"Black, White and Shades of Gray: The Sixty-Year Debate Over Propaganda v. Public Diplomacy"

Journal of Promotion Management, Vol. 14, Issue 3&4 2008, 309-325

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, forced the people of the United States to ask a fundamental question, Why do Islamic fundamentalist extremists hate us? They also reenergized a debate over the proper role of American overseas information programs, a topic that had lost much of its luster since the end of the Cold War.

This article looks at the more than 60-year debate over the role of U.S. government overseas information programs in the War on Terror. It began in the earliest days of the Cold War, was revisited in 1953 by a new president unhappy with what he saw as the ineffective efforts of his predecessor, temporarily laid to rest in 1998, and revived by the events of 9/11. As this article demonstrates, many of the issues confronting U.S. leaders in 1947 are still present today. Those include defining propaganda, its role in democratic societies, and what forms – if any -- it should take. Then there is the question of where within the government should such a program be housed.

Propaganda versus Persuasion

There are few words in the English language that are as emotionally charged and carry as many ethical intonations as *propaganda*. Among many Americans, the very mention of the word conjures images of Nazi Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels, *Pravda* and the Cold War. The history of the use of propaganda is somewhat confusing because its very definition is a matter of dispute. Historian Brett Gray wrote, "Propaganda as a label suffered (and suffers) from a certain

imprecision; it is not unlike Justice Potter Stewart's fabled definition of pornography: 'I don't know how to define it, but I know it when I see it'" (Gray, 1999, 8).

Many scholars -- and laypersons -- embrace the paradigm of propaganda as an umbrella covering all forms of persuasive communication, including advertising and public relations. Linebarger wrote in a Cold War era publication that propaganda is "the planned use of any form of public or mass-produced communication designed to affect the minds and emotions of a given group for a specific purpose, whether military, economic, or political" (Linebarger, 1954, p.39). Mertz and Lieber lumped persuasive communications into two broad categories. One is *revealed propaganda*, messages that are overt in their effort to persuade, such as those in conventional advertising. The other is *concealed propaganda*, such as publicity generated from the distribution of news releases. In their model, the propaganda label can apply to almost any communication. (Mertz, Lieber, 1991)

This broad definition of propaganda has created difficulties for the public relations profession, which emerged in its modern form during the early 1920s in no small measure due to public interest in propaganda. Gray argued that propaganda should not be confused with advertising and public relations. He wrote, "For my part, I try to maintain that distinction by defining propaganda as the organized manipulations of key cultural symbols and images (and biases) for the purposes of persuading a mass audience to take a position, or move to action, or remain inactive on a controversial matter" (Gray, 1999, p. 8). Historian Leo Bogart wrote that the propaganda studies of the mid-1930s were "prompted by the assumption that the statements of totalitarian governments represented cunning and deliberate distortions of the truth to serve deeper strategic objectives" (Bogart, 1995, p. xii)

Jowett and O'Donnell also prefer a narrower definition of propaganda, one that makes it a sub-category of both persuasion and information. "Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist" (Jowett, O'Donnell, 1999, p. 6). On the other hand, they say persuasion "is interactive and attempts to satisfy the needs of both the persuader and persuadee (Jowett, O'Donnell, 1999, p. 1)."[1]

Jowett and O'Donnell wrote that *white propaganda* is that which comes from a source that it identified correctly and accurately reported. *Black propaganda* is "that which is credited to a false source and spread lies, fabrications and deceptions." A third form identified by Jowell and O'Donnell is *gray propaganda*, where the source "may or may not be correctly identified, and the accuracy of the information is uncertain (Jowett, O'Donnell, 1999, pp. 12-15)."

Communication professionals were not alone in distancing themselves from the propaganda label. The United States government has backed away from that terminology since an initial flirtation with it at the outbreak of the First World War. In what is a common government tactic, officials have attached the label "public diplomacy" to the effort to influence foreign public opinion. However, few are fooled by the use of creative language. USIA veteran Fitzhugh Green acknowledged in his book *American Propaganda Abroad* that public diplomacy is "a euphemism for the word modern Americans abhor - propaganda (Green, 1988, p. 3)."

Propaganda and the World Wars

The seeds for today's common conceptions of propaganda -- or misconceptions, depending on one's point of view -- grew out of the 20th century's two world wars. As Burton St.

John noted, "the contemporary understanding of propaganda – as manipulative and deceitful communication designed primarily to foster the interests of the privileged – is a relatively recent occurrence (St. John, 2006, p. 222)." For contextual purposes, it is important to remember that the term did not hold the same meaning prior to the outbreak of World War I. When the United States was drawn into global conflict in 1917, President Woodrow Wilson saw the creation of the Committee on Public Information as a necessary counterweight against the propaganda of the Central Powers. He appointed a long-time friend and political ally, newspaperman George Creel, to head its operations. Creel saw the application of American-style propaganda as being preferable to the wartime censorship favored by some in the military. Some critics saw it as a form of censorship covered in the blanket of an altruistic cause (Kennedy, 1980, p. 62).

The Office of War Information, created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the outset of the Second World War, had neither the authority nor the influence of the CPI (Cutlip, Center, Broom, 1985, pp. 40-49). The Voice of America, modeled after the BBC's overseas broadcasts, was beamed to occupied Europe. As the Allies moved into Europe, OWI served as media contacts and established a series of Information Centers, or libraries. The agency engaged in white and gray propaganda (Nelson, 1996, pp. 176 and 274). It was left up to the Office of Strategic Services to conduct psychological warfare against the enemy, including the use of black propaganda (Nelson, 1996, p. 128).

Bogart wrote that the differing missions of OWI and OSS led to a philosophical split that influenced American overseas information programs throughout the Cold War and into the post-Soviet era (Bogart, 1995, p. xiii). These differing views were first articulated in a 1948 Brookings Institute study, which said the debate over the role of overseas information programs "rested on differences between those who believed that propaganda should form part of the

program of subversive operations....and those who believed that propaganda should be a public, responsible government operation to tell the truth (Bogart, 1995, p. xiii)."

Cold War Propaganda

At the start the Cold War era, the U.S government was uneasy about embracing anything that smacked of Goebbels-like propaganda. Former Senator William Fulbright (D-Ark.) said, "there is something basically unwise and undemocratic about a system which taxes the public to finance a propaganda campaign aimed at persuading the same taxpayers that they must spend more tax dollars to subvert their independent judgment (Cutlip, Center, Broom, 1985, p. 570)." This concern led to the adoption of the United States Information and Educational Exchange Act, the Smith-Mundt Act, in 1948. It authorized the federal government to engage in a program of dissemination of truthful information to international audiences, while, in the same breath, prohibited the government from transmitting the same information to domestic publics (Palmer, Carter, 2006, pp. 1-34).

Harry Truman distanced the government from the use of overseas information as a strategic tool during the early stages of his presidency. When Truman signed an executive order abolishing the OWI on August 31, 1945, he said, "This government will not attempt to outstrip the extensive and growing information programs of other nations. Rather, it will endeavor to see to it that other peoples receive a full and fair picture of American life and the aims and policies of the United States government (Official File, Folder 37, Truman Library)." However, Truman's view toward overseas information programs would evolve over the next two years as a result of both foreign and domestic pressures.

This transformation began on March 12, 1947, when the president first articulated what would become known as the Truman Doctrine before a joint session of Congress. The purpose of the speech was to announce a $400 million economic and military aid package to prop up Greece and Turkey against communist aggression. Prior to the speech, Assistant Secretary of State Will Clayton wrote in a memorandum that "the United States will not take world leadership effectively unless the people of the United States are shocked into doing so (Freeland, 1972, p. 89)." Senator Arthur Vandenberg (R-Mich.) told the president that he would have to "scare the hell out of the country" to win approval of the Greco-Turkish aid package (Freeland, 1972, p. 89). The Truman Doctrine speech established the philosophical and rhetorical tone for the announcement of the administration's signature foreign aid program, the Marshall Plan, later that same year.

Overseas information programs became a political battleground between Truman and his congressional critics. The administration consolidated the State Department's Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs (a direct descendent of OWI) into the new Office of International Information and Educational Exchange in fall 1947 (Bogart, 1995, p. 1). However, the Republican-controlled Congress, unhappy with what it saw as a timid American response to Russian propaganda, trumped the White House with the Smith-Mundt Act, which authorized the government to globally disseminate information about the United States and its policies (Snyder, 1994). In turn, the White House created an even larger, more aggressive overseas information program, the Office of International Information (Bogart, 1995, p. xiv).

Truman fully embraced overseas information programs in an April 20, 1950, speech before a meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Truman told the editors that his administration would embark upon a "Campaign of Truth:"

> "The cause of freedom is being challenged throughout the world by the forces of imperialistic communism. This is a struggle, above all else, for the minds of man. Propaganda is one of the most powerful weapons the communists have in this struggle. Deceit, distortion, and lies are systematically used by them as a matter of deliberate policy. This propaganda can be overcome by truth -- plain, simple, unvarnished truth -- presented by newspapers, radio, and other sources that the people trust" (Presidential Speech File, Box 6, Truman Library)."

The debate over American overseas programs during the last two years of the Truman presidency was shaped by two wars, a shooting war on the Korean peninsula and battles within Washington bureaucracy. While the Korean War added a sense of urgency to the debate, a turf battle between the Economic Cooperation Administration and the United States International Information and Exchange Program infighting gave it its intensity. Both had competing missions that resulted in conflicts between the two agencies' public information staffs. The result was the creation of the United States International Information Administration in January 1952 "for the conduct of the (State) Department's international information and educational exchange programs (*Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-54, Volume II, Part 2*, 1984, p. 1591)."

The Jackson Committee

Unlike his predecessor, Eisenhower embraced the strategic use of oversees information from the outset of his administration. And different from many political figures, Eisenhower's rhetorical approach was oriented more toward outcomes than process:

> "Eisenhower often appeared to be reticent about speaking, leading some scholars to suggest that he disliked speaking, per se. It would be more accurate to say that Eisenhower hated to waste time and found political speaking to be just that - a waste of time. He always had his eye on the goal to be achieved; he was not overly concerned

> with how it got done. In fact, if the goal could be achieved quietly, without fanfare, that was preferable (Medhurst, 1994, p. 22).”

Eisenhower had made the nation's cold war "psychological strategy" a campaign issue. "Many people think 'psychological warfare' means just the use of propaganda like the controversial Voice of America," Eisenhower said. "Certainly, the use of propaganda, of the written and spoken word, of every means to transmit ideas, is an essential part of winning other people to your side.

"But propaganda is not the most important part of this struggle," Eisenhower said. "The present Administration has never yet been able to grasp the full import of a psychological effort put forth on a national scale (Reston, 1953, p. 53)."

Just six days after taking the oath of office, President Eisenhower appointed the President's Committee on International Information Activities. It became widely known as the "Jackson Committee" because of its two most prominent members, William H. Jackson, the managing partner of a New York investment firm, and the committee's chairman, and C.D. Jackson, a Time-Life executive who had become one of Eisenhower's closest advisers. It was C.D. Jackson, an adviser to General Eisenhower on psychological warfare matters during the Second World War, who first suggested the creation of the committee in a November 26, 1952, memorandum, to the President-elect (Jackson Committee Records, Scope and Content Note, Eisenhower Library). All of the committee members, except one, had military experience in either intelligence or psychological warfare. Most had media experience (Jackson Committee Records, Box 14, Eisenhower Library).

In a letter to the executive secretary of the National Security Council, Eisenhower said the purpose of the committee was "to make a survey and evaluation of the international information policies and activities of the Executive Branch of the Government and of policies

and activities related thereto with particular reference to the international relations and the national security of this country." The President went on to say, "It has long been my conviction that a unified and dynamic effort in this field is essential to the security of the United States and of the peoples in the community of free nations (Jackson Committee Records, Box12, Eisenhower Library)."

The Great Propaganda Debate

When the Jackson Committee met for the first time on January 30, 1953, it was not the only panel in Washington discussing the future of U.S. overseas information programs. Within a month, the Senate extended the life of a special subcommittee investigating overseas information programs until June 30, the same day the Jackson Committee report was due. The Hickenlooper Committee, chaired by Senator Bourke B. Hickenlooper (R-Iowa), held a series of hearings March 6 through May 13 (*Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-54, Volume II, Part 2*, 1984, p. 1672). There was the Advisory Commission on Information, a five-member panel of specialists outside of government created by President Truman to review the operations of the IIA (Egan, 1953, p. 1). There were also hearings conducted by a committee chaired by Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-Wisc.), which the White House was closely monitoring -- as evidenced by the large volume of archived memoranda and newspaper clippings in the Jackson Committee files. The Jackson Committee also received indirect input from the President's Advisory Committee on Government Organization, chaired by Nelson A. Rockefeller.

There was also intense interest in the Jackson Committee's deliberations from outside government circles -- particularly among journalists, who were generally opposed to anything

that had the appearance of propaganda. The tone of much of this commentary was along the lines of the editorial opinion of *The Washington Post*, which said, "Psychological warfare, in addition to being contrary to the American way of doing things, is antithetical to the American way of life (Jackson Committee Records, Box 14, Eisenhower Library)." Columnists Joseph and Stewart Alsop wrote, "Democracy cannot be peddled like soap flakes (Jackson Committee Records, Box 14, Eisenhower Library)." Walter Lippmann, who wanted to abolish the Voice of America, wrote, "In a society where opinions are free, a government propaganda, which is a monopoly, is an inherent contradiction and practically unworkable. (Jackson Committee Records, Box 14, Eisenhower Library)."

Predictably, the deliberations also had the attention of the nation's public relations practitioners. While generally supportive of an aggressive program of overseas public information, they, too, shied away from the "propaganda" label. "Psychological warfare must be an integral part of our national policy, not a thing apart," said public relations pioneer Edward L. Bernays. "The government should use social scientists who understand our activities as they relate to other countries. (Jackson Committee Records, Box 14, Eisenhower Library)." Thomas J. Deegan, Jr., vice president and director of C&O Railway Company, told participants in a public relations workshop that the U.S. was "naive" in its counter propaganda and that the government had "traded down" public relations by using inadequately trained "press-release men (Jackson Committee Records, Box 13, Eisenhower Library)." Some of the most comprehensive recommendations came from Denny Griswold, the publisher and editor of the weekly newsletter *Public Relations News* (Griswold, 1953, p. 1).

The debate on the role overseas information programs can be boiled down to two questions: Should the nation use propaganda to advance its foreign policy goals, and where in the

government should overseas information programs reside? Considering the political atmosphere of the times, it is somewhat surprising that the Jackson Committee was able to reach a broad consensus on both points. The feeling in the Congress, within the media, and among public relations practitioners was that the nation's initial flirtation with propaganda, the Psychological Strategy Board, had been a failure. President Truman created the PSB on April 4, 1951, "to authorize and provide for the more effective planning, coordination, and conduct within the framework of approved national policies, of psychological operations (Psychological Strategy Board, Collection Description, Truman Library)."

The Jackson Committee heeded the voices of the board's many critics who felt that the PSB had been established on a false premise. "It is founded upon the misconception that 'psychological activities' and 'psychological strategy' somehow exist apart from official policies and actions and can be dealt with independently by experts in this field," the committee stated in a July 8 press release timed announcing its recommendations. "In reality, there is a 'psychological' aspect or implication to every diplomatic, economic, or military policy and action (White House press release, 8 July 1953)." The committee also won praise for rejecting of the use of propaganda in pursuit of American foreign policy goals. "American broadcasts and printed materials should concentrate on objective, factual news reporting," the committee news release said. "The tone and content should be forceful and direct, but a propagandist note should be avoided (White House press release, 8 July 1953)."

There wasn't a consensus on where the government overseas information efforts should reside. Many wanted them outside the State Department. Eisenhower had singled out the State Department during the 1952 campaign, criticizing the Truman administration for compartmentalizing the nation's response to the Cold War. Senator Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.)

said the only way to save these programs from "certain death" was to transfer them from the State Department to a new federal agency. Hickenlooper Committee staff concluded that the program had "strayed too far" from its original purpose and "has become increasingly less effective as it has become more an instrument of propaganda and less an instrument of information (Jackson Committee Records, Box 14, Eisenhower Library)."

Eisenhower effectively ended the debate when he sent Congress Reorganization Plan No. 8 of 1953, creating the United States Information Agency. In many ways, Ike's package mirrored the Rockefeller Committee's recommendations. USIA represented a consolidation of overseas information programs administered by IIA, the Mutual Security Agency, the Technical Cooperation Administration, and by programs financed in connection with government in occupied areas. The president also agreed with those favoring the abolition of the PSB. However, the Rockefeller Committee's recommendation that the new agency be established under the control of the NSC was rejected.

Oddly, the only voice in the debate that appeared to favor State Department control of overseas information was Eisenhower's own handpicked group, the Jackson Committee. However, Reorganization Plan No. 8 was sent to Congress on June 1, 1953, exactly one month *before* the Jackson Committee report was due. Noting that the White House had already sent its proposal to Capitol Hill, the Jackson Committee declined to make a specific recommendation. But the report did say, "In our opinion, the most satisfactory arrangement would be to retain *within* the Department of State those functions now assigned the IIA and combine them with the information activities handled by MSA and TCA (Report to the President, 1953, pp. 101-102)."

There is an ironic historical footnote to this debate. Under the direction of Vice President Al Gore, the Clinton administration embarked upon a cost-cutting program in 1993, the National

Performance Review. Gore said, "It is imperative that both the State Department and USIA look for efficiencies and economies that result from the elimination of redundant programs, duplicative functions, and excess capacity (Accompanying Report of the National Performance Review, 1994).” On December 30, 1998, the White House announced that USIA's functions would be consolidated within the State Department. On October 1, 1999, USIA ceased to exist (Fact Sheet, 1998). Ironically, the one Jackson Committee recommendation ignored by President Eisenhower had finally been realized.

Propaganda in the 21st Century

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States thrust the debate over the role of overseas information programs back into the spotlight. It was in this environment that the Bush White House gave *Washington Post* reporter Bob Woodward unprecedented access to the president, key administration and military figures, and classified documents during 2002. The result was *Bush At War*, a 376-page book detailing the administration's response during the first 100 days of the War on Terror.

The book showed that overseas information, often referred to as the politically more palatable *public diplomacy*, was on President Bush's mind in the first hours of the crisis. According to Woodward, Bush met with Karen P. Hughes, counselor to the president, on the morning after the attack. The president told Hughes to develop a "plan, a strategy, even a vision...to educate the American people to be prepared for another attack. Americans need to know that combating terrorism would be the main focus of the administration -- and the government -- from this moment forward (Woodward, 2002, p. 41).”

Hughes spearheaded the use of white propaganda with the creation of the Coalition Information Center (CIC) in October 2001. Within the CIC, staffers from the White House, other administrative agencies, and the British Embassy engaged in what *The New York Times* described as "the most ambitious wartime communications effort since World War II (Becker, 2001, p.1)." The CIC's stated purpose was to more effectively and quickly communicate U.S. foreign policy goals to the world -- especially a skeptical Muslim world. *The New York Times* also reported that its creation was "an acknowledgment that propaganda is back in fashion after the Clinton administration and Congress tried to cash in on the end of the Cold War by cutting back public diplomacy overseas...to balance the budget (Becker, 2001, p.1)."

The first fruits of the CIC came within a few days of its creation. It arranged an appearance by former American ambassador to Syria Christopher Ross on the influential Arabic news channel *Al-Jazeera*. It was the first time an American official had addressed the Arab world in its own language since the attacks (Boehlert, 2001). On November 17, First Lady Laura Bush presented the White House's weekly radio address as part of a coordinated effort to draw attention to the Taliban regime's brutality against women and children (Radio Address, 2001). Just a few days later, the CIC office in Islamabad released a list of 22 atrocities it alleged were committed by al Qaeda and the Taliban (Milbank, 2001, p. A38).

A Turn to the Dark Side

At the same time the CIC was being created, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld articulated a different philosophy, one emphasizing the control of information. During a September 15 meeting of the Bush war cabinet, Rumsfeld outlined his vision for overseas

information. The minutes of that meeting indicated that the secretary of defense said, "Need tighter control over public affairs. Treat it like a political campaign with daily talking points (Woodward, 2002, p. 88)."

The Pentagon established its own information outlet, the Office of Strategic Influence (OSI). Defense officials said later that its objectives were not much different from those of the CIC. However, the OSI also engaged in the use of gray propaganda techniques, often associated with military and CIA psyops, psychological operations. In the early stages of the war, the CIC's gray propaganda efforts included the dropping of leaflets and the use of flying radio stations -- both carrying instructions to the Taliban on how to surrender (McIntyre, 2001).

Speculation that OSI was moving into the area of black propaganda resulted in its early demise just three months later. When media reports surfaced in February 2002 of OSI plans to spread disinformation to foreign journalists, White House aides reportedly "hit the ceiling," and, in a rare show of disharmony within the administration, said they were "furious" about the proposal. Hughes, who had been accompanying Bush on a Asian trip at the time the news broke, called a *Washington Post* reporter to ensure "that there be no change in the administration's strict policy of providing reporters with the facts. (Allen, 2002, p. A17)." Although Rumsfeld characterized the reporting as "inaccurate speculation and assertions," he announced the office's closing one day later. Rumsfeld also said the Pentagon would not deal in disinformation ("Pentagon closes down controversial office", 2002).

The New York Times reported in December 2002 the existence of a secret effort "to discredit and undercut the influence of mosques and religious schools, as well as planting news stories in newspapers and other periodicals in foreign countries." White House spokesman Ari Fleischer told reporters, "The president has the expectation that any program that is created in his

administration will be based on facts, and that's what he would expect to be carried out in any program that is created in any entity of the government (Schmitt, 2002)." In a Pentagon briefing, Rumsfeld said that the idea might have been discussed "at the 50th level" of the bureaucracy, but that "we don't intend to do things that are in any way inconsistent with the laws, or our Constitution, or the principles and values of our country. (Transcript. U.S. Department of Defense, 2002)."

These assurances notwithstanding, the Defense Department engaged in a systematic black propaganda program following the outbreak of Iraq war in 2003. The Pentagon contracted the Washington-based Lincoln Group to complement the military's psyops in Iraq and Afghanistan. This was done under the auspices of what Rumsfeld called his "Information Operations Roadmap," which closely paralleled the discredited and dismantled OSI. (Duke, 2006), p. D1). Tactics included planting favorable news articles in the Iraqi news media. While the Pentagon Inspector General cleared the military of charges it had conducted an illegal covert action to influence the internal political conditions of another country, the audit also concluded that the Pentagon had violated federal contracting guidelines by failing to keep adequate records of the Lincoln Group's activities (Mazzetti, 2006, p. 12).

Even in the post-Rumsfeld era, questions remain about U.S. propaganda. The Pentagon Inspector General announced in May 2008 that it would investigate a Pentagon public affairs program to train retired military officers who work as broadcast news analysts to become "message force multipliers" to echo Bush administration talking points on the War on Terror. The Defense Department suspended the program after it the *New York Times* uncovered it. The inquiry will determine whether the Pentagon violated longstanding prohibitions against spreading propaganda within the United States (Bartstow, 2008, p. A16).

Who speaks for America?

The White House announced July 30, 2002 -- the 49th anniversary of the Jackson Committee Report -- that it was establishing a permanent Office of Global Communications, an extension of the CIC, to coordinate the administration's foreign policy message and to help shape the country's image abroad. Spokesman Ari Fleischer said, "better coordination of international communications will help America to explain what we do and why we do it around the world." However, when asked whether the new office would replace or supersede State Department public diplomacy efforts, he said, "The Department of State has the lead in public diplomacy around the world. But it's a White House coordinating body, to work shoulder to shoulder with the State Department on this (Transcript. Ari Fleischer, 2002)."

This approach won qualified praise from the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, a bipartisan panel created during the Cold War to provide oversight on overseas information programs. In a report released September 18, 2002, the five-member panel said, "The Office of Global Communications should provide strategic direction and themes to the U.S. agencies that reach foreign audiences, while relying on the Secretary of State to provide tactical and strategic coordination of the diplomats overseas. ("Building America's Public Diplomacy", 2002, p. 6)."

That interpretation is supported by another commission recommendation, that the 1998 consolidation of USIA within the State Department be reviewed. The report noted that the State Department's public diplomacy efforts had been strengthened since the consolidation, "much remains to be done to ensure that public diplomacy is brought into all aspects of policy decision

making." It also favored integrating Congress into public diplomacy efforts ("Building America's Public Diplomacy", 2002, p. 6).

There were others who wanted distance between the State Department and overseas information programs. In a report released the same day, the independent Council on Foreign Relations recommended the creation of an independent Corporation for Public Diplomacy, modeled after the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, to develop programs to communicate American messages overseas (Dao, 2002). The Council on Foreign Relations also proposed the creation of a "Public Diplomacy Coordinating Structure, whose chair would be the president's principal advisor on public diplomacy. (News release, 2002)."

Analysis

In comparing the debate over the role and direction of U.S. overseas information during the Cold War with the renewed debate brought on by the War on Terror, one cannot help but be struck by the similarities. In both cases, the United States was not as much at war with another nation as it was at war with a philosophy. Both debates occurred at a time when new media were emerging. Significantly, in both debates the focus was more on the message than the media.

Through this 60-year debate, the American people and their government struggled to define the appropriate role for overseas information. There has always been a broad consensus on the need to more effectively communicate U.S. messages and values. However, when it came to the specific nature of such communication, opinions diverged. Those aligned with the military tended to take a more tactical approach to overseas information. This, in turn, provided them with justification for the use of gray and, occasionally, black propaganda techniques. Journalists

and public relations practitioners preferred a more strategic approach. They favored the use of white propaganda -- although the practitioners distanced themselves from the term. The political leadership in the White House and the Congress publicly embraced the strategic approach while, at times, appearing the turn a blind eye to the occasional necessity of the tactical approach.

Another striking similarity is the ambivalence toward State Department leadership of overseas information programs. There appears to be a basic mistrust of the State Department that transcends eras or political parties. There was a broad-based consensus toward removing these programs from State Department control during both the Cold War and the War on Terror. Even the different versions of the same presidential advisory panel made parallel recommendations some 49 years apart.

There is one other significant point of comparison: the role of key presidential advisers in framing the debate. For Dwight Eisenhower, that key adviser was C.D. Jackson, who had a relationship with the president that pre-dated the White House and who had long served as an adviser on communication matters. In George W. Bush's White House, there were two, strong and competing voices.

One was Karen Hughes -- a trusted friend who has served as his chief adviser on communication issues since his days as Texas governor and the first person Bush turned to when it came to the critical question of how to win the hearts and the minds of an overseas audience. She supported public diplomacy in the form of white propaganda and transparency.

However, Donald Rumsfeld represented a different philosophy, one with a more tactical approach that often employed both gray and black propaganda. Kersten and Sidky argue that the Rumsfeld's forays into black propaganda grew out of an organizational dysfunction known as dramatic neurosis, where the organization – in this case the Department of Defense -- is focused

on the top executive. “These organizations go where their leaders want them to go, based on their vision, dreams, values, hopes, and ideals,” Kerten and Sidky wrote. They added that dramatic executives such as Rumseld construct an organizational narrative that creates “a poetic space in which fantasy prevails over reality (Kersten, Sidky, 2005, p. 473).” They said this kind of narrative was evident as the Pentagon attempted to explain away the prisoner abuses at Abu Ghraib as the product “of a few bad apples (Kersten, Sidky, 2005, p. 475).”

While Bob Woodward’s description of Rumsfeld’s management style may not be as precise as Kersten’s and Sidky’s, it was equally critical. In his third book in the *Bush at War* trilogy, Woodward details Rumsfeld’s intimidation of the Pentagon through micromanagement. “Rumsfeld was into everyone’s business,” Woodward wrote. “No one was immune. (Woodward, 2006, p. 24).” At one point, Woodward described Rumfeld’s micromanaging as “almost comical (Woodward, 2006, p. 42).”

Rumsfeld’s black propaganda approach ultimately discredited U.S. efforts to “win hearts and minds.” As Newsweek’s Jonathan Alter wrote, “The beaming of American-produced Farsi programming into Iran, for instance is working well. It’s the culture of secrecy, self-dealing and subversion of truth that’s killing us (Alter, 2005, p. 42).”

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[1] The basic problem with most definitions of propaganda is that they lack consistency and often fail to distinguish propaganda from other forms of persuasion. Perhaps the best attempt to clarify this issue is by Richard Alan Nelson (1996, p. 232) who argues for a neutral definition in which propaganda is "a systematic form of persuasion which attempts to influence the emotions, attitudes, opinions, and actions of specified target audiences for ideological, political or commercial purposes through the controlled transmission of one-sided messages (which may or may not be factual) via mass and direct media channels."