

Narrative and Warfare

Philippines (1941 – 1945)

Japan's Narrative Incongruity vs Guerrilla Narrative Congruity

“...psychological operations” is often misunderstood as the preposterous proposition that words can substitute for deeds... —Angelo Codevilla, Paul Seabury (2006)

→ What lessons can we apply to counter, stem, or collapse contemporary CCP expansionist efforts—to try to persuade other governments and civil societies to turn down CCP influence and projects?

- For example, should the U.S. and allied governments conduct direct persuasion campaigns or persuade by/with/through foreign civil-society systems?

The Japanese occupations of the Philippines during the Second World War was as close to an overwhelmingly strong (foreign) government controlling the entire information environment as any time in history.

Japanese propaganda was 24/7/365—constant radio, daily papers, weekly films, pamphlets, and more.

There were no open attempts at wide counter-narratives by Philippine and U.S. resistance.

There were no overt attempts to correct constant oversaturation of Japanese disinformation and misinformation over their occupation, crimes against humanity, war crimes, brutal totalitarian military rule, racism, or goals.

Any counter-narratives—until the U.S. Army returned—were conducted almost entirely by deeds (propaganda by action) by guerrillas, subversives, saboteurs, spies, and passive resistance. While word of resistance was spread by word of mouth, this was conducted so quietly as almost to be silent lest anti-Japanese sentiment be stomped out by force.

This was an extreme example of the limits and failure of disinformation, failure when messaging is congruous with action.

Japanese promises through propaganda:¹

- “New Philippines for and by Filipinos.”
- Liberation from U.S. occupation
- “Asia by Asians”
- “Co-prosperity Sphere in the Greater East Asia.”
- Via films, radio, literature

Japanese means of controlling the information environment:²

- Air raids first targeted anti-Japanese news services—radio towers and stations, newspaper offices and printing presses
- Shut down formal news outlets not supportive of Japanese
- Banned foreign radio broadcasts
- Banned news in English
- Confiscated radios or altered to only access pro-Japanese propaganda
- Registered typewriters

Japanese actions:³

- Death camps for transgressors
- Lack of freedom of ideas and speech
- Japanese military control of everything
- Every Filipino had to bow before any and every Japanese soldier
- Puppet government did not represent most Filipinos and Filipinas
- Thousands of Filipinas were torn from families and forced into slavery to serve Japanese soldiers and sailors

→ The Japanese had descended upon the Philippines, armed only with empty promises of Asian prosperity while looting the nation's warehouses, stores, and crops.⁴

→ In [Manilla], men, women, and children starved to death each day by the hundreds. Others turned to thievery, prostitution, and even grave robbing to survive. Manila had devolved into a humanitarian catastrophe...⁵

→ ...Japanese occupation...ruined the economy, triggered widespread starvation, and shredded the social fabric...⁶

Anti-Japanese (non-Maoist) guerrillas:⁷

- U.S. and Filipino guerrillas conducted almost no propaganda except by deed (no counter-narratives)—treated population respectfully and defended innocents
 - Word of mouth throughout all islands and Manila—quietly, rarely openly, never widely
 - Messengers clandestinely traveled from Australia (where MacArthur had fled) to communicate with some guerrilla leaders
 - Use of indigenous runners to deliver written messages between resistance networks

World War II:

- Japan's invasion and destruction of the Philippines were ruthless (end of 1941 and start of 1942). Subsequent death marches, death camps, lethal subjugation was crime against humanity after crime against humanity.
 - *December 8th, 1941: Japanese attack on Clark Field*—followed by bombings across Manila and more.⁸

- *January 2nd, 1942: Japanese occupy Manila.*⁹
- *April 9th, 1942: Bataan Death March.*
- January 1942 – January 1945: guerrilla warfare against Japanese occupiers (MacArthur departs Philippines March 1942 and returns to Philippines' Leyte Island in October 1944).
 - Guerrilla/espionage/subversive/influence warfare (mostly Filipinos¹⁰, some U.S. Army insurgent commanders, some First Nations peoples) and counter-guerrilla campaigns in the subsequent years were brutal.
 - Through these periods, disease, starvation, dehydration, exposure, and absence of institutions and governance and facilities for municipalities, multiplied deaths.
 - An active second insurrection (Maoist “Huks” against the Japanese as well as any Filipinos and Americans wanting a return to stability and traditional governance) complicated these years.
 - And civilians deprived, starved, targeted, murdered in war crimes, and caught in Japanese crossfire (indiscriminate invasion and counter-guerrilla war and defense against the U.S. return) multiplied casualties manifold.
 - The guerrilla movement was widely supported by civilians to the point that in the final days, Japanese troops could not count on civilian labor and felt insecure as if the entire population was against them (they were):
 - *...the population's hostility toward the Japanese meant that many civilians would likely turn on his troops when MacArthur's forces arrived.*¹¹
- The return of the U.S. military to liberate the Philippines and rescue allied prisoners of war was one of if not the deadliest battle in the history of the world. These comprised the Battle of Leyte Gulf, Battle of Leyte, Battle of Luzon, Battle of Manila (this last comprised one of deadliest urban battles in history—won in March 1945).
 - October 1944: Battle of Leyte Gulf (arguably largest naval battle in history)
 - October – December 1944: Battle of Leyte
 - December 1944 – July 1945: Battle of Luzon.¹²
 - Feb 1945 – Mar 1945: Battle of Manila.
- The naval wars, air engagements (kamikazes were at their height), jungle warfare, mountain warfare, extended tunnel warfare, and urban warfare were so bloody that historians in just the last decade are starting to make sense of all that happened—lessons applicable to modern warfare.

Narrative streams:

- Filipinos fought against the Spanish (with U.S. as allies) for independence and self-determination.

- Philippine guerrillas then fought U.S. occupiers for independence and self-determination.
- Before World War II, the U.S. government promised independence in 1946.
- During World War II, Philippine guerrillas, with support only from individual U.S. Army volunteers, fought against the Japanese for independence and self-determination.
- Informally U.S. guerrilla leaders fighting alongside Filipinos against the Japanese promised a liberated and independent Philippines as a mutual goal towards this objective of self-determination.
- Although recapture of the Philippines did not offer strategic advantage to U.S. forces (U.S. military could reach the Japanese mainland without control of the Philippines), MacArthur (viewed as a villain, coward, hero, and savior in different circles of the Philippine resistance) still returned as he promised.
- Philippines was indeed given independence in 1946—a sovereign state no longer a U.S. territory. Although this was after WWII, the promise of self-determination was indeed delivered.
- To date the battles and atrocities in the Philippines during the Second World War are largely unknown in most elementary school systems outside the Philippines. For example, little is taught about the Rape of Manila in the waning days of Japanese occupied Philippines:
 - *...massacre where the death toll...as high as 500,000 military personnel, men, women, and children were killed along with 20,000 or more women and children raped...*¹³
 - *The Bayview Hotel in Manila was used as the main rape center for the Japanese for their Rape of Manila conquest, along with the San Juan de Dios Hospital, the St. Paul's Convent, and St. Vincent de Paul Church.*¹⁴
 - *... the Imperial Japanese Forces, rounding up thousands of women and children as young as 12 years old, taking them into the Bayview Hotel.*¹⁵
 - *... locking thousands of civilians inside homes and social halls before setting them ablaze.*¹⁶
 - *Many innocent civilians were also used as human shields to protect Japanese defensive positions around Manila.*
 - *Reports have also stated that they would set Filipinos and Filipinas on fire after they were done with them, dousing them in gasoline...*¹⁷
 - *...clear the city of Filipino guerillas before and during the US advance. Along with this mission, they proceeded to indiscriminately bayonet pregnant women and ripped their babies out of their bellies.*¹⁸
 - *Japanese Imperial Army had gone into the De La Salle University on February 9, 1945. The Japanese, who thought that the Catholic priests and nuns were helping the American and Filipino forces...killed everybody within the campus...*¹⁹