

Call for Papers

War and the Public Sphere

A Symposium of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the University of Klagenfurt

5-7 March 2009

Vienna, Austria

The Austrian Academy of Sciences and the University of Klagenfurt are currently making arrangements for a symposium on “War and the Public Sphere”, which is to take place in Vienna from 5 to 7 March 2009. The symposium intends to bring together internationally renowned experts from the fields of media and communication studies, politics and history. Special emphasis will be paid to comparative research across time and space.

Immanuel Geiss, Professor Emeritus of Modern History, University of Bremen, will serve as introductory speaker. Among the keynote speakers confirmed to date will be:

Robert M. Entman, Shapiro Professor of Media and Public and International Affairs
at the George Washington University, Washington, DC

Daniel C. Hallin, Professor of Communication at the University of California, San Diego

Brigitte L. Nacos, Adjunct Professor of Political Science at Columbia University, New York

Philip Seib, Professor of Journalism and Public Diplomacy at the Annenberg School of
Communication at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles

Undoubtedly, the playing out of war in the public sphere is one of the most significant developments of modern warfare. The inclusion of civilians, not only as “manpower” and an increasingly vulnerable target of hostile actions but also for legitimating war in face of its tremendous economic and social consequences, requires the mobilization of society as a whole. Consequently, the “total war”, so dramatically experienced for the first time in World War I, brought along with it massive changes in the social organization of warfare, including the role of the media and public opinion.

The changing relationship between state and civil society aims, at least superficially, at cooperation rather than suppression (as it used to be) with state functions often taken on by intermediary institutions, such as the media. Although this understanding of the relationship between the state, the media and society prevails nowadays in times of so-called “limited wars”, it is only in recent years, as Daniel C. Hallin has put it, that research in the field of media and communication studies has begun to address “the impact of war and wartime communication in the relation of state and civil society, the structure of the public sphere, or political culture and social ideology”.

Considering these questions, the Vienna Symposium focuses on the pictures of war in our heads (to vary Walter Lippmann’s famous phrase), how they are shaped and how they are shaping culture, society, and politics. In particular, papers are welcomed which emphasize a comparative perspective to allow for different historical circumstances. Among the topics we wish to address are, for example:

- a communication perspective on the culture of war as a form of individual and national self expression (e.g. in terms of solidarity, heroism or masculinity)
- the role of the media in the social construction of “self” and the “other” and its possible impact on policy making in times of crisis
- the modes of how war is accessible to the public and the techniques of how war is made accessible to the public (which depend partly on the changing role of war correspondents from observers to participants)
- the ethics of war (as expressed in theories of “just war”, “self-defence”, “deterrence”, and “pre-emptive war”) and its implications for public representations of war which are often assumed to be moving from the “sphere of consensus” to the “sphere of legitimate controversy”
- the ways how people give meaning to war and war news by integrating them into larger structures of cultural patterns
- and, last but not least, how mediated war images and narratives affect the routines of people’s lives as well as their attitudes, thus building collective memories and constraining policy options.

The papers may feature empirical as well as methodological, theoretical, and critical studies. Extended versions of selected papers will be published in a proceedings volume edited by the Organizing Committee of the symposium.

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Submission of proposals opens on November 10, 2008. To submit your proposal, visit the conference submission website (<http://www.oeaw.ac.at/cmc>) where you will be able to submit your proposal electronically. The deadline for submissions of proposals is December 10, 2008. To submit a paper, please firstly create an account (your e-mail address is your user name). Then log-in with your user name and submit the title of your presentation. After submitting the title of your presentation, please upload an anonymous abstract of no more than 500 words as a PDF file. You can also add additional authors. The submissions should not previously have been published, nor should be under consideration for publication. All submissions are subject to blind peer-review. You will be notified of the decision of the Organizing Committee at the latest by January 15, 2009.

Please note that all presenters will need to register and pay for conference attendance. Online registration will be open from February 1 to March 4, 2009. There will be several registration packages available from 25 Euros upwards. The full package amounts to 400 Euros covering participation, accommodation (from 5 to 8 March 2009), an opening reception on Thursday evening (5 March), lunch, and a conference dinner on Friday evening (6 March). The conference will close at noon on Saturday, March 7. Please note: Due to the numerous congresses taking place in Vienna during the first week of March 2009, it is very difficult to find a room in that period.

Organizing Committee:

Matthias Karmasin, Professor of Media and Communication Studies at the University of
Klagenfurt

Gabriele Melischek and Josef Seethaler, Senior Researchers at the Commission for Comparative
Media and Communication Studies, Austrian Academy of Sciences

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