

# Enemy images



- What are “enemy images”?
- Why do we “need” an enemy?
- How are “enemy images” created?
- What is our perception of the enemy?
- How do enemy images influence our actions?
- Are contemporary and historical enemy images alike?
- Are there similarities with enemies shown in fiction?
- What can we do to promote a more realistic view?

**"Warfare is NOT intrinsic to human nature and not based on genetic, brain or instinctual factors."**

(the Seville Statement on Violence)

In 2004, there are 35 low intensity wars, 40 million refugees and displaced persons and 20% of the world's population lives in absolute poverty. Enemy images are used to justify the violence of war and oppression.

While conflict and enmity have many sources – political, economic, religious and so on, they have also psychological causes. One of the most significant is the exaggerated image of the enemy and the exaggeration of his negative characteristics.

# Create an enemy

## - dehumanization step by step

The enemy is described as

- “your unconscious shadow”
- full of greed, hatred, carelessness, cruelty
- not an individual
- never smiling, hoping or loving
- a skeleton, beast, insect, vermin
- accompanied by devils, demons and other evil creatures of your nightmares

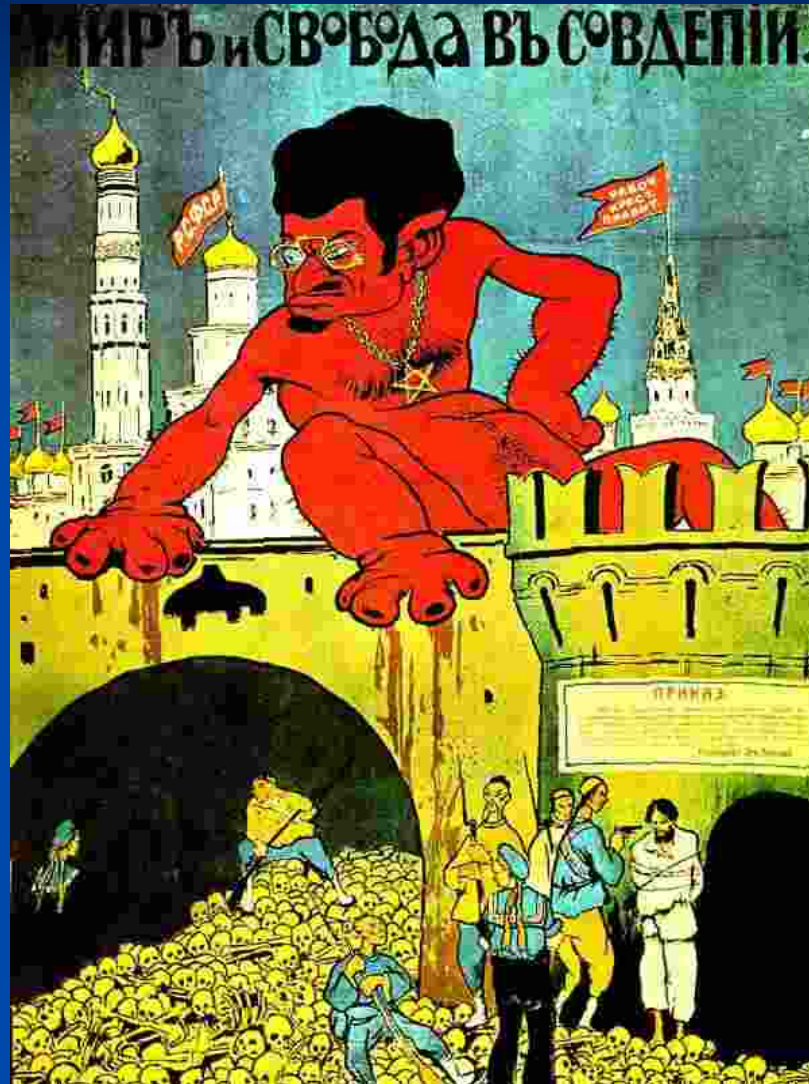
As he seems totally inferior, inhuman und extremely dangerous, you can now kill him without guilt, slaughter him without shame.



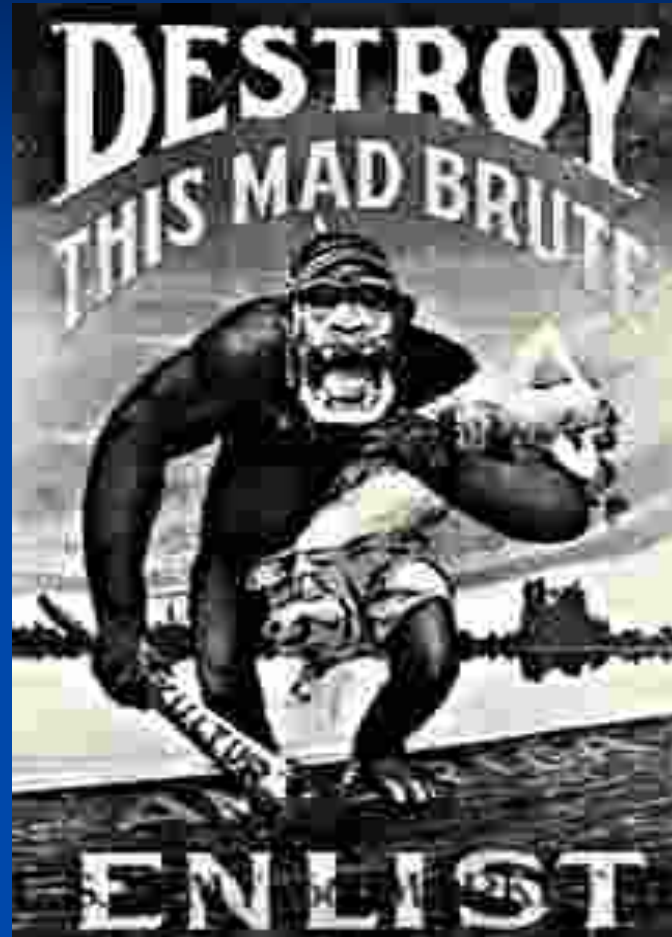
***THIS IS THE ENEMY***



a beast, barbarian, monster,



man-eater, rapists, child-  
murderer



an insect, snake, etc, etc



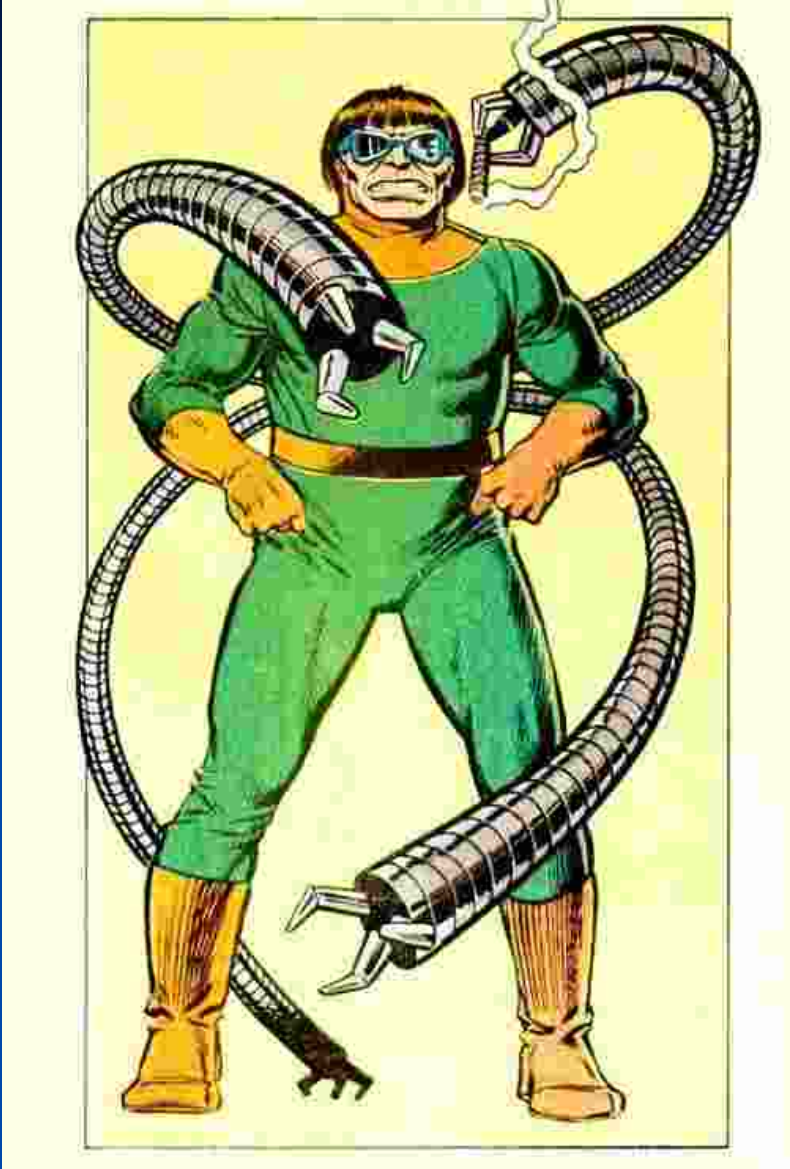
# Why do we “need” an opponent?

- Thinking in opposites such as “good” and “bad” are important for one’s identity formation and decision-making processes
- Having an opponent strengthens a sense of belonging to a family/ group/ nation that distinguishes between “us and them” (ingroup and outgroup)

# Influence of the media???

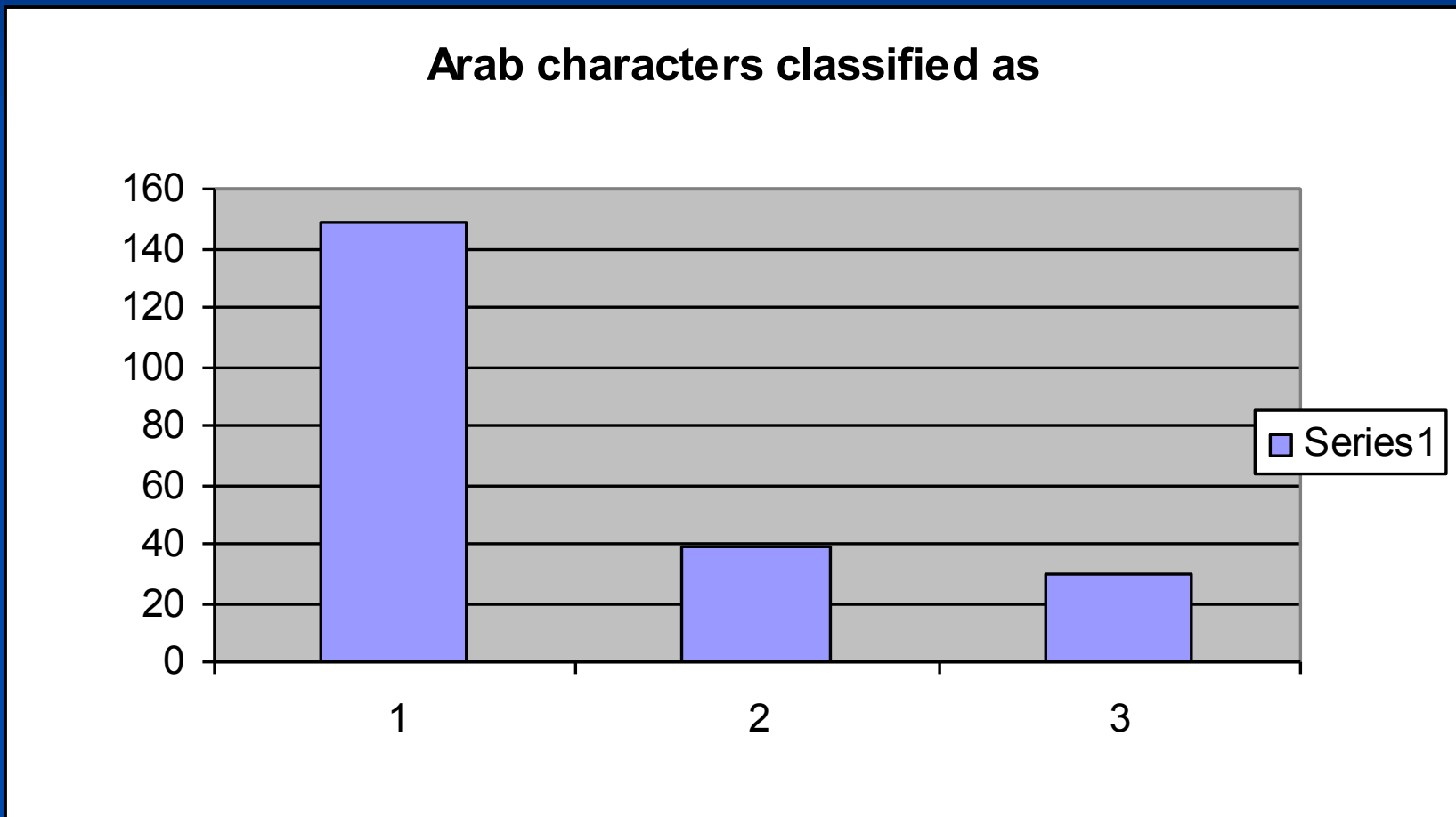
## enemies as shown in comics





# Think about it. Does the media affect our perceptions of others?

Shaheen (2002): Portrayal of Arabs in American comic books  
1=evil (149), 2=common people (39), 3=good (30)



# the most common villainous Arab characters used in comic books

- the repulsive terrorist
- the sinister sheik
- the rapacious bandit

Arab women are mostly shown as oppressed and voiceless.





Islam and fundamentalism are often portrayed as going hand in hand, suggesting that all Muslims are radical fundamentalists associated with violence and terrorism.

Enemy images in films and comics are contributing to widespread racism, creating negative stereotypes.

Enemy images distort our thinking by influencing cognitive processes such as attention, memory and attribution.

# Projection, stereotypes and mirror imaging:

In projection, parties to a dispute perceive the other (the outgroup) as expressing unwanted and unconscious aspects of their own group (the ingroup).

In a protracted conflict, parties to a dispute can develop negative stereotypes of each other that are often mirror images, in which elements of each side's perceptions of the other become very similar.

# Attribution of motive for action

IF YOU ARE:

acting selfishly, unsocial:

It's the pressure of the situation.

acting peacefully,

cooperative:

“as always”

IF THE ENEMY IS:

acting selfishly, unsocial:

He shows his “real face”.

acting peacefully,  
cooperative:

It's the pressure of the situation.

He had no other choice.

He has a hostile motive and wants to trick you.

Just a wolf in sheep's clothing?



According to Middens (1990), “The threat of enemies justifies actions that might otherwise be unacceptable or illegal. Physical assault and killing becomes justified in war.... Enemies serve as a focus for aggression and as a means of diverting attention from complex and pressing internal problems.... In addition, enemies provide a contrast by which a person or nation can...inflate their sense of superiority”

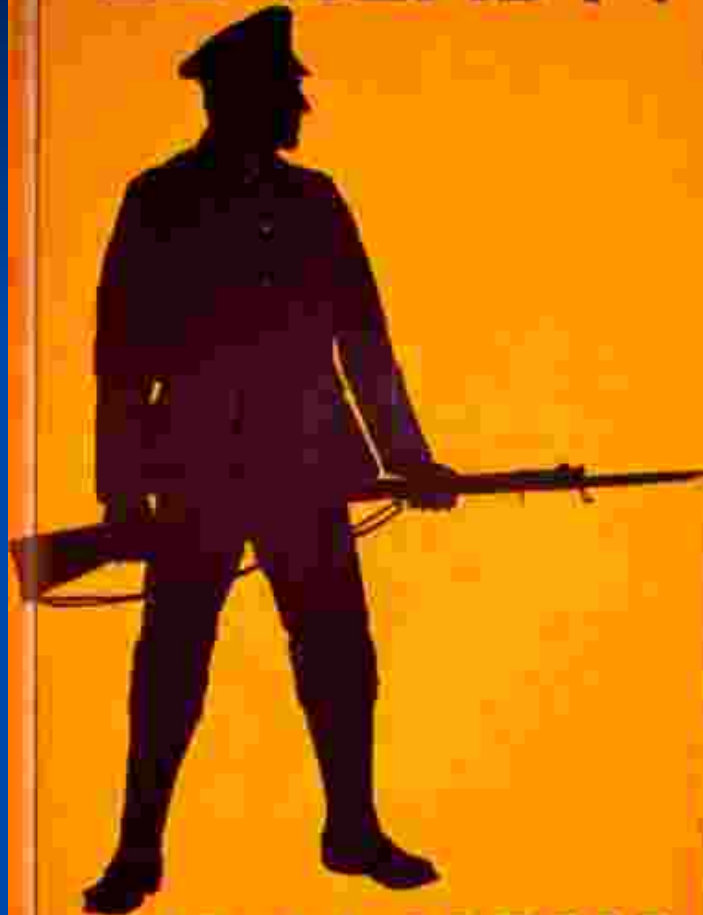
According to President Bush (2003), “In America, we say, everybody is precious, everybody counts, everybody is equal in the eyes of the Almighty. That’s not what the enemy thinks. They don’t value innocent life. They’re nothing but a bunch of cold blooded killers, and that’s the way we are going to treat them.”



Will you fight now  
or wait for **This**



**BE READY!**



**JOIN NOW**

# “us” versus “the enemy”

expressions used by the British press during  
the Gulf War 1991

Our soldiers are

- professional
- confident
- cautious
- loyal
- resolute
- brave
- young knights of the sky

Their “militiamen” are

- brain-washed
- desperate
- cowardly
- blindly obedient
- ruthless
- fanatical
- bastards of Baghdad

# WE

- take out/ suppress
- eliminate/ neutralize
- use precision bombs
- launch first strikes  
preemptively
- Our planes suffer a high rate of attrition/ Fail to return from missions

# THEY

- destroy
- kill
- fire widely at anything
- launch sneak attacks  
without provocation
- Their planes are shot out of the sky/ are zapped

# The “pro-us” illusion

might lead to:

- underestimating the opponent and therefore initiating a war in a spirit of overconfidence.
- believing that the people/soldiers in the opposing country are more discontent than they actually are.
- believing that the opponent has less popular support
- underestimating the likelihood of a third party intervening.

In war  
the first victim  
is  
truth



# Propaganda: The language of War

- “Human death” becomes “collateral damage”
- Percentage of a population one is willing to sacrifice in a war is expressed as TLD (Tolerable Level of Destruction)
- The bombing a city becomes “an operation with clinical precision”

**Pictures of civilian victims are avoided, because one might question the necessity of violence.**





# Realistic Empathy

- humanizes the enemy
- identifies possible rational reasons for actions taken by the enemy
- illuminates different aspects of the situation, which may be affected by projection and mirror imaging

Realistic empathy does not mean sympathy, but is simply an attempt to “understand what is in the mind of others”.

**What steps are officially taken to promote peace and understanding?**

# “The Program of Action on a Culture of Peace”

(adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1999)

promotes

- understanding, tolerance and solidarity
- peace education
- sustainable economic and social development
- human rights
- equality between men and women
- democratic participation
- free flow of information and knowledge
- international peace and security

# Declaration of Principles on Tolerance

## Member States of UNESCO on 11/16/1995: From Article 1

- 1.1 Tolerance (...) is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible.
- 1.2 Tolerance is, above all, an active attitude prompted by recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. (...) Tolerance is to be exercised by individuals, groups and States.

# Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (contd.)

- 1.3 Tolerance is the responsibility that upholds human rights, pluralism (including cultural pluralism), democracy and the rule of law.
- 1.4 Consistent with respect for human rights, the practice of tolerance does not mean toleration of social injustice or the abandonment or weakening of one's convictions.

# What can civilians do to overcome the spiral of hate? Some examples:

- Active nonviolent resistance through, for example, boycotts or non-cooperation (nonviolent resistance seeks to appeal to conscience and understanding, not to defeat or humiliate the opponent)
- Promote GRIT (Graduated and Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension-reduction)

# GRIT (Graduated and Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension-Reduction)



In a situation that does not allow big steps towards a peaceful resolution of a conflict, both sides can only come to an agreement using a lot of small steps towards a better understanding. GRIT was successfully used as a method in international conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

# Did you know...

...that no human being can be less closely related to any other human than approximately fiftieth cousin?



# Learn more about enemy images

- Enemy images – A Resource Manual on Reducing Enmity, Psychologists for Social Responsibility
- US & THEM – the Challenge of Diversity, Stephen D. Fabick, Ed.D.
- Faces of the Enemy – reflections of the hostile imagination, the psychology of Enmity, Sam Keen
- The world is a dangerous place, Images of the Enemy On Children's Television – Petra Hesse, Centre for Psychology and Social Change

Presentation developed by:  
Stefanie Friedrich, PsySR Intern

[stefanie@psysr.org](mailto:stefanie@psysr.org)

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208 "I" Street, NE, Washington, DC, 20002 USA

[www.psysr.org](http://www.psysr.org), [psysr@psysr.org](mailto:psysr@psysr.org)

**Get involved!!!**

## other supporters

### **Forum Friedenspsychologie e.V. (Forum for Peace Psychology)**

contact: Prof. Dr. Gert Sommer,  
Fachbereich Psychologie, Gutenbergstr. 18, D-35032 Marburg, Germany  
Tel. 06421-2823666/8, Fax: 06421-2824281  
e-mail: [forum@friedenspsychologie.de](mailto:forum@friedenspsychologie.de)

### **Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict and Violence:** Division of Peace Psychology of the American Psychological Association (Div. 48)

contact: Stephen D. Fabick, Ed.D.  
email: [stevefabick@aol.com](mailto:stevefabick@aol.com)

or contact the Administrative Office, American Psychological Association,  
750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002-4242; Tel: (202) 336-6013; Fax:  
(202) 218-3599

**Thank you for your  
attention!**