



**HOW DO PROVERBS CONTRIBUTE TO THE  
PROPAGATION OF PROPAGANDA AND THE  
REINFORCEMENT OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY ?**

# **WHERE IS THE LINE**

**DRAWN BETWEEN THEIR CULTURAL USE AND MANIPULATIVE TACTICS?**

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## Propaganda Poster

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In my research project, I'm delving into the intricate relationship between proverbs and propaganda, with a primary focus on two key objectives.

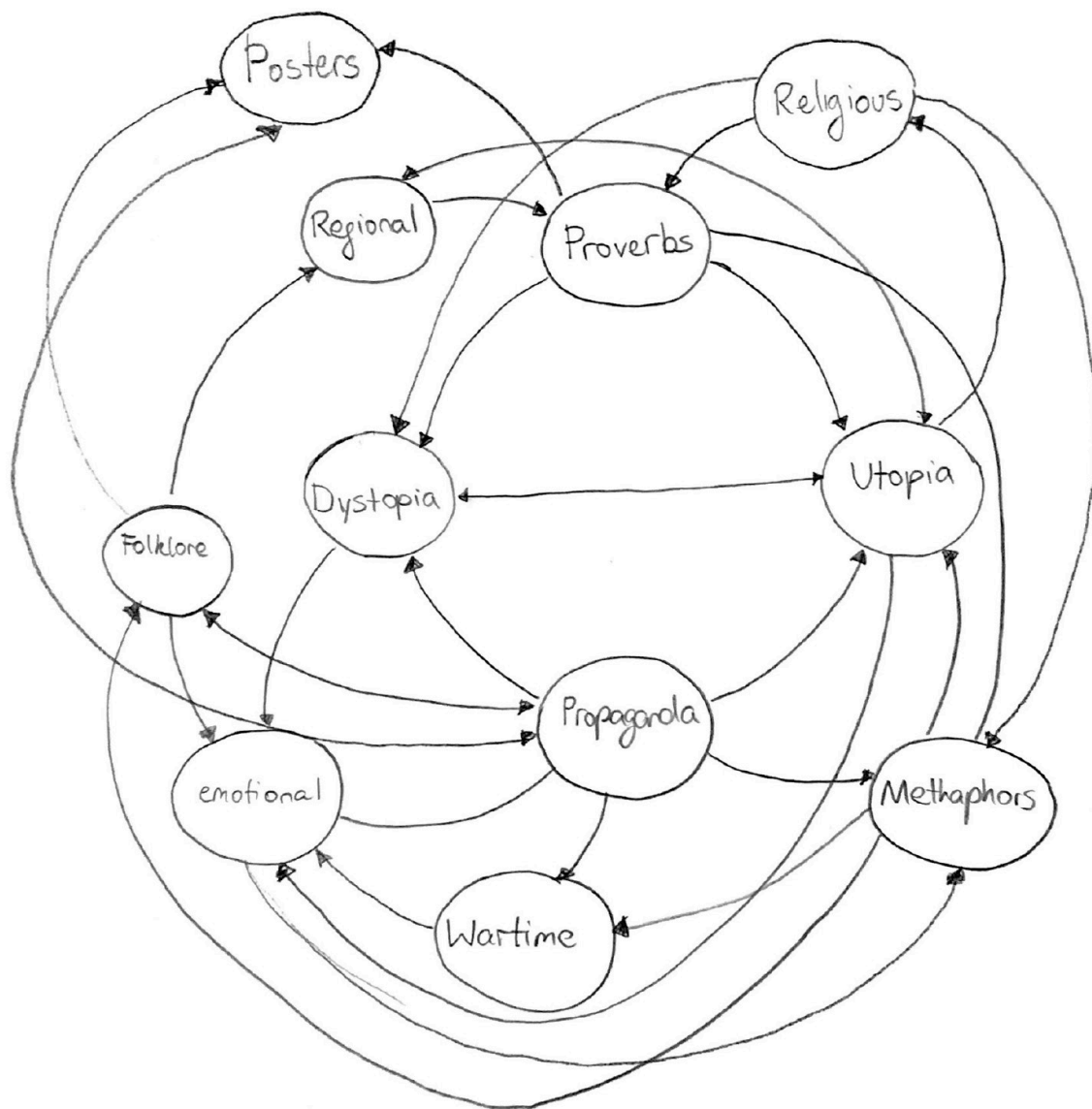
Firstly, I aim to analyze the extent to which proverbs are used in propaganda materials, investigating their prevalence as rhetorical tools in publications and poster designs issued by the government. Secondly, I'm exploring how these proverbial expressions contribute to reinforcing collective or regional identity. This involves examining the cultural and historical contexts that shape the use of proverbs in propaganda and understanding how they resonate with specific groups, shedding light on how government institutions might employ them to manipulate public opinion.

I'm particularly interested in the challenge of determining when proverbs transition into propaganda, as this boundary can often be ambiguous. This distinction is crucial to my re-

search, as it underlines the fine line between these two concepts and their potential overlap.

For the second part of my project, I'm planning a studio-based practice. Here, I'll practically demonstrate how proverbs and propaganda methodologies function. I'll create my own propaganda materials or use historical examples to reveal how proverbs can significantly impact public perception.

By combining research with practical exploration, my project aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the use of proverbs in propaganda, their role in shaping collective identities, and the potential dangers associated with this manipulation. I will also explore the blurred lines between proverbs and propaganda, ultimately offering insights into the mechanics of propaganda and how it can be challenged or exposed through my practical work.



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## Propaganda - Words

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Motive: *Text*

Font: *Upper Case, Sans Serif, Calligraphy*

Feelings: *Upcoming Danger*

Proposed Actions: *Active*

Region: *UDSSR, UK, Germany*

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Propaganda posters that rely solely on text against a plain background are designed to convey a strong and direct message, motivating people to take action. In the context of World War II propaganda in countries like Germany, the USSR, and the UK, these posters often feature the following characteristics.

The choice of a sans-serif font, rather than calligraphy or ornate styles, is deliberate. This font maximizes readability and accessibility, aiming to reach as many people as possible with a universal and straightforward appearance. The color scheme of red, black, and white is deliberately aggressive. Red conveys urgency and a call to action, while the stark contrast between

black and white emphasizes the message's seriousness.

The text on these posters commonly promotes themes of work, action, and sacrifice. Citizens are urged to contribute to the war effort, emphasizing the importance of immediate and sustained action for the collective good. During World War II, these posters served as powerful tools to boost morale, encourage compliance with wartime policies, and instill a sense of duty and collective responsibility. They were designed to motivate citizens to play their part in the war by working harder, sacrificing, and contributing to the state's goals.

(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)



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(7)



Figure 1: 'Strike while the Iron is hot'

Figure 2: 'Arbeit macht frei' (Work frees you), (Germany)

Figure 3: 'Jedem das Seine' (Everyone their own), (Germany),

Figure 4: 'Gemeinnutz geht vor Eigennutz' (Germany), WW II

Figure 5: 'Keep Calm and Carry on' (UK), WW I

Figure 6: 'Nichts ist zu kostbar um für die Freiheit geopfert zu werden', (Nothing is too precious to be sacrificed for freedom), (Germany)

Figure 7: 'Blut ist dicker als Wasser' (Blood is thicker than water), (Germany)

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## Propaganda - One Figure

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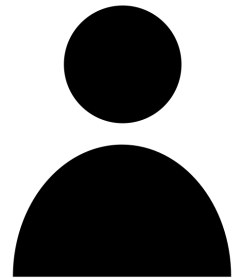
Motive: *One Central Figure*

Font: *Decorative, Serif-Gothic, Sans-Serif*

Feelings: *Strength, Opportunity*

Proposed Actions: *Active*

Region: *UDSSR, UK*



Propaganda posters featuring a single central figure, whether it's a proud man, woman, or a national symbol like a cock, are designed to convey a message of national pride and resilience. This central figure serves as a powerful visual representation of the nation's strength and pride, embodying the ideal citizen or national identity that the propaganda seeks to promote.

The use of decorative and serif gothic fonts adds a sense of tradition and formality to the message, giving it the feeling of a personal note from the nation. This font choice conveys a simplified yet classic appearance, aligning with traditional values and invoking a sense of history and gravitas.

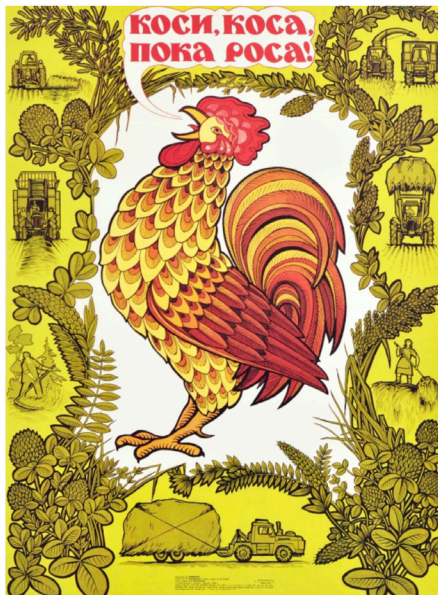
The vibrant color scheme with bright colors and dynamic visuals creates an energetic and positive atmosphere in the posters.

These colors, often patriotic in nature, symbolize enthusiasm and commitment, while the dynamic movement suggests progress and determination.

The text and imagery in these posters commonly call on people to be strong, proud, and hardworking. They encourage a sense of agency and purpose, emphasizing that by staying resolute, resourceful, and nationalistic, individuals can significantly contribute to the betterment of their nation. These posters aim to inspire a deep sense of national pride and unity by using a central figure as a symbol of strength and pride. The decorative fonts and vibrant colors create a dynamic and motivating visual experience, while the text encourages people to take an active role in the nation's progress, fostering a strong sense of agency and commitment to their country's ideals.



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(3)



(4)

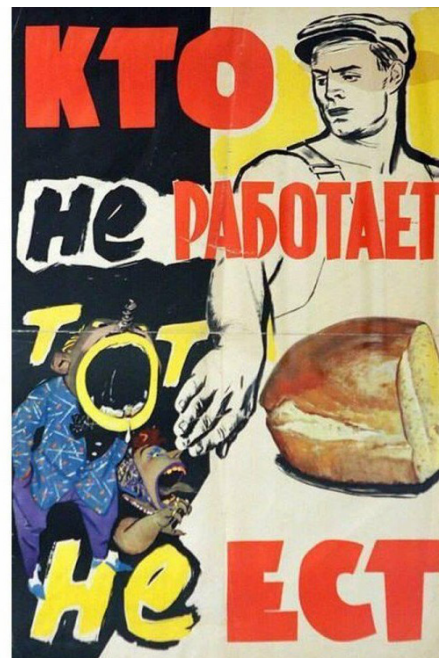


Figure 1: 'Make Hay While Sun Shines' (USSR), Cold War

Figure 2: 'Workers of the World Unite' (UK), 1903

Figure 3: 'Every female cook should learn to govern the state' (UDSSR, Lenin) 1925

Figure 4: 'If You Don't Work, You Don't Eat' (UDSSR), WW II

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## Propaganda - Many Figures

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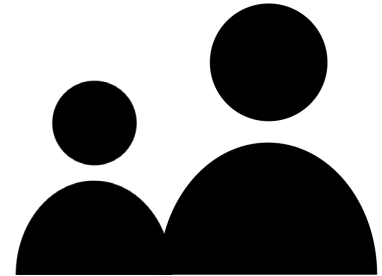
Motive: *Many Figures*

Font: *Decorative, Sans-Serif*

Feelings: *Strength, Opportunity*

Proposed Actions: *Active*

Region: *UDSSR, UK*



Propaganda posters that employ multiple central figures, like groups of men or women marching together, serve to convey a message of collective strength, unity, and national pride. These posters emphasize the power of unity and the shared determination of the nation's people in pursuing a common cause. The use of sans-serif fonts in these posters reflects a commitment to universal appeal, ensuring that the message can be easily read and understood by a broad audience, transcending individual demographics.

The rich contrast and aggressive color scheme, often featuring bold and vibrant colors, including reds, blues, and whites, create a visually striking and attention-grabbing composition. This color scheme is designed to evoke strong emotions like passion and determination, reinforcing the message's significance.

The message conveyed in these posters encourages people to be strong, proud, and hardworking, emphasizing collective action and participation in the nation's growth and development. The call to action seeks to empower individuals and instill a sense of agency within the collective effort, motivating citizens to actively contribute to their nation.

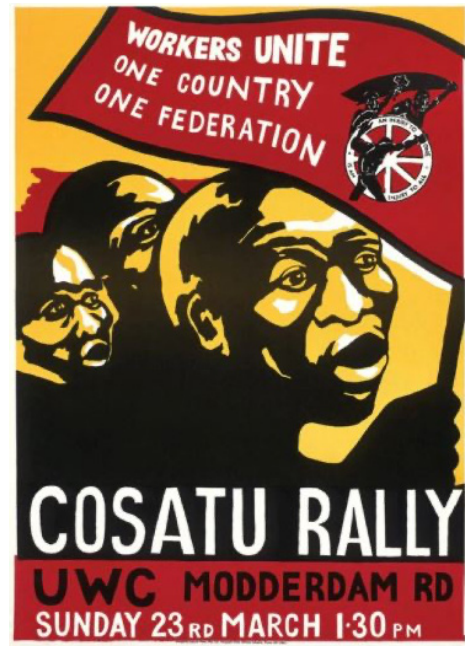
These posters aim to inspire a sense of collective agency, stressing that each citizen's contribution is valuable. By calling on individuals to be strong, proud, and active, these posters promote a shared sense of purpose, reinforcing the idea that every citizen's efforts matter in the nation's progress and prosperity.



(1)



(2)



(3)



Figure 1: 'Every female cook should learn to govern the state' (UDSSR , Lenin) 1925

Figure 2: 'Workers Unite' (South Africa), 1985

Figure 3: 'United we are strong' (Unknown) WW II

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## Propaganda - Ad - Icon

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Motive: *One Icon*

Font: *Decorative, Sans-Serif, Upper Case*

Feelings: *Strength, Opportunity*

Proposed Actions: *Active*

Region: *USA, UK*



Propaganda posters featuring a central figure icon, such as a raised hand or a sinking ship, are designed to deliver a message that urges people to either maintain silence and compliance or to rise in protest. The use of sans-serif fonts in these posters underscores their universal accessibility, ensuring that the message can resonate with a wide audience, speaking to the nation as a whole.

The predominant use of red in the color scheme is deliberate, aiming to intensify the message's urgency or seriousness. The dual message conveyed by these posters is symbolized by the central figure icon: the raised hand signifies a call to action and protest, while the sinking ship may symbolize the consequences of inaction or compliance.

Furthermore, the iconic symbol utilized in these posters is adaptable and holds significant symbolism. It has the potential to be repurposed and reinterpreted to connect with various protest movements or causes, making it a potent and versatile tool for conveying messages of activism and obedience across different contexts.

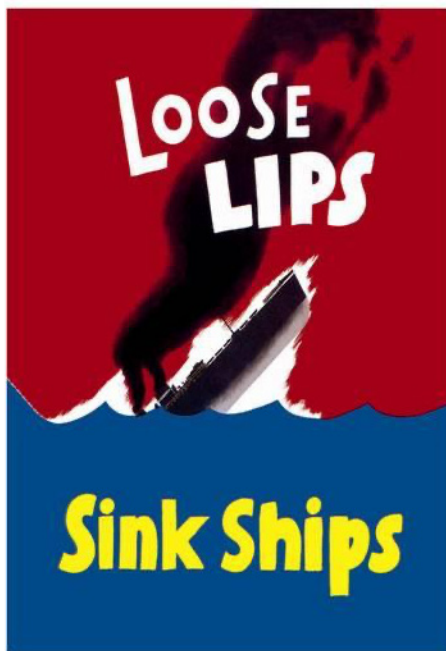
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Figure 1: 'Press for cider not for war' (USSR), Cold War  
Figure 2: 'Loose talk can sink ships' (UK), 1903  
Figure 3: 'Loose lips sink ships' (UDSSR , Lenin) 1925  
Figure 4: 'The Future is now'

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# Propaganda - World

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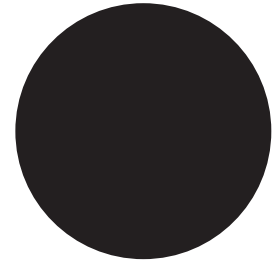
Motive: *Map / Birds-Eye View*

Font: *„Calligraphy“*

Feelings: *Upcoming Danger*

Proposed Actions: *Passive*

Region: *USA, China, UK, Germany*



Propaganda posters frequently utilize visual elements, such as a bird's-eye view or maps, to communicate a sense of impending danger. This approach serves several purposes.

Firstly, it provides a symbolic overview of a larger area, emphasizing the scope and impact of the danger. This underscores that the threat is not isolated but extends across a broad geographical area or even the entire world. Additionally, this perspective makes individuals and communities appear small and vulnerable in the face of a global or widespread danger, reinforcing the idea that the peril is vast and necessitates collective action. Maps can also highlight strategic locations or key points of interest, such as cities, landmarks, or military installations, to underscore the significance of defending or protecting these areas.

Another technique used in propaganda posters is the employment of calligraphic writing. This lends a personal and intimate quality to the message, making it appear as though it were a handwritten note from the author.

This personalization fosters a stronger emotional connection with the audience, rendering the message more relatable and urgent. Furthermore, calligraphy can convey an impression of authenticity, as if the message originates from a trustworthy and sincere source, which enhances the message's credibility.

The color scheme used in these posters is often characterized by muted, subdued colors. Bright, active, or uplifting tones are purposefully avoided. The absence of vibrant colors serves to underscore the gravity of the situation, invoking feelings of anxiety, caution, and readiness.

Lastly, these posters often encourage passive actions, such as „hold promises“ and „stay silent.“ This strategic use of passivity conveys the idea that, in the face of impending danger, it is crucial for the population to remain cautious, disciplined, and avoid unnecessary risks. Emphasizing inaction suggests that any actions outside of the prescribed ones could be detrimental.



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(2)



(3)



(4)



Figure 1: 'United we stand, together we fall' (USA), WW II

Figure 2: 'Actions speak louder when not betrayed by words' (USA), WW II

Figure 3: 'United we stand, together we fall' written on the Eagle - a symbol for the US (China), 1900

Figure 4: 'Bits of careless talk are pieced together by the enemy' (USA), WW II



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## Propaganda - Pyramid

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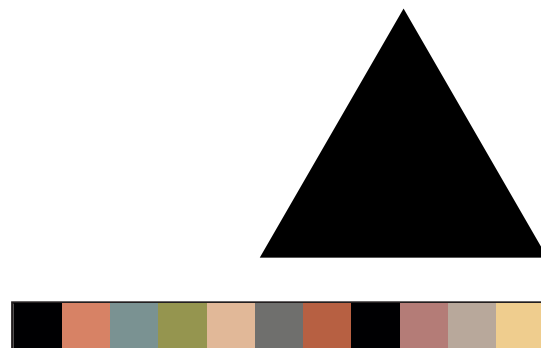
Motive: *Pyramid*

Font: *Sans Serif, Upper Case*

Feelings: *Uncomforting*

Proposed Actions: *Neutral*

Region: *USA, UDSSR*



Propaganda posters that employ a pyramid as a visual motif to illustrate an existing hierarchy within society serve a significant purpose. They are crafted with the intention of prompting individuals to reflect on the systemic shortcomings in societal and government structures. The pyramid, in this context, is a compelling visual metaphor, symbolizing the established order of things—whether it's the social, economic, or political hierarchy.

To ensure that the message in these posters reaches and resonates with a broad audience, they often incorporate sans-serif fonts and straightforward illustrations. This choice is rooted in the desire for universal accessibility. The goal is for individuals of all ages, including children, to grasp the message effortlessly.

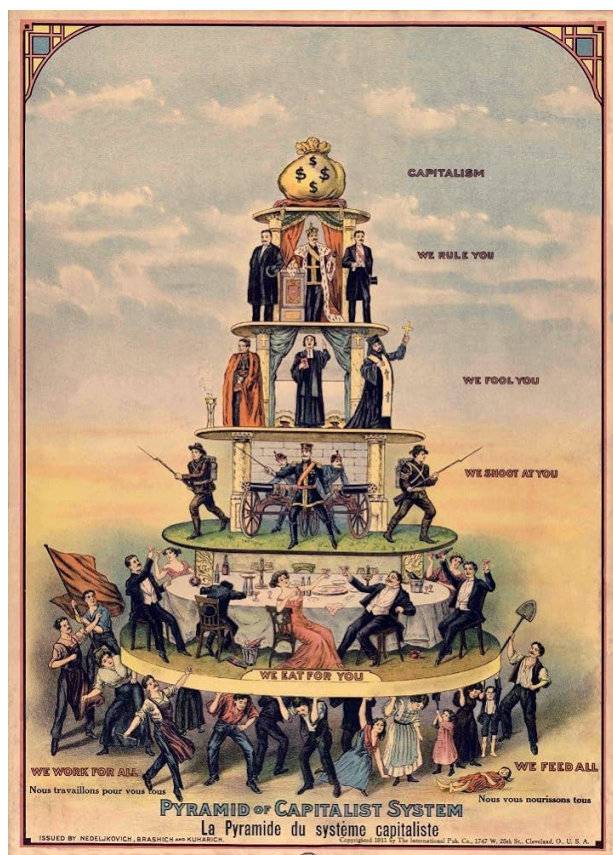
The color palette in these posters is deliberately minimized, with an emphasis on contemplative and subdued hues. This careful color selection serves to draw the viewer's attention to the depth and gravity of the poster's content. The absence of vibrant and

distracting colors is intended to encourage introspection and thoughtful consideration.

A distinctive aspect of these posters is their challenge to the viewer. They prompt individuals to engage in self-reflection by asking them to identify their own position within the hierarchy or state structure. This self-assessment encourages individuals to think about their role and place in the societal framework.

In essence, this form of propaganda is considered sophisticated because it delves into the fundamental roots of contemporary society and its structural issues. By visually representing the hierarchy within a pyramid, these posters invite people to question and critically examine systemic flaws, power imbalances, and inequities present in society and government structures. The ultimate aim is to foster critical thinking and stimulate discussions about the imperative need to address and rectify these systemic errors, thus paving the way for a fairer and more just society.

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(2)



Figure 1: 'Pyramid of Capitalist system', (USA), 1911  
Figure 2: 'Social Pyramid', (Russia), 1901

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# Proverbial Propaganda Poster

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My next step involves drawing inspiration from the collated material and proverbial expressions to reinterpret a propaganda poster in form of a map. These diverse sources provide a rich tapestry of cultural and rhetorical elements that I intend to weave into a new, captivating representation of our world.

The idea is to create a map or bird's-eye view that not only serves as a geographical depiction but also encapsulates the intricate dynamics of culture, identity, and influence. By using propaganda material, I can explore how political and social forces manipulate information to shape our understanding of the world. The use of proverbial expressions adds an additional layer, highlighting the cultural significance and historical context embedded in these phrases.

This endeavor isn't just about drawing geographical boundaries; it's about illustrating how propaganda, culture, and language intersect and influence our perceptions of the world. The map will be a visual narrative, revealing the power of rhetoric and cultural symbols on a global scale.

Through this reinterpretation, I aim to provoke thought and reflection, encouraging viewers to consider the intricate interplay between politics, culture, and our understanding of the world. It's a creative exploration that will transcend traditional cartography, offering a unique perspective on the intricate relationship between propaganda, proverbs, and our global landscape.









