VA: Pitchstone Publishing.

## *Publication Ethics and Policies*

**Oxbridge Publishing UK, adheres to internationally recognized standards of publication ethics.**

**- *Plagiarism Policy***

All submissions undergo thorough plagiarism screening. Manuscripts with unethical similarity are rejected or returned for revision, ensuring originality and credibility.

**- *Conflict of Interest***

Authors, editors, and reviewers must disclose any potential conflicts of interest to ensure transparency and maintain the integrity and credibility of the publication process.

**- *Corrections and Retractions***

In cases of significant error or ethical violation, corrections or retraction notices are published and permanently linked to the original publication.

**- *Permanent Access Policy***

Published works are maintained with stable URLs. Content removal is avoided; instead, editorial notices are issued where necessary.

## *Our Promise*

Our publishing company is dedicated to supporting high-quality, original, and ethical scholarly work through the publication of academic journals and scholarly e-books. All publications are developed and released in accordance with internationally recognized academic publishing standards.

Our editorial processes are built on rigorous peer review, plagiarism screening, conflict of interest disclosure, and a strong commitment to academic integrity. Each published work is supported by clear and structured metadata, hosted on stable landing pages, and maintained with a long-term commitment to accessibility and preservation.

The reliability, traceability, and sustainability of scholarly content lie at the core of our publishing philosophy. We aim to ensure that every work we publish contributes lasting value to the global scholarly communication ecosystem through visibility, citability, and enduring academic relevance.

## **Contact**

**Email:** [info@oxbridgepublishinguk.com](mailto:info@oxbridgepublishinguk.com)

**Office:** 2 dickens road Coventry cv6 2jt - United Kingdom

**Message Center:** <https://bit.ly/44Pms6e>

**Web:** [www.oxbridgepublishinguk.com](http://www.oxbridgepublishinguk.com)

**Editor-in-chief:** Asst. Prof. Dr. Ferhat Atik - [ferhatatik@me.com](mailto:ferhatatik@me.com)



We are an inclusive workplace. Please email us about any adjustments you may need.



ACADEMIC JOURNAL VOL.1.0- ISSUE 1

**OXBRIDGE<sup>®</sup>**

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

**A COMMON GROUND  
FOR  
INTERDISCIPLINARY  
SCHOLARSHIP**

