PERSUASION AND POWER

THE ART OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

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Foreword by JOHN J. HAMRE

CHAPTER 1

Psychological Operations

The trap that the US government, and especially the Department of Defense, has put itself into in its approach to defining forms of communication is notable in its queasy attitude toward psychological operations (PSYOP). Several points are relevant. First, PSYOP is a form of strategic communication aimed at foreign audiences. It is carried out through the use of words, actions, images, or symbols. It aims to mold or shape public opinion in order to influence behavior. Second, the government's current tendency to treat PSYOP as a ticking bomb that could blast its reputation for honesty, integrity, and credibility is unnecessary—although unless properly conceived, monitored, controlled, and exercised, it could backfire. Worse, its efforts to disassociate PSYOP from propaganda, as the Defense Department defines that term, make it look hypocritical. The effect is to create the problem the US government seeks to avoid.

There is a need for a pragmatic, consistent approach to defining PSYOP that differentiates it clearly from propaganda, which in the modern world is viewed pejoratively as an effort to lie, trick, deceive, or manipulate. Although the terms have been used interchangeably, drawing the distinction makes sense. Protecting US credibility in communication merits obvious priority to preserve the government's flexibility in acting to leverage its power, as well as to avoid tainting strategic communication that the United States employs. Experience shows that this goal is easily achievable.

What Are Psychological Operations?

The Defense Department defines PSYOP as "planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals. The purpose of psychological

operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator's objectives."[1]

For some, the term had, as Col. (ret) Alfred H. Paddock Jr., former director for psychological operations in the Office of Secretary of Defense put it, "a nefarious connotation."[2] Some equate psychological operations with lies and deception. In response, in June 2010 the Pentagon rebranded the term and now calls it Military Information Support Operations (MISO). The definition of MISO employs the same language that defines PSYOP; only the name has been changed. Indeed, many in the military continue to use the term PSYOP colloquially to mean action aimed at demoralizing the enemy. In this book I use the term PSYOP, with the understanding that the Department of Defense has renamed it.[3]

As PSYOP expert Joe Meissner, editor of *Perspectives* and the *Daily Front Post* publications directed to the PSYOP community points out, "MISO is not a good name for what we do. It does not describe our work, nor does it limit our work by its words of Military Information Support Operations. The term is both overinclusive and underinclusive."[4] It encompasses activities that public affairs or public information officers do. You can be certain they would object to any suggestion that their activities comprise MISOs. MISO is too narrow a term. Those who are engaged in psychological operations understand that PSYOP is conducted to support other military operations. But it can also be the main activity, not just a supporting activity. On this count, as well, critics argue that the term MISO is unsatisfactory.

Meissner criticizes the words "military information" as unclear. "What does 'military information' mean?" he asks. "Does this mean only information on military topics? What about social, economic, and cultural information? Must MISO personnel all be military—or merely have a military goal and perspective? The notion of PSYOP has no such limitations."[5]

A competing school of thought views the transformation of PSYOP into MISO as a way to broaden, not narrow, the notion. PSYOP (MISO) units were extremely helpful in the New Orleans area in the aftermath of Katrina, providing support to civilian relief efforts. Many concluded that the military's considerable talents and expertise in this area could be applied more broadly. The term MISO is gaining adherents in many quarters.

Britain's Approach

Britain resolved the debate over a name change to MISO in favor of PSYOP. Commander Steve Tatham, a senior officer in Britain's influence development organization, notes that in 1999 the 15 (UK) PsyOps group, which had been

established in 1996, announced that it would change its name to the Information Support Group. The name change was brought about because of the perception that Psyops was a pejorative term, somehow associated with brainwashing and mind-bending. "However," Tatham points out, "the name lasted less than three years and in 2002 it was changed back to PsyOps. In that intervening period the group had been plagued by three problems as a direct result of the change: The British army had presumed that it now possessed no PsyOps capability and the group was written out of routine exercises and, worse, inclusion in operations; second, NATO had decided not to change its name and fellow NATO members were unhappy; finally, the group became plagued by phone calls and e-mails from around the UK armed forces for requests to help fix IT and computer problems!"[6]

He adds: "In 2010, when the US changed from PsyOps to MISO the MoD convened a meeting to discuss whether the UK should follow suit. In almost undue haste there was widespread agreement amongst various senior officers that this was a good idea until the Commanding Officer of 15 (UK) PsyOps Group was finally asked to comment. After relaying the group's history the matter was quickly closed and the meeting adjourned; the UK would not be changing its name anytime soon."[7]

PSYOP Is Strategic Communication

Aimed at influencing and shaping the behavior of foreign audiences through words, actions, images, or symbols, PSYOP qualifies as strategic communication. The Defense Department acknowledges that PSYOP's mission is to influence perceptions and the subsequent behavior of audiences, although it cautions against confusing "psychological impact with PSYOP." Actions "such as strikes or shows of force have psychological impact but they are not PSYOP [MISO] unless their primary purpose is to influence the perceptions and behavior of a TA [target audience]."[8] In short, the test for whether an action is PSYOP is intent. If it's PSYOP, it is strategic communication.

Christopher Lamb of the National Defense University distinguishes PSYOP from other forms of influence communication. He states: "PSYOP supports military operations and aims to modify behavior directly. Toward that end it will use emotion as well as reason; it employs truth but selectively; it will omit facts and on occasion, may mislead the audience. It is inherently biased and the interests of the target audience are incidental compared to the objective of supporting military operations.[9] Public diplomacy is directed at foreign publics. It seeks to modify perceptions indirectly by presenting issues from the US government point of view. In terms of techniques it appeals to reason and

only subtly and infrequently to emotions. Relevant facts may be omitted, but Public Diplomacy never seeks consciously to mislead, lie or deceive. Public Affairs attempts to influence by creating a better informed public. In addition to emphasizing accuracy, Public Affairs officers take care to avoid omitting facts critical to a story even if they are inconvenient, although once disclosed, they are presented in ways that are favorable to US interests if possible."[10]

The issue over whether PSYOP should mislead has engendered controversy. Many argue that because it is advocating a message, it is selective about the facts it uses and its presentation, aimed squarely at persuasion and influence, is inherently biased. The extent to which it may properly mislead is unresolved. The notion of "misleading" is also subjective. Is it misleading to influence an audience to oppose an enemy by characterizing the enemy in very strong, negative terms? Suppose we call an opposition a gang of murderers. Or criminals masquerading as political leaders, interested merely in gaining power and lining their pockets. Others may view those forces very differently. What is appropriate? The answer depends upon one's perspective.

Joseph Meissner argues that this is why "truth is the best PSYOP. Truth should be the guideline. It is the key to maintaining credibility."[11] Meissner raises an important point. People will accept disagreement with your point of view. But credibility is irretrievably lost once they cease to trust because they feel you are lying or misleading them. Political campaigns offer a cogent analogy. The *first thing* consultants do when assessing communications from opponents is to identify any misstatements or distortions of fact, misleading assertions, untruths, or lies. That affords a basis for discrediting the opponent with either of two simple messages about what the opponent has stated. First, ask a target audience: If they would mislead you on this, can we trust them on anything else? Second, declare to a target audience: Some people will say or do anything to win (or, advance their own self-interests), at your expense.

Effective PSYOP requires a more careful, measured, and nuanced approach than it may at first appear. Truth *is* an ally, but the truth communicated must resonate as plausible to an audience. Meissner notes wryly that one of the ironies about PSYOP is that on occasion the truth is not accepted: "In World War I, a piece was put out showing German POW's eating eggs, to show they were well treated. Unfortunately, the Germans, who had limited access to such food, found that not at all believable."[12]

Such concerns help frame the anxiety over psychological operations and the related notion of propaganda (discussed in the next chapter) and are understandable, but misguided. Historically, the US government has recognized that both notions are neutral in content. Whether good or bad, prudent or imprudent, it depends upon the context in which the tools are employed, the char-

acter of the message, and how PSYOP or propaganda is used. We have always tried to influence foreign target audiences, from the time of the Declaration of Independence. A key issue, especially today, is whether communications that are employed to exert influence are factual, accurate, or consciously misleading. That issue is entwined in whether people perceive that statements are truthful.

Truth is an essential quality to the credibility of any communication. PSYOP's mission is not, it bears noting, to serve the best interests of a target audience. As Christopher Lamb has observed, "PSYOP may provide information that is helpful to a target audience, but fundamentally it exists to further the interests of our military personnel and their endeavors, not those of the target audience."[13] He notes as well that "this is why PSYOP is ethically suspect in public affairs [PA] and public diplomacy [PD] circles," where it is viewed with suspicion. But the history and use of PSYOP suggests that PA and PD concerns are overstated.

The Historical Context

The legendary Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which existed between 1942 and 1945, offers a good starting point to examine the evolution of US official thinking on psychological operations and propaganda. OSS's chief, Bill Donovan, believed them to be powerful weapons, and he drew no distinction between the two. Both tactics employ words, actions, images, or symbols to mold or shape attitudes and opinions in order to influence audience behavior. Both qualify as strategic communication.

Donovan was impressed by the British Special Operations Executive, which integrated intelligence activity, special operations, and psychological warfare.[14] He persuaded Roosevelt to adopt the approach of the Special Operations Executive. In 1941, the president established the office of Coordination of Information (COI) under Donovan's leadership. From the start, a heated debate broke out over what strategies and tactics were appropriate for the United States. This debate continues today. The pivotal issues include how closely US government communication should stick to the truth, and whether the source of communication should be disclosed or attributable.

On one side stood New Deal supporter and playwright Robert Sherwood, a personal friend of Roosevelt and head of the Foreign Information Service (FIS) unit within COI. Sherwood supported psychological operations—which he, too, thought of as propaganda—for democratic education. He considered neither term pejorative. Sherwood hoped to mobilize Americans by contrasting good American values with the evil of the Nazis. But he believed that all communications should be true and attributable. Today, Sherwood's view is called

"white" strategic communication.[15] White communication acknowledges US government communication as emanating from US official sources.

Sherwood disdained "black" or "gray" propaganda—covert communication that could be untrue and whose source was unattributable or unattributed.[16] Donovan favored both. He saw the Nazis as a tough foe whose defeat required brass knuckles. For Donovan, what counted was winning, not how you won. Deception struck him as fair game. He embraced black propaganda that concealed the true source and could appear to come from a party hostile to the United States, as well as gray propaganda in which the true source, such as the US government, is not revealed. Gray propaganda may have no attribution or come from a nonofficial source.

Neither Sherwood nor Donovan gave ground, and Roosevelt tended to like having things both ways. He gave each man his own turf. On June 11, 1942, he transferred Sherwood and his FIS to the Office of War Information (OWI). He dissolved COI, formed the OSS, and installed Donovan in charge. OSS engaged in intelligence, espionage, propaganda, and various forms of direct action and special operations. OWI communication was directed at US audiences. OSS focused on external audiences, such as South America, where turf battles with Nelson Rockefeller and J. Edgar Hoover shut Donovan out, and the Pacific, from which Douglas MacArthur excluded OSS. (The organization did operate in Southeast Asia and China, although in 1944 MacArthur created his own psychological warfare branch that dropped over 400 million leaflets and secured the surrender of 20,000 Japanese troops.[17])

Donovan was determined to subvert enemy morale, and his efforts were adventurous. The OSS operation named the "League of Lonely German Women" epitomized the organization's deviousness. Interviews with German POWs had revealed emotional concerns that their women back home were having affairs. The OSS exploited these fears (which American broadcast media also found in soldiers posted to Iraq in the 2003 war, who shared the same concerns about girlfriends at home finding other men and the impact that had in increasing personal stress). Apparently that stress is common to soldiers no matter the war or who they're fighting for. OSS leaflets dropped over German soldiers bore the drawing of a heart with a key inside. The leaflets advised German soldiers to cut out the heart symbol and display it at home during leave, where German girls who saw it would lavish them with sexual attentions. Many German POWs were found in possession of League leaflets and pins.[18]

Donovan biographer Doug Waller admired the OSS's ingenuity and imagination. "In Donovan's day," Waller says, "psychological operations were fairly crude. They could be heavy-handed. His London station spread rumors that senior Nazis had gone into hiding. They faked German mailbags and stuffed

them with poison-pen letters whose addresses were copied from prewar German phone directories. The sacks were air-dropped in the hope that civilians would provide them to postmen for delivery. Some ideas worked better than others. Spreading rumors that German soldiers were freezing at the Russian front while Hitler stayed warm and cozy at Berchtesgaden made sense. Other ideas were silly, such as one suggesting that photos of succulent meals be dropped over the German public to make them go crazy with hunger. The point of these operations was to sway the attitudes and opinions of German soldiers and civilians to stop fighting. Donovan was a true pioneer in such operations and demonstrated the breadth and scope of what was possible."[19]

Donovan conducted his operations under a broad charter. The OSS Supporting Committee prepared a basic estimate of psychological warfare that endorsed subversion, propaganda, and intelligence as essential for executing PSYOP.[20] PSYOP operations in the OSS proved very effective.[21] General Dwight Eisenhower created a separate psychological warfare division for Western Europe that defined PSYOP as "the dissemination of propaganda designed to undermine the enemy's will to resist, demoralize his forces, and sustain the morale of our supporters."[22] Eisenhower became a strong proponent for PSYOP.

While Roosevelt appreciated the OSS, Harry Truman had no use for it, nor for Donovan's proposal to turn it into a central intelligence agency once the war ended. On October 1, 1945, Truman disbanded the OSS. Still, three months later he created the Central Intelligence Group, which later became the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The CIA received authority to conduct covert psychological operations, although its priority was intelligence collection. Prodded by diplomats like George Kennan, Truman supported the use of propaganda and psychological operations. Kennan and others worried that the Soviets would win over public opinion in Europe and argued for the use of propaganda to counter their efforts. Truman agreed and authorized the CIA to engage in covert propaganda against the Soviet Union. He created the Office of Policy Coordination attached to the CIA that could conduct operations.

Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RL) broadcast to Eastern Europe and Russia. In 1951, Truman created the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) to unify and coordinate US activity. The State Department did not agree with its perspective and showed verve and effectiveness in obstructing it. It failed to mobilize the national security bureaucracy behind a coordinated effort, rendering its efforts ineffective.[23] The lesson is that forging and executing a coherent, coordinated policy of psychological operations or propaganda requires hands-on attention from a president. Truman's attention was focused elsewhere. Opposition to psychological warfare from the State Department

stymied its use during his administration; that Truman preferred to use the department as a lead agency for national security policies magnified the problem.[24]

The country finally got such a president in Dwight Eisenhower. His experience in World War II had persuaded him that psychological warfare was effective. On becoming Army Chief of Staff, he argued that the War Department should retain the capability to conduct psychological operations. In his view, "practical, political, and moral grounds" required the United States to undertake psychological operations.[25] His position drew few supporters, as most military considered PSYOP a civilian function. Things changed when he became president.

Even as a candidate, Eisenhower had made clear his strong support for psychological warfare. During a famous speech delivered in October 1952, he advised his San Francisco audience: "Don't be afraid of that term just because it's a five-dollar, five-syllable word."[26] Once elected president, Eisenhower was able to act on his views. He appointed C. D. Jackson, a career propagandist, as his chief advisor on psychological strategy and made him a speechwriter.[27]

He created the Committee on Information Activities, headed by New York businessman William Jackson, to study what was needed to defeat the Soviets. Kenneth Osgood, who wrote a penetrating study of Eisenhower's approach to propaganda and psychological operations as part of a "total war" strategy, notes that C. D. Jackson was the brainchild of the committee. Osgood vanquishes the myth that Eisenhower was a passive executive: his objective was to defeat Communism, not coexist with it.

As historian Stephen Ambrose has done in pointing out Eisenhower's assertiveness in his decisive rejection of recommendations among key national security advisors to employ nuclear weapons, Osgood and Fred I. Greenstein dismiss the charge that Eisenhower was disengaged on this issue.[28] Ike vigorously asserted leadership in devising, monitoring, and pushing this strategy, and did not flinch from overruling Secretary of State Foster Dulles or anyone else who harbored criticism of it.[29] His long army career had provided him a deep understanding of how military staffs functioned and what it took to make things work. "No one in his cabinet," a later study of his decision-making process concluded, "would challenge his national security policymaking approaches."[30]

The Jackson Committee concluded that psychological operations were integral to diplomatic, economic, and military strategy. It argued that while people resented being told what to think, it was important to provide them the information they desired.[31] A committee report concluded that "the art of persuasion is to give him what he wants so truthfully and so skillfully as to influence his thinking in the process."[32] Endorsing propaganda, the committee argued that "men and women throughout the world on both sides of the Iron

Curtain must come to believe that what we are and what we stand for in the world is consistent with their own aspirations."[33]

A key element was presenting a positive picture of the conditions of freedom and happiness for human beings.[34] Significantly, although convinced that propaganda was a key weapon for winning the Cold War, the Committee felt strongly about the need for truth in communication, declaring that "to be effective, [propaganda] must be dependable, convincing, and truthful."[35]

Some have perceived Eisenhower as favoring a modus vivendi with the Communists. Actually, his real instinct was to beat them by winning hearts and minds and challenging the appeal of Communism at home and abroad. Eisenhower felt passionately about this, and supported campaigns that targeted Americans and foreigners in a global contest for public opinion. He agreed with the Jackson Committee. He set up the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) to handle psychological warfare planning, replacing Truman's ineffective psychological strategy board (PSB). Osgood observes that it developed plans of action and put them into action.

To ensure that the White House itself could enforce a unified approach to strategic communication across the government, Eisenhower established the OCB under his authority to operationalize plans. He was not about to allow other departments or agencies to undercut his commitment to conducting effective psychological warfare against the Soviets.

The OCB served as one of two primary structural components of Eisenhower's national security system that functioned under the control of the National Security Council (NSC). The NSC served as the central policymaking forum, where Eisenhower chaired the weekly NSC Planning Board and the Operations Coordinating Board meetings. The Planning Board prepared papers that served as the basis for discussion at the weekly meetings of the NSC members. Presidential decisions were "then conveyed to the departments and agencies via the Operations Coordinating Board, which monitored implementation of presidential decisions."[36] Eisenhower also consulted a circle of close advisers as part of his decision making. The effect ensured his control and supervision and placed strategic communication for psychological warfare under White House direction. In Eisenhower's scheme, propaganda and psychological operations were merely one aspect of a broader effort in which words had to be matched by deeds. He instituted a comprehensive, integrated approach to driving America's message that the West offered a better life and future than the Communists. Eisenhower had the experience and ability to make the system work. With the exception of President George H. W. Bush, no other president since that time has enjoyed equal success in forming a coherent communication strategy for national security, but Bush did not centralize communications the way Eisenhower had done.[37]

Eisenhower used several organizations, including the Defense Department and the CIA, to influence world opinion.[38] In 1953, he established the United States Information Agency (USIA), whose efforts targeted audiences outside the Iron Curtain, although the USIA also used the Voice of America (VOA) to broadcast radio messages through it as well.[39] Eisenhower ensured that USIA reported to the president through the National Security Council.[40] He approved clandestine deals between USIA and media outlets and permitted information to be disseminated on a nonattributable basis, acting as if it were a news organization. Despite USIA's aura as a news agency, it was an instrument of propaganda. USIA's Voice of America and the CIA-run Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberation (later Radio Liberty) helped enable USIA's mission. USIA also employed grey propaganda tactics that used third parties not identified or attributable to the United States, such as front organizations or private individuals.

Broadcasting was a vital tool that Eisenhower used for propaganda. By 1958, there were also USIA officers at the US mission in Poland, although they had had to officially "resign" from USIA and be "hired" by State for the duration of that assignment.[41]

Eisenhower insisted that communication be truthful to boost respect and trust. His team found that positive messages worked better than ones that attacked the Soviets, who worked hard to position themselves as champions of peace and coexistence. He endorsed a message of "Faith and Vision," expressing the themes of "humanity," "right of self-determination," and the need for "disarmament" and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.[42] It was a message of hope and opportunity. That approach and theme has been echoed in modern US political campaigns. Although his message evoked skepticism among Muslims, President George W. Bush attempted the same in waging what he described as the War on Terror, which contrasted a future of freedom, hope, security, and prosperity offered by the West against one of poverty, fear, violence, and repression offered by al-Qaeda.[43] The Eisenhower administration, Osgood remarks, "camouflaged its propaganda through its overt and covert strategies."[44] The lesson, as we think about PSYOP or propaganda today, is that until recently it was not only sanctioned but central to US strategic thinking about how to advance American interests and policies.

Tragically, USIA was disbanded in 1999 as part of a political deal cut between Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Senator Jesse Helms, who viewed it as a way to make government smaller. USIA's broadcasting functions were transferred to the Broadcasting Board of Governors, and its other functions moved to the newly created Under Secretary of State for Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy at the Department of State. Most USIA employees were

slotted into the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and Office of International Information Programs (IIP). Others were sent to support regional and functional bureaus. It was an imprudent decision. USIA was an excellent agency that drew talented individuals and carried out its mission effectively. Neither the Department of State nor any other part of the government has matched USIA's impact or effectiveness in communicating US points of view or the relevant information that supports it. Christopher Paul contends that the decision destroyed the organization's coherence and unity of purpose.[45] He echoes the view expressed by the Heritage Foundation that breaking up USIA forced creative, independent-minded operators "into the lumbering, rigid State Department bureaucracy" that sent unqualified officers to fill public diplomacy jobs. The vacuum created has not been successfully filled.[46]

Eisenhower's view that PSYOP should respect the truth represented a sharp departure from Donovan's philosophy and defined an ethos that set the stage for today's employment of psychological operations. A review of more recent examples bears that out.

Grenada to Afghanistan

PSYOP has proved its value over time, and the empirical experience of the United States in conducting such operations should counter concerns that the US government achieves its goals through deception or lies.[47] Key case histories show that the United States has proven adept at executing smart, well-targeted psychological operations that were culturally attuned, clearly messaged, and politically savvy in supporting military efforts, and respected the intelligence of foreign audiences to whom they were targeted.

During the Korean War, Gen. Matthew B. Ridgeway, the commander in chief of United Nations' forces, saw psychological operations as useful and made no bones about calling them propaganda. Ridgeway avidly supported PSYOP, especially the use of flyers and loudspeakers against the North Koreans. He considered it "the cheapest form of warfare."[48] The policy guidance for American PSYOP was concise and savvy. Units were to speak from a UN, and not US, point of view; treat the conflict as aggression, not civil war; attack Communism and its visible effects on everyday life rather than in ideological terms; and focus on concrete subjects with a bearing on Korea. After the Chinese entered the war, objectives were refined to include weakening the resistance of North Korean troops, telling North Koreans the truth about the war, and bolstering the morale of South Koreans. They were politically on-target and appropriately summarized the key themes and messages that UN forces needed to drive.[49]

The Psywar Division approved radio and loudspeaker scripts in Chinese and Korean done by university-educated writers in Seoul, although the work drew criticism as being too sophisticated for uneducated Chinese and North Korean peasants.[50] The leaflets were more successful. They stressed themes of the "Happy POW," "good soldier—bad leaders," "surrender and you will be well-treated," "we can crush you," and nostalgia for family back home. Military historian Stanley Sandler concluded that "at no time before or since has the Army fielded such effective printed propaganda."[51]

Sandler notes that "Army psychological warriors cleverly worked on latent Chinese anti-Russian feeling, harping on the brutal Soviet 'liberation' of Manchuria in 1945 and proclaiming that 'Stalin will fight to the last Korean."[52] A third of the total prisoner of war population polled by the United Nations said that propaganda leaflets caused them to surrender.[53] In his book on the Korean War, Sandler points out that surrender leaflets were "the most used to the extent that many Communist soldiers came to believe that they *had* to have one to surrender unharmed."[54] PSYOP did, he concludes, "make a difference, particularly when directed at the so-called 'marginal man,' the Communist soldier who was already discouraged, perhaps in trouble with his NCOs, homesick, and worried."[55]

Even in Operation Urgent Fury (1983) in Grenada, an operation that has been sharply criticized for poor planning, psychological operations performed well and brought credit to the military.[56] Maurice Bishop had staged a coup in 1979 against the legitimate government. In 1983, Bishop was murdered and his place taken by the Marxist Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard, who invited the Cuban military into the country. President Ronald Reagan refused to countenance a Communist buildup on the island. In the wake of Bishop's murder, there were also concerns for the safety of six hundred American medical students studying there. Reagan moved quickly to depose Coard and restore democracy. During the operation—some of the more colorful incidents were dramatized by Clint Eastwood in the film *Heartbreak Ridge*—4th PSYOP Group loudspeaker teams proved effective in persuading enemy troops to surrender, while specialized leaflets projected the image that the operation was a combined Caribbean and not merely a US operation. It deployed a 50-kilowatt transmitter, "Spice Island Radio," to broadcast news and entertainment and keep islanders informed and calm, while Navy SEALs disabled the island's commercial AM transmitter.[57]

Operation Just Cause in Panama (1989) employed loudspeaker teams to convince Panamanian Defense Force units to surrender, telling them they had fought with honor and could honorably cease resistance.[58] Another PSYOP team took over Panama's most popular TV station and broadcast prepackaged

materials that helped calm the civilian population.[59] "Ma Bell" missions used Special Forces to phone Panamanian defense force commanders. Using Spanish speakers, they told the Panamanian commanders to put all weapons in an arms room, line up their men on the parade field, and surrender to US forces that would arrive. The operation produced 2,000 surrenders without loss of many Americans.[60]

Assured Response in Liberia (2003) was a brilliantly successful operation in which the United States provided support for the military forces of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to restore calm in the wake of the civil war that led to the removal of Charles Taylor as president. The conflict exploited thousands of child soldiers on both sides. As civilian casualties mounted, the security situation collapsed. President George W. Bush authorized the deployment of a 5,000-member force from the US Army Southern European Task Force that set up a joint task force to support ECOWAS.

The United States helped assure calm among the frightened civilian population by conducting aggressive information operations with PSYOP units. As Lt. Col. Thomas Collins notes in his commentary on the operation, the information operations working group developed plans and produced products to coordinate with the country team. The products "were critical to gaining public support" and "shaping the environment for the arrival of UN Forces."[61] Products included public service announcements, radio broadcasts, leaflets, and newspaper advertisements. The PSYOP operations were well conceived and executed. The posters and leaflets were clear and to the point, delivering an articulate message that the forces were peacekeepers on a humanitarian mission to provide relief, security, and protection.

One poster pictured a tough, gun-toting US Marine with his palm raised, advising that US Marines "have temporarily secured this area to allow humanitarian assistance to arrive" and warned people "not to interfere." A leaflet pictured African military and declared that "the multinational interim forces are well trained and equipped peacekeepers. Follow the instructions of the peacekeepers to help restore safety and security." Another pictured marines and a hovering helicopter and stated that "US Forces Are Near. They Are Ready to Provide Assistance if Needed." Billboards proclaimed that the United States and the UN were there just to help.[62]

Other leaflets, retired Sgt. Maj. Herbert Friedman reports, "held out a carrot and a stick. On one side they showed massive food stock issued to the people, on the other side they would show armed troops, military vehicles or aircraft." Another warned that marines would use deadly force to protect the embassy.[63] The psychological operations were effective in helping to restore calm and end violence.

The Nobil Anvil operation in Kosovo (1999) deployed PSYOP units to communicate the truth about what the Serbian authorities had been doing and to counter Serbian propaganda that twisted the facts. A multimedia campaign using leaflets, handbills, posters, radio, and television informed Serbs about Slobodan Milosevic's campaign of mass murder, systematic rape, and forced evacuation, and "served as a source of information and hope for the Kosovo refugees in Albania and Macedonia." Over 100 million leaflets were dropped, and radio and television spots blanketed Belgrade and northern Yugoslavia, Kosovo, and southern Serbia with "Allied Voice and Television."[64] These were precursors to the 2003 war in Iraq and the 2001 war in Afghanistan, where PSYOP has proven invaluable rather than a cause for deep-rooted anxiety.

One of the efforts for psychological operations in support of our military took place in 1991 during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The president asked Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf to prepare to eject Saddam Hussein's troops from Kuwait. Schwarzkopf's PSYOP chief, Col. Tommy Norman, advised the general that US Central Command should plan a strategic communication plan that would integrate the efforts of all government agencies. Schwarzkopf submitted a plan to Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell. Powell forwarded the plan to the Department of State and other relevant parties, and in cooperation with the Defense Department, coordinated an approach to the invasion that included the placement of experienced operators in key Arab capitals to inform and educate the Arab public as to the rationale for the action that the United States intended to take. As US forces bombarded Iraqi formations in Kuwait, messages were sent to Iraqi soldiers that specified how and under what circumstances they should surrender. The strategy worked beyond all expectations, with Iraqi units even surrendering to US press people. It was a remarkable demonstration of what well-planned and executed PSYOP could achieve.

During Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, the tactic was different. More than 40 million leaflets were dropped before the war commenced, urging citizens to ignore Saddam Hussein's order and to surrender. Although surveys could not prove causation, a postoperational review led by National Defense University distinguished research fellow Christopher Lamb found that the leaflets may have influenced the surrender of many Iraqi soldiers. Direct tactics such as using loudspeakers to call Iraqi insurgents hiding among women and children cowards caused some to emerge to fight more directly. Instructions broadcast from helicopters to Iraqi soldiers on Faylaka Island ordering them to surrender during the first Iraqi War, Desert Storm, caused their surrender. Ninety-eight percent of POWs captured had seen or possessed PSYOP leaflets imploring their surrender.[65]

Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan employed a PSYOP plan to shift the debate from Islam to terrorism and to counter adversarial propaganda, discourage interference with humanitarian affairs activities, support objectives against state and non-state supporters and sponsors of terrorism and disrupt support for and relationships of terrorist organizations."[66] Once Kabul fell, PSYOP units helped support US diplomatic efforts and bolstered Hamid Karzai's credibility at the time.[67]

The issue is intent. Still, psychological operations are strategic communication. One understands the conceptual reluctance about their use, but their utility and relevance remains well proven. Not every psychological operation produces the desired results. Mistakes are made. During Desert Storm, a leaflet that meant to assure Iraqi soldiers that the United States did not want them to come back "dead or crippled" was mistranslated to assert the opposite.[68] Leeds University professor Phil Taylor pointed out that a *Superman* comic book that depicted Superman saving two children from mines was a mistake, as it encouraged children to walk into minefields in the hope that Superman would save them, and then reported that the comic had been withdrawn.[69] Psychological warfare historian Herb Friedman investigated further and reported that it was neither withdrawn nor motivated any children to walk into minefields.[70] The point is, one has to be very careful about the content included in PSYOP pieces.

In Afghanistan, a leaflet depicting the dove, a symbol of peace, was mistaken by some Afghans to be a certificate that entitled them to a free meal from coalition forces.[71] An Iraqi family whose photograph appeared on a leaflet asked for a million dollars for use of their image, loss of privacy, and personal risk for appearing to help Americans.[72] Marine Corps University professor Pauletta Otis has pointed to a leaflet dropped in Iraq bearing the image of an evil eye, apparently intended to apprise insurgents that the United States was watching. The leaflet failed to factor in cultural considerations; Iraqis found it offensive.[73] In Afghanistan, Americans dropped soccer balls inscribed with a Saudi Arabian flag and the Shuhada (declaration of faith) written on it: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his Messenger." Friedman notes the blunder: "Some Muslims felt that kicking the holy statement was heresy."[74] The lesson is that no operation is foolproof. No less clear is that the mistakes were unintentional and not aimed at deceiving, which is the critical point in addressing those who fear the notion of psychological operations: successful PSYOP requires the hand of those with strong linguistic skills, cultural awareness, and strategic sensitivity.

The issues don't always just affect what we tell the enemy. When former pro football star Pat Tillman joined the Army Rangers after September 11, he was killed in Afghanistan. Although the communication concerning his death was more an issue of public affairs, his death was treated, in Joseph Meissner's

words, "as a heroic act and the event was used to make the case that our efforts in Afghanistan were for a valiant cause."[75] In reality Tillman—a courageous American who gave up a lucrative career on the gridiron to serve his country—proved to be the victim of a tragic accident that can happen in any war: He lost his life to friendly fire. Tillman's mother refused to be mollified by the story that the military put out, digging through a mountain of heavily redacted official documents to reveal inconsistencies that forced the government to set the record straight.[76] Comments Meissner: "It hurt American credibility. We would have been far better off getting the facts out—and getting ahead of the story by getting them out first, and quickly. That would have bolstered, not damaged, our credibility. The lesson is that effective, credible communication requires respecting the facts and truth in these situations."[77]

A RAND Corporation study of PSYOP in Afghanistan identified a series of challenges that such activity needs to address now or in future conflicts.[78] These include ensuring that information operations officers are well integrated with operations centers to assure that they have good knowledge of activities taking place and planned, and that information operations are integrated with all activities within a command. "Ground troops," it noted, "cannot rely on higher echelons to perform some PSYOP functions," and centralizing press releases, radio broadcasts, and relations with the Afghan media at the brigade level can be counterproductive. The study embraces the concept, that "every soldier should be a communication platform," in order to capitalize on "the value of face-to-face activity and using host nation capabilities."

The study points as well to the need to establish close coordination between information operations and public affairs and to integrate their activities more closely.[79] Indeed, the 2003 *Information Operations Roadmap* recommended closer coordination between Defense Department Public Affairs and other US government agencies, notably the State Department Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, noting that DoD Public Affairs and PSYOP capabilities should support public diplomacy.[80] The roadmap emphasized that PSYOP "may be employed to support U.S. public diplomacy as part of approved theater security cooperation guidelines."[81]

Calling for new initiatives to revise information operations doctrine and a new multimedia strategy, RAND's Afghanistan study identified a series of organizational challenges that affected information operations and psychological operations, including lack of standardized information operations (IO) and PSYOP integration with operations; long response times and coordination–process delays; conflicting IO, PSYOP, and public affairs functions; failure to exploit the informal, oral Afghan communication system; and a general lack of measures of effectiveness.[82]

concerns that the United States should be vigorous in protecting its credi- and upholding a reputation for honesty and integrity are vital. That is the military has instituted a series of protocols to ensure that PSYOPs out and respect the process that respect national objectives, the president's tegic intent, and the commander's intent; or for nonmilitary projects or where the military is providing support, that of parties with the responsi- for decision making.

The military has generally shown prudence in planning and executing psy- logical operations, but they are not perfect. They are constantly striving to improve their concept and execution. Forward-thinking studies such as that led by Christopher Lamb reflect efforts to uncover issues that highlight the need for improvements. Some people in the media and elsewhere do worry that both the term and substance of "psychological operations" connote deception or ly- ing. By intent, design, and execution, US government psychological operations make a conscious effort to avoid both traps, respect the truth, and preserve credibility, and that applies to the State Department as well as the Pentagon. In a later chapter we'll see how the State Department planned and executed one of the most significant and effective psychological operations in history, the Marshall Plan.

The concerns do not justify flinching from conducting such operations, calling them PSYOP, or criticizing a strategic communication because it bears that name or carries overtones of such an operation. Indeed, rebranding PSYOP as MISO on the theory that it sounds more innocuous is precisely the kind of action more likely to arouse rather than allay suspicion.

Influencing Foreign, Not Domestic Audiences

It bears noting that PSYOP and MISO operations must aim to influence *foreign* target audiences. The closest language to an explicit prohibition is this wording in congressional authorizations for defense: "Funds available to the Department of Defense may not be obligated or expended for publicity or propaganda purposes within the United States not otherwise specifically authorized by law."[83] The department is prohibited from using PSYOP or MISO on the American public, except in limited circumstances such as providing interagency support to other US government agencies. Such activities range from providing public information for humanitarian assistance and dealing with disasters like hurricanes, to assisting with drug interdiction. These require specific deployment-and-execution orders from the secretary of defense, who shares with the president the legal authority to conduct PSYOP. That procedure ensures strict control and accountability.

Information Operations

PSYOP/MISO is a form of information operations, even as a debate has raged as to what "information operations" means. Planners and practitioners are too often unclear on the terms. As one senior retired military public affairs officer said, "Were it me, I'd eliminate the term information operations from discourse. It produces too much ambiguity. Too many people use the term when they mean public affairs or MISO/PSYOP." The confusion this public affairs officer identifies is reflected in poor planning and poor execution of both communication and actions. We need to clarify the meaning of information operations and its components.

On January 25, 2011, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates issued a memorandum that tried to clarify the definition and use of IO.[84] The memo redefined information operations, shifting the emphasis from core capabilities to integration. He stated: "The new definition will be 'the integrated employment, during military operations, of information-related capabilities in concern with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own."[85]

The memo made clear that the prior definition led to too much emphasis on core capabilities and confused the distinction between these and IO as an integrating staff function. The secretary's action provided far greater flexibility in enabling the Pentagon to conduct influence activities.

In the same memo, Secretary Gates formally designated the undersecretary of defense (policy) and the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs (ASD/PA) as the co-leads for strategic communication in the department to ensure that policymaking and communication planning will be "better integrated." He designated the Global Engagement Strategy Coordination Committee to serve as the department's central coordinating body for strategic communication. Dan Kuehl, a professor of information operations at the National Defense University who provided input into the secretary's definition of IO, believes we must think beyond IO as purely a coordinating activity and view it substantively.

"In some situations," he says, "IO ought to be the key *supported* activity, rather than the *supporting* activity. Kinetic activity—dropping bombs or firing missiles—is not necessarily the lead tactic that leads to success in an operation." Kuehl explains, "When we think of information operations, one should think about it in two different dimensions. First is the technical aspect. That embraces electronic warfare, computer network operations, television—any technology used to communicate information. It's the technology employed to achieve communication objectives. That has been true since the day of the

tenberg printing press. The second dimension entails influencing attitudes opinions to shape behavior."

He points out that IO must be understood in the context of the informa- environment: "We use technology for information connectivity to deliver formation content that has a cognitive effect. Thinking about information erations in this light is important, because you can measure and quantify all ree of those factors." In short, Kuehl sees IO as an aspect of strategic com- unication and a direct tool for influencing behavior.

Matt Armstrong echoes this view: "IO is and should be treated as part of e communication spectrum, but where in the spectrum is unclear. Some in- luence actions are for small audiences, such as decision makers and planners, hile others are for larger audiences, such as troops and civilians. All actions nd words communicate, mutually reinforcing each other, or undermining. So, what is IO and where does it sit? It depends on how the tactics, techniques, nd procedures are separated."[86] Armstrong is correct. His notion brings IO quarely within the ambit of strategic communication.

Christopher Paul offers the following judgment. He contends that "virtu- lly all information operations in contemporary operations are psychological perations."[87] That may be too broad. Electronic warfare and computer net- work operations, cyberwar, do not necessarily qualify as MISO/PSYOP. One rmy information operations officer may be closer to the mark: "IO not only nvolves influence, but also the ability to disrupt command and control sys- tems, infrastructure, vehicles, and machinery in a way that can be analogous to kinetic effects. Kinetics, obviously, are different from PSYOP, although disrupt- ing command and control certainly influences decision making and informa- tion gathering."

One challenge these different views about IO raise is explaining who be- sides a commander and those to whom he assigns the job of conducting an influence operation has the authority to do so. Certainly, those conducting PSYOP/MISO and public affairs act under prescribed authorities. But who else has the authority to act? Some had argued that categorizing IO into five categories—electronic warfare, computer network operations, PSYOP, military deception, and operational security—assured that each activity came with its own set of authorities that governed who could do what, when, and under what circumstances. Others, like Armstrong, contend—and this author concurs—that can lead to confusion, overlapping authority, and unproductive debates over definitions.

Where has broadening the notion of IO left us? It puts more emphasis upon the instruction that a commander gives, based upon his own authority. Commanders must ask: What are my objectives and resources, and how will I

use my resources to achieve these objectives? The fact is, one does not need to own capabilities in order to build and execute a plan that uses them. Their use simply has to fall within a commander's authority.

Col. (ret) Jack Guy, an expert on information operations who in 2010 worked as a senior IO adviser on the Counter-Insurgency Advisory & Assistance Team (CAAT) for International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul, argues that "the key for troops is to understand the commander's intent. That allows the staff to plan operations that focus on the perceptions and behaviors of a target foreign audience that need to be changed. While MISO forces play a key role in that endeavor, in today's environment, everything that we say or do in a theatre of operations affects perception and behavior. This makes it imperative that those in charge of information operations have to be able to coordinate the message from the top to the bottom and the bottom to the top. It has to be a two-way street. They also need—and in places like Afghanistan this is a challenge—to develop a more reliable system of measures of effectiveness so that we actually know what works or doesn't, where, and why. We have to get much better than that."[88]

The bottom line is that information operations embraces the broader Pentagon notion of strategic communication as a process to the extent that they entail influence activity, but not necessarily as they affect kinetic activity. One understands why the term has led to vigorous debates and different views within the Pentagon. Christopher Lamb argues that IO be treated as a core military competency with five core capabilities (and several supporting capabilities) that are increasingly interdependent.[89] He suggests creating a corps of professionals composed of planners and capability specialists who understand all five disciplines (electronic warfare, PSYOP, computer network operations, military deception, and operational security) to provide combatant commanders with experts who can integrate information operations into contingency plans. In Lamb's view, information operations should be a core military competency, like air, ground, sea, and special operations, to enable decision superiority. Military information operations built for battlefield conditions intersect with national-level strategic communications primarily when one of the five core IO capabilities, PSYOP, takes content guidance from the national strategic communications plan. The IO roadmap that he embraces was at one time Pentagon policy, and it is a commonsense approach that the Pentagon should revisit and act upon.

CHAPTER 2

Propaganda: The Resonance of Emotion

Historians Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell have pointed out the use in ancient times of "the equivalent of modern-day propaganda techniques to communicate the purported majesty and supernatural powers of rulers and priests." They cite symbols such as dazzling costumes, insignia, and monuments as techniques used to persuade audiences, and to Alexander's practice of arranging marriages between his officers and Persian noblewomen.[1] Most credit Pope Gregory XV with coining the term in 1622. Concerned by the spread of Protestantism, he established a committee of cardinals within the Roman Curia called the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide (Congregation for Propagating the Faith). His goal was to regiment and enforce religious orthodoxy in Church doctrine among priests who embarked upon evangelical missions to the New World and other places.[2] In his introduction to the book by the eminent students of propaganda, as well as being the nephew of Sigmund Freud, Mark Crispin Miller wrote that propaganda was associated with Catholicism well into the nineteenth century.[3] Even in those times, the term was pejorative.

That holds even more true today. Labeling a communication as propaganda destroys its credibility. People and the media in the United States and abroad are culturally attuned to treating propaganda as inherently misleading or as an outright lie. The media is on the lookout for any government action that smacks of manipulation. Often, there is a rebuttable presumption that *anything* a government says requires close examination, as if it evidences a potential crime scene. In this era people have grown skeptical about what governments do and how they do it—and what they say to justify or explain their actions.

The Scholars' Views

A closer look at the notion reveals a more complicated and nuanced picture. Some people view propaganda more harshly than others. Harold Lasswell,

famous for his pithy descriptions of politics ("politics is who gets what, when, and how") and communication ("who says what, in which channel, to whom, and with what effect"), called propaganda "the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols. The word attitude is taken to mean a tendency to act according to certain methods of valuation."[4] The key word is "manipulation." Laswell does not argue that it is inherently evil.

Daniel Lerner tried to put Lasswell's obtuse definition into plain English: "When communication seeks to persuade—that is, when it operates as propaganda—it manipulates symbols to shape attitudes that will condition (facilitate or constrain) the future behavior of its 'targets.'"[5] He goes on to say that "propaganda is the distinctive instrument which manipulates only the symbols by which people think, feel, believe; it works with threats and promises to affect people's hopes and fears. It shapes human aspirations as to what should happen and human expectations of what will happen."[6]

Leeds University professor Phil Taylor was interested in how propaganda differed from psychological operations. He argued that in wartime, "propaganda is a process designed to persuade people to fight. Psychological warfare, on the other hand, is propaganda designed to persuade the opposition *not* to fight."[7] Taylor believed that because it persuaded people to lay down arms instead of fighting and dying, stigmatizing propaganda was "a serious obstacle to our understanding of the propaganda process."[8] Taylor thought that propaganda could be good or evil, and that the key question was *intent*. "Propaganda," he argued, "uses communication to convey a message, an idea, or an ideology that is designed to serve the self-interests of the person or persons doing the communicating."[9]

Jowett and O'Donnell echo Taylor: "Propaganda is the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist."[10] Both sets of definitions bring propaganda within the ambit of strategic communication and psychological operations and accept that it can be rooted in truth and communicate truth.

Edward Bernays, among the most renowned scholars of propaganda, viewed propaganda as a "wholesome word" of "honorable parentage": "Propaganda becomes vicious and reprehensive only when its authors consciously and deliberately disseminate what they know to be lies, or when they aim at efforts which they know to be prejudicial to the common good."[11]

Other scholars take a darker view. George Orwell was blunt: "All propaganda is lies, even when one is telling the truth."[12] The current *Oxford Dictionaries OnLine* definition echoes Orwell: "Propaganda. *Chiefly derogatory* [original emphasis] information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to pro-

promote a particular political cause or point of view." This definition includes "the dissemination of such information as a political strategy."[13]

Steven Luckert and Susan Bachrach of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum echo that view, defining propaganda as "the dissemination of information, whether truthful, partially truthful, or blatantly false, that aims to shape public opinion and behavior. Propaganda simplifies complicated issues or ideology for mass consumption as always biased, and is geared to achieving a particular end."[14]

Scholar Randal Marlin believes propaganda is about suppressing rational, informed judgment: "Propaganda = The organized attempt through communication to affect belief or action or inculcate attitudes in a large audience in ways that circumvent or suppress an individual's adequately informed, rational, reflective judgment."[15]

The Pentagon View

The Department of Defense comes down hard on the negative connotation. It defines propaganda as "any form of *adversary* communication, especially of a *biased or misleading nature* [emphasis added], designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, or behavior of any group in order to benefit the sponsor, either directly or indirectly."[16]

One can understand why the government distances itself from propaganda. Still, this view creates serious challenges. It will always face a cynical, questioning 24/7 media environment that increasingly is colored by social media. But this definition limits flexibility, constrains action, and opens US communication to charges of contradiction, tolerance for deception, and outright hypocrisy when the definition is compared to that for PSYOP. Other problems with the way public affairs is generally viewed within government add further constraints and complications.

One starts by comparing the definitions for propaganda and PSYOP. Which category a communication falls into depends on who is communicating. In essence, propaganda is seen as what the *enemy* does, whereas PSYOP is what *we* do. The implication is that propaganda entails deception by the enemy, but the phrase "*especially of* biased or misleading" communications renders that a description, not a requirement. In essence, the definition implies that the enemy lies but we tell the truth. The distinction is neat but disingenuous in the use of language and as one reviews American history; it places the United States in the position of appearing to wink at the use of PSYOP as a tool through which it can put out biased or misleading communication—in short, lies.

As with PSYOP, propaganda qualifies as strategic communication. Both tools of communication seek to shape target audience behavior by molding and

influencing their attitudes and opinions. But labeling strategic communication as propaganda triggers explicit and implicit constraints as policymakers and action officers strive to protect their credibility. In the past there was more realism. The definition needs revision—or perhaps, for the faint of heart, omission from the Pentagon dictionary entirely, accompanied by an explanation if queried that the US government does not tarnish its communication by use of the term. Should we retain the definition, consistency with PSYOP and MISO suggests calling propaganda a neutral term that may apply to our communications as well as to an adversary's, while asserting that US communications will always aim to be truthful.

Although his recommendation was not accepted, former Deputy Principal Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Robert T. Hastings offered an excellent definition of propaganda that directly addressed the problem with the current definition: "Propaganda. 1. The systematic propagation of information, ideas, or rumors reflecting the views and interests of those advocating a doctrine or cause, deliberately spread for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, movement, or person. 2. The material disseminated as part of such an effort. Propaganda is designed for political effect and selects information with little concern for truth or context. In common usage, 'propaganda' implies misrepresentation, disinformation, and the creation of ambiguity through omission of critical details. Communication activities designed to educate, persuade, or influence do not, by themselves, constitute propaganda."[17]

Hastings recognized that the current definition was "overly broad" and that it was important "to protect reasonable and truthful efforts to persuade and influence from being misinterpreted or misrepresented as propaganda." His comments are on the mark. It separates propaganda from PSYOP, and it affirms the critical importance of requiring US strategic communication to respect the need for truth and place communication into context (excluding activity such as military deception). That would ensure vital flexibility. It bears stressing: Truth is our ally. It enables us to counter adversaries who cry foul, as they habitually do. Failure to respect truth in strategic communication—whether it is propaganda or PSYOP—can lead to political, diplomatic, or military calamity.

That approach would bring the definition of propaganda back, as Taylor correctly argued it should be, to the issue of intent. One acknowledges that propaganda as well as psychological operations aims to serve the self-interests of the communicator.

The Lessons of History

In analyzing the role of propaganda in US government attitudes or actions, it's well to understand that propaganda has enjoyed a long tradition in the

United States. In 1898, J. Stuart Blackton and Albert E. Smith produced *Tearing Down the Spanish Flag*, a pseudodocumentary depicting a US army attack in Havana. It was complete hokum. War had been declared, but no shots had been fired. That didn't prevent thousands of people sitting in vaudeville houses from cheering Americans on to victory.[18]

As World War I broke out, President Woodrow Wilson appointed journalist George Creel to head the United States Committee on Public Information. It sponsored paintings, posters, cartoons, and sculptures. Over 75,000 public speakers—called "Four Minute Men" for the length of their presentations—as well as artists, writers, and filmmakers, were mobilized.[19] Compub was created as a government news agency to distribute propaganda postured as new information presented as news to the public around the world.[20] Newsreel footage of the war was faked; much of it was restaged after battles had already been fought.[21] President Wilson's speeches were translated and transmitted globally within twenty-four hours, establishing him, as historian Kenneth Osgood put it, as *"the* spokesperson for the allies."[22]

Creel was proud of his committee's work but later realized that the term propaganda had become pejorative and associated with the enemy. In his postwar report he wrote that "we strove for the maintenance of our own morale and the Allied morale by every process of simulation; every possible expedient was employed to break through the barrage of lies that kept the people of the Central Powers in darkness and delusion; we sought the friendship and support of the neutral nations by continuous presentation of facts. We did not call it propaganda, for that word, in German hands, had come to be associated with deceit and corruption."[23]

He also insisted that Americans fought lies with truth: "Our effort was educational and informative throughout, for we had such confidence in our case as to feel that no other argument was needed than the simple, straightforward presentation of facts."[24]

Creel's remarks are facile but they gloss over the fact that every act that his Committee engaged in was to influence audiences, notably at home, and not to inform. It was excellent propaganda and effective. But it was propaganda, not news, and its aim was to persuade people that the US cause during the war was right and just and stood for democracy, and defended America against a ruthless foe. But after the war people decided the US government had distorted the truth, and thus began a strong reaction against the notion of propaganda.[25] The wounded came home and prompted questions as to whether the price of war had been worth it. Films depicting the war graphically began to appear in the mid-1920s.

A single book written by Erich Maria Remarque and the film made from it by Lewis Milestone crystallized opinion: *All Quiet on the Western Front.* Both the

book and the movie offered a savage meditation on the futility and brutality of war, telling the story of German schoolteacher Paul Baumer, who joins the army and finds himself locked in the middle of a savage conflict characterized by random death or injury. Returning home on leave, he discovers that his hometown has become for him a strange land to which he can no longer connect. He returns to the front lines, where his friends lose their lives, and eventually, just before the armistice is declared, he loses his own at the hands of a sniper. Remarque wrote about a generation of men destroyed by the world. They lose their youth, get cut off from family, and become beholden to officers oblivious to how the frightening war is affecting their men. The book and the film are about disillusionment, alienation, and loss of hope. They resonated powerfully with audiences and helped shape the political climate in the postwar years.

That did not prevent the United States from embracing propaganda during the Second World War. It bears stressing that psychological operations and propaganda were viewed as the same thing. Robert Sherwood's key point was that it respect truth. OSS chief Bill Donovan employed it without such scruples.

On the home front, notably central to US war propaganda was the collaboration between the government and Hollywood; the government also produced films. Excellent books have been written about this topic.[26] Critical here is the US government's explicit endorsement of propaganda and a recognition that cinema offered a uniquely powerful tool.[27] George Marshall thought cinema so crucial as a vehicle for laying out a compelling rationale for fighting the Nazis that he personally supervised the production of seven films in a series called *Why We Fight*. All were directed by Frank Capra, renowned for the popular films *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *Arsenic and Old Lace*.

The first film in the series, *Prelude to War*, offers insight into Marshall's mindset. It is out-and-out propaganda. Its message is about defending democracy rooted in the four freedoms: the freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Called "the greatest gangster film ever made," it employs the technique of "mash-up" familiar to today's Internet users.[28] Stylistically, it integrates footage from German propaganda with images that depict a free society of faith to define the stakes and explain why we must fight and win. A documentary flavor heightens the impact. The glamorous German Leni Riefenstahl may be celebrated as the genius of film propaganda, but Capra was by far the better filmmaker. Capra's seven films are blunt and compelling. They are heavy-handed by today's standards, and lack the subtle sophistication of contemporary storytelling and modern film technology. But they are very good.

In Hollywood, the United States levied pressure through the Production Code Administration (PCA) and the Office of War Information (OWI). Both

had real leverage. Absent a PCA seal, no studio would distribute a film, thereby effectively killing it. The OWI created an office under Elmer Davis to liaise with Hollywood. Davis and his team believed strongly in propaganda, and their philosophy was to insert ideas into mass entertainment. "That meant," cinema historians Clayton Koppes and Gregory Black write, "an emphasis on understanding the issues of the war—as OWI interpreted them. When asked what OWI's strategy would be, Davis replied simply, 'to tell the truth.'"[29]

Their experience highlights the challenge of strategic communication by government agencies. Truth shines differently among the eyes of different beholders. In Davis's era, people held diverse notions about the "nature of American right, and what American might should accomplish."[30] Henry Luce and Vice President Henry Wallace exemplified this divide. Writing months before Pearl Harbor, Luce penned a *Life* magazine editorial titled "The American Century" to decry isolationism. He tied America's future to defeating Hitler. Failure would lead to "the organized domination of tyrants" and the "end of constitutional democracy."[31] He declared that "we are in a war to defend and even to promote, encourage, and incite so-called democratic principles throughout the world."[32] His views would resonate with many of today's political conservatives.

In 1942, the left-leaning Wallace delivered his speech "The Century of the Common Man," which espoused different priorities.[33] He did see the war as a fight between a slave world and a free world." But for Wallace, New Deal social justice was the key goal. Davis and his colleagues at OWI shared Wallace's social philosophy, and the pressure they exerted upon Hollywood reflected that orientation.

Davis pushed for films that expressed egalitarian, populist values. Movies that paid homage to the British class system were disdained. OWI wanted to show that Britain was evolving toward equality. I can offer no defense for Britain's social structure here, but it's troubling that government officials were so eager to refashion reality—and to use official authority to recreate it in their own vision. It is precisely such caprice that gives contemporary observers heartburn when they consider the implications of permitting bureaucratic control and influence over attitudes and opinions. A government consists of its people, and people have opinions. Consciously or not, neutrality is not a natural state of affairs.

OWI was no blushing violet in expressing its opinions. When Warner Brothers Studio released *Princess O'Rourke*, OWI objected to the storyline, in which the president busied himself with marrying off an heiress to a royal bachelor—done with the consent of the government. Comedy that celebrated extravagance was out. Many in today's populist world might find it easy to wave away such objections to such frivolity, although this author finds OWI's arrogance

hard to sanction. Even on OWI's own terms, its passion for equality had limits. When issues like race relations cropped up in scripts, characters who embodied the problem were written out—moral scruples about *that* social injustice easily tossed. One should not be surprised that a poll taken in Harlem after Pearl Harbor revealed the startling figure that 49% believed that they would be no worse off should Japan win, and 18% thought that life would improve.[34]

There is a lesson. Even where government officials in good faith believe they are merely informing and telling their version of the truth, judgments remain personal, selective, and subjective. As Phil Taylor wisely observed, propaganda "does not operate in a vacuum divorced from social or political realities. It is an essential means by which leaders attempt to gain public support for—or avoid opposition to—their policies."[35] New Deal officials took as their mission to *inform* audiences of the truth. Like Sherwood, OWI believed that communication of truth would mobilize war support. They believed that they were informing. Even so, their selection and presentation of facts and truth as they saw it were actions of influence. That holds true for any effort by public affairs officials to inform, and it affects, as we shall see, how well the US government's view on public affairs functions.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Gen. Matthew Ridgeway saw nothing wrong with either psychological operations or propaganda, drawing no distinction between the two. President Truman embraced propaganda, mounting a Campaign for Truth, and eagerly embraced propaganda directed at foreign audiences. Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberation/Radio Liberty mounted a Crusade for Freedom. They labeled their broadcasts as objective news and information, but employed "both private and public rhetorics that are representative of the dominant motives, means, and symbolic manipulations" typical of Cold War communication.[36] The Crusade for Freedom campaign spanned fifteen years, from 1950 to 1965, through four US presidential administrations. The National Committee for a Free Europe (NCFE) was formed on May 27, 1949, and the Committee for a Free Asia (CFA) was formed on March 12, 1951. Radio Free Asia (RFA) chose as its symbol a wooden Asian bell with the slogan "Let Freedom Ring." They conducted live broadcasts to discredit Communism.[37] This clandestine campaign—clearly considered propaganda—drew active support from millions of Americans.

Eisenhower believed in the power and necessity of propaganda. So, when does propaganda become inherently a bad thing? That the public deems it pejorative may be no more than perception, and that alone may justify avoiding action that enables it to be labeled as propaganda. But for decades the US government and top leaders embraced the notion of propaganda as not only beneficial but necessary for the protection of US vital interests.

ere does one draw the line? Is it where communicators engage in decep-
hat advances their own interests, knowing that it may harm audiences?
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mmunication *know* that it is prejudicial to the common good, it is propa-
and therefore correctly deemed pejorative. Then what of the Nazis and
oviets? Until the latter stages of Nazi and Communist rule, many actually
ved their twisted ideologies. Did that render their propaganda pejorative?
tired Foreign Service officer Patricia Kushlis notes that by "1978, few Soviets,
ncluding government officials with whom I dealt, believed in Communism.
hey could see the system was failing and had lost their faith in it."[38] That's
alid, but at what point, then, does propaganda and strategic communication
become unacceptable and ineffective, and justify being pejorative?

The issue is not easily resolved. For example, how should one characterize
he George W. Bush administration's May 2003 Iraq victory celebration held
oard the aircraft carrier USS *Abraham*? Critic Mark Danner feels that it would
been "quite familiar to the great propagandists of the last century," and
mpares it to Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*.[39] The event was grand,
th an S-EB Viking landed on deck to kick off a carefully choreographed cere-
ony beneath a towering banner that proclaimed "Mission Accomplished."
Bush and his team believed that their handiwork in Iraq—and especially
moving Saddam Hussein from power—merited the celebration.[40] The event
med for maximum impact to bolster Bush's political credibility and unite
Americans around the Iraq war. Was that wrong? Danner is entitled to his
ticism, but in judging the ethics of what took place, the real issue is whether
he Bush team honestly believed victory had been achieved. Their optimism
er Iraq proved to be premature, but they judged unfolding events in Bagh-
dad more positively. The Bush team used the event to congratulate themselves
and salute the military. Danner denounces it as a conscious fraud in which the
power of the presidency was exerted to create a misleading image of success
for the benefit of election cameras.[41] Whether you agree with Danner or Bush,
one point seems uncontestable: the event was propaganda and met all the re-
quirements for strategic communication. The lesson is familiar: How you judge
propaganda depends upon your perspective.

The field of propaganda is well studied. Until recently, the US government
felt no shame in using the term. PSYOP or MISO has generally been labeled by
scholars more properly as propaganda. As propaganda has become pejorative,
there's good reason to call it something else, or at least redefine the term. What's
clear is that denying that we engage in anything that could be considered pro-

paganda, except by artificially categorizing it as activity engaged in solely by our enemies, makes the US government look hypocritical. At a minimum, Deputy Principal Assistant Secretary of Defense Robert Hastings' response offered a plausible way out of this bog. The issue needs to be revisited, and either Hastings' definition or a similar one needs to be adopted.

Prohibitions against Influencing Domestic Audiences

What about strategic communication that aims to influence American audiences? That debate often arises in arguments over propaganda as it affects who in the US government can do what. The White House may engage in propaganda—although they wouldn't pin that label on their political communication—at will. The Departments of State and Defense, the intelligence community, and other parts of the US government are prohibited from engaging in communication that seeks to influence Americans. Such efforts are viewed as propaganda. As a political body, of course, the White House is free to engage in it, although one might wince at the exploitation of our military to serve as a prop for the show. The Bush team's response would be that in their view, the mission had in fact been accomplished, in which case the White House had every right to crow about it. Who is correct depends on how you feel about the Bush White House and its perception of what it had achieved.

This debate is a sidebar to whether propaganda is strategic communication. In 1948 Congress enacted the US Information and Educational Exchange Act, known as Smith-Mundt.[42] The act empowered the State Department to engage with foreign audiences. But this was the dawn of the Cold War struggle for minds and wills, and some in Congress worried about the stigma of propaganda, accusing the State Department of being "drones, the loafers, and the incompetents."[43] A second concern was raised by people like Congressman Eugene Cox, who believed the State Department was "chock full of Reds."[44] To reduce the stigma of propaganda and to address the concerns, the State Department was authorized to engage with foreign but not domestic audiences. It may do so through broadcast, face-to-face contacts, educational or cultural exchanges (which also engage American audiences), publications, and other forms of contact. The department considers most of that public diplomacy, not strategic communication. One should note that the department engages with the US press corps every day in public affairs.

Smith-Mundt erected a firewall as to Voice of America (VOA) activities. It allows VOA to influence foreign audiences. Except for the journal *Problems of Communism*, it prohibited the State Department from disseminating within the United States any informational (as opposed to educational, technical, or

...d) materials intended for foreign audiences.[45] Patricia Kushlis notes that ...partment also published the *English Teaching Forum*, a quarterly journal ...buted to teachers of English as a foreign or second language that had ...ing to do with anti-Communist communication.[46]

The legislation imposed three other key restrictions: The department was ...ngage in information activities only to supplement private efforts; it could ...acquire a monopoly on broadcast or other channels of communication; ...it was required to invite private sector leaders to review and advise the State ...partment's information activities. The third oversight on such activities was ...mplemented through the formation of what is today called the Advisory Com...mission on Public Diplomacy.

Senator J. William Fulbright succeeded in amending the law in 1972. His ...mendment enabled the State Department to ignore the act for cultural and ...education exchanges, but toughened up the original language by banning the ...dissemination to the American public of any "information about the United ...States, its people, and its policies" aimed at foreign audiences. An exception to ...hat ban authorized the department to make such material available for exami...nation to the media, academics, and Congress.[47]

In 1985, Senator Edward Zorinsky tightened it further. Zorinsky worried ...hat the US Information Agency could be used as a mechanism for government ...propaganda, and in his view, that's how the Communists operated. The Soviet ...Union used propaganda and fear to control the Russian people. Zorinsky acted ...to ensure that no US government agency could do the same. He passed a pro...hibition that barred USIA from using funds to influence public opinion in the ...United States or from distributing USIA materials prepared for foreign audi...ences.[48] Zorinsky declared that "the American taxpayer certainly does not need ...or want his tax dollars used to support US government propaganda directed at ...him or her."[49]

The Defense Department rules prohibit efforts to influence domestic au...diences. Public affairs can communicate with Americans, but as its brief is to ...inform and not influence, technically public affairs is legally on safe ground. As discussed below, however, in practice its behavior does not always respect ...that distinction.[50] Legally, MISO or PSYOP must be targeted toward foreign ...audiences.[51]

Where does the debate on Smith-Mundt stand today? Its provisions clash ...with the realities of the 24/7 global media environment. Satellite television and ...the Internet broadcast and report on Pentagon and State Department press ...conferences and statements, and these reach American audiences. Anyone to...day can download a VOA transcript from the Internet, just as in days gone by, ...people with shortwave radios can listen to VOA broadcasts. The dichotomy is

that official US government entities that conduct public diplomacy, including the International Information Programs Office of the State Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors, are prohibited from making such statements available to Americans—yet they are also available to Americans through State's Bureau of Public Affairs.

This produces odd consequences. When NATO, Johns Hopkins University, and Harvard University tried to show a 2008 Voice of America documentary film on Afghanistan's poppy harvest to US audiences, for example, the law blocked VOA from providing it—though any interested citizen could easily download the program from YouTube. How ridiculous is that result?

In 2009, scholar and reformer Matt Armstrong organized a symposium to discuss the Smith-Mundt Act. Distinguished journalists, flag officers, and both active duty and former State Department officials convened. It turned out that people held diverse views. Former Foreign Service officer Barry Zorthian argued that the act did not impede public diplomacy, at least in practice, while former Under Secretary of State James Glassman felt that it relieved the State Department from the burden of talking to domestic audiences.

Critics argued for ignoring the act, a view that sat poorly with the military, "who view laws as granting permission for what they can do."[52] From the cross-benches, Marc Lynch, author of an illuminating book on Arab satellite media, argued that the firewall *does* have merit, while conceding that it could be strengthened in a "more creative and innovative way" to adapt the act to the modern era.[53]

The Smith-Mundt symposium's final report concluded that the "firewall does more than limit American access to information generated by their tax dollars. It taints overseas broadcasting."[54] Armstrong declared: "Parties abroad know that what we are telling them we can't tell the American public. It raises questions as to the integrity of our foreign messages. Inevitably, people will ask: if the American people can't legally listen to it, why should we trust it?"[55] Karen De Young, the senior *Washington Post* diplomatic reporter, concurred with the need to provide Americans access, while sensibly insisting upon a requirement for transparency "to let Americans know what is being said in their name."[56]

What to do about Smith-Mundt is not cut-and-dried. Glassman's objection rests upon a slender reed. If the State Department wants to avoid dealing with an issue it can do so easily, whether or not legal constraints choke off action. As it happens, the department takes a proactive view on public affairs. Its statements advance administration agendas—a classic definition of influence activity. Indeed, State public affairs provides official texts and transcripts to domestic and foreign audiences and places them on a web page that anyone can access.

ignoring the law, as some suggest, is absurd. But Lynch raises a valid point some limits on communicating with domestic publics do make sense. The residency is a bully pulpit. The executive branch rightly possesses clear authority to assert its policies. It will capitalize on every venue possible to drive themes and messages. Today, where presidents wield enormous power to leverage influence, the firewall makes sense, if reasonably applied.

What solution is workable, given that communication from any US government party carried over the Internet may be seen by American audiences? Is it realistic to expect that Americans would not be influenced by them? Today's fast-moving politics render geographical boundaries of states increasingly less relevant. The global impact of the Internet and the dynamics of 24/7 global media are increasing. Diasporas are spreading. These factors should help frame what reforms are needed to bring Smith-Mundt into the current era. The act should apply a test rooted in intent, good faith, and transparency. Legal restrictions should not bar government parties from redistributing within the United States what the US government disseminates abroad and clearly labels as US communication. The State Department should also forge an efficient process to enable it to redistribute its information at home.

Patricia Kushlis makes the point that "ensuring clarity and understanding of State Department messages requires placing the distribution of messages to foreign audiences into a different context than those distributed to Americans. That is where Public Affairs and the Bureau of International Information Programs have different missions. PA deals with domestic audiences. IIP deals with foreign audiences."

The process should appropriately balance the interests of transparency and the need to communicate with the interests in steering as clear as possible from partisan domestic propaganda. The issue affects American strategic communication to the extent that it affects who has the authority to say or do what. The fact that communications reach and influence an American audience at home limits the authority of the military to act. Who can do what, when, where, and how is important for understanding the art of strategic communication. But the debate over Smith-Mundt does not alter the key relevant consideration here. Any communication that influences a public, foreign or domestic, qualifies as strategic communication.