

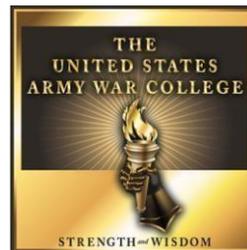
# Political Warfare Lessons from the Cold War

by

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# Political Warfare Lessons from the Cold War

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## Abstract

With the challenge of what to do in the gray zone environment, many security professionals are calling for the renewal of the US to conduct political warfare. Political warfare was once a vital and integral component of national security strategy. After World War II, both Truman and Eisenhower conducted extensive overt and covert political warfare campaigns as part of their national security strategy. President Truman and his team conducted numerous actions and eventually recognized the need for a coordinating body to conduct political warfare and therefore formed the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB). President Eisenhower and his team kept the concept of a PSB but provided new structure and guidance and called it the Operations Coordination Board (OCB). What can we learn from the way Truman and Eisenhower organized to conduct political warfare? This paper will study the organization and function of the PSB and OCB and compare efforts of the Truman administration in Italy in 1948 and the Eisenhower administration's efforts through the "Chance for Peace" and "Atoms for Peace" campaigns and a case study on Singapore from 1955 to 1961, to derive lessons that we can use today. Based on the lessons learned, this paper will advocate for an OCB like structure to be placed on the National Security Council to properly coordinate, synchronize, and integrate political warfare as an element of national power today.

## **Political Warfare Lessons from the Cold War**

*“Information and education are powerful forces in support of peace. Just as war begins in the minds of men, so does peace.”* President Dwight Eisenhower

An on-going discussion occurring in the US national security arena today is the topic of “gray zones.” Gray zones have been defined as “security challenges, which are competitive interactions among and within state and non-state actors that fall between the traditional war and peace duality.”<sup>1</sup> Gray zone conflicts are also characterized by activities that are meant to be conducted in a way that allows a revisionist power to achieve national objectives while also remaining below a threshold that would lead to general war.<sup>2</sup> Examples of contemporary gray zone issues include the Russian annexation of Crimea and China’s move to extend their territorial sovereignty by creating islands 600 miles south of their mainland near the Philippines. As evidenced by these actions, gray zones are part of the current operating environment and they are forecasted to continue well into the future. The most recently published National Intelligence Council’s Global Trends report predicts that “the ability to stay below the threshold for a full-scale war will lead to more persistent economic, political and security competition in the “gray zone” between peacetime and war.”<sup>3</sup>

Gray zones and the space between peace and war is also recognized by the current Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dunford. In a recent speech, General Dunford, stated that, “Russia (our top threat), China, and Iran use “economic coercion, political influence, unconventional warfare information ops, cyber ops to advance their interests and they do it in a way that they know we don’t have an effective response.”<sup>4</sup> General Dunford went further stating, “our traditional approach where we are either at peace or

at war is insufficient to deal with that dynamic.”<sup>5</sup> The current reality is more “an adversarial competition with a military dimension short of armed conflict.”<sup>6</sup>

Within this strategic context is a debate on how the US should operate in this space to deter or counter other nation states from these types of campaigns. Some are calling for a renewal of what was once known as political warfare operations. Max Boot and Michael Doran write in *Foreign Affairs* that the US should “reinvigorate the US government’s capability to wage political warfare” to help counter aggressive states operating in this space.<sup>7</sup> Nadia Schadlow writes in a 2014 article titled, *Competitive Engagement: Upgrading America's Influence*, that “the United States is in a global argument” and that we should adopt a mindset of competitive engagement so the US can “engage in – and win – this argument.”<sup>8</sup> Michael Noonan argues that in certain cases political warfare should be used so the United States can “at least try to be able to shape events on the ground overseas with as little force as possible or else live with the consequences of outcomes that may call for the use of more force down the road.”<sup>9</sup>

As Boot and Doran mention, the US has conducted political warfare in the past, primarily against the Soviets to counter their efforts of expansion during the Cold War. In April 1948, George Kennan wrote that the US needed to prepare to engage in political warfare. Kennan wrote that “Political warfare is the logical application of Clausewitz's doctrine in time of peace. In broadest definition, political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives. Such operations are both overt and covert. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures (as ERP--the Marshall Plan), and "white" propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support of "friendly"

foreign elements, "black" psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states."<sup>10</sup>

With a call to renew US efforts to conduct political warfare, what can we learn from the heyday of political warfare operations in the United States on how we organized to conduct political warfare operations, specifically during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, that we can apply today? Both President Truman and Eisenhower were firm advocates of political warfare operations and they were a critical component of US strategy during the Cold War to counter Soviet expansion. The Truman administration began political warfare operations in 1947 and as the number of operations grew they realized they did not have the means to integrate, coordinate, and synchronize political warfare operations across the US government leading to the formation of a Psychological Strategy Board in 1951 that reported to the National Security Council (NSC). President Eisenhower was more of an advocate than Truman for political warfare and he even criticized Truman's efforts to conduct political warfare while he was on the campaign trail in his efforts to become President. As President Eisenhower took office, he reorganized the PSB and renamed the organization the Operations Coordination Board (OCB).

This paper will conduct a historical look at the PSB and OCB – why they were formed, how they operated, and their effectiveness – to glean lessons that we can apply today on how to coordinate, integrate, and synchronize political warfare and operations at the national level for implementation. This paper will conclude that the US should revive the concept of a PSB/OCB type organization for the following reasons: 1) As a way to bring the many disparate organizations that touch this issue into a cohesive

national 'information' strategy; 2) to properly coordinate, integrate, and synchronize these operations across the government and; 3) to bring coherence to the understanding of political warfare operations and have a process in place that leads to a common understanding of the President's intent and tolerance of risk for political warfare operations. This paper will recommend that an inter-agency policy coordination committee (PCC) be formed on the National Security Council to provide the President and the US government a means to ensure that this important tool is a viable option to be considered and nested within the overall strategy of the United States in the conduct of American foreign policy.

Note to readers. During the Truman and Eisenhower eras the terms political warfare, propaganda, and covert operations were used interchangeably which can cause confusion. This paper leaves the terms as stated by the people at the time for purpose of historical context and the proper quoting of primary sources. They all refer to inform and influence operations both overt and covert. As you will see, this was one of the issues that hampered efforts to effectively organize these types of operations early-on. George Kennan provides a broad definition of political warfare above. Overt operations are those operations that are acknowledged by the government and are also known as white propaganda. Covert operations can be black, "which is credited to a false source and spread, lies, fabrications and deceptions," and gray where the source "may or may not be correctly identified, and the accuracy of the information is uncertain."<sup>11</sup> For the term propaganda, "Richard Alan Nelson 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.<sup>12</sup>

## **Historical Context**

*"So long as we remain amateurs in the critical field of political warfare, the billions of dollars we annually spend on defense and foreign aid will provide us with a diminishing measure of protection." - Senator Mundt, 1961*

## **Background**

As the US emerged from WWII, President Truman's primary focus was to transition the nation from a wartime footing back to peace. The nation had to shift the many factories that mobilized to support the war effort back to the production of consumer goods and supplies. The military had millions of men they needed to transition out of the service and back to civilian life. Meanwhile the US grappled with a devastated Europe including Great Britain, leaving the US as the sole superpower in the world. Initially, Truman followed FDR's assumption that Stalin and the Soviet Union could become part of the integrated world community.<sup>13</sup> Truman even stated that Stalin "was a fine man who wanted to do the right thing."<sup>14</sup> However, as time went on Truman's stance on Stalin and the Soviets changed. "Perceptions of the Soviet Union changed and concerns about its international behavior and ambitions deepened...but in the end Truman...broke free of FDR's 'hunches' regarding Stalin."<sup>15</sup>

## **Truman and the Psychological Strategy Board**

This shift in belief, coupled with a European continent dealing with the devastating effects of WWII and the increasing belief of Soviet expansion, led to the Truman Doctrine and the European Recovery Program, also known as the Marshall Plan, in 1947 and 1948 respectively. The development of the strategy of containment, first articulated by George Kennan in the long telegram in 1946, started to take hold as

the enduring concept with which to counter the Soviet Union. As Cold War scholar John Lewis Gaddis wrote about Kennan and containment:

“Kennan's strategy of containment mapped out a path between dangerous--even deadly--alternatives. Despite the persistence of a multipolar international system, the dominant trend in thinking about strategy through the end of World War II had been one of bipolar extremes: war or peace, victory or defeat, appeasement or annihilation. The idea that there could be something in between--neither war nor peace, neither victory nor defeat, neither appeasement nor annihilation--had never been clearly articulated.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Recognition of the need for Political Warfare**

This thinking, combined with a very real concern to avoid war with the Soviets, shaped policy maker's decisions on how best to counter Soviet expansion. In a 1948 memo, titled “The inauguration of organized political warfare,” George Kennan stated that “political warfare is the logical application of Clausewitz's doctrine in time of peace. In broadest definition, political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives. Such operations are both overt and covert. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures (as ERP), and "white" propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support of "friendly" foreign elements, "black" psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states.”<sup>17</sup> In the referenced Memo, Kennan notes how the “creation, success, and survival of the British Empire has been due in part to the British understanding and application of the principles of political warfare,” and he also noted that the “Kremlin's conduct of political warfare has become the most refined and effective of any in history.”<sup>18</sup> Mr. Kennan further states that...”

Having assumed greater international responsibilities than ever before in our history and having been engaged by the full might of the Kremlin's political warfare, we cannot

afford to leave unmobilized our resources for covert political warfare. We cannot afford in the future, in perhaps more serious political crises, to scramble into impromptu covert operations [1 line of source text not declassified].”<sup>19</sup>

In this memo, Kennan called for a directorate of political warfare operations...with a director designated by, and responsible to, the Secretary of State with complete authority over covert political warfare operations.<sup>20</sup> Kennan stated that the directorate should have the authority to initiate new operations under its control or abolish existing covert activities, and that on-going covert activities being conducted by other agencies brought under the authority of the directorate.<sup>21</sup>

Kennan’s memorandum on political warfare was in response to Soviet efforts and a general recognition by many in the US government that they had to do something. By the time the memo was written, the Soviets had consolidated control over Eastern Europe, established clandestine in-roads into Greece, Turkey, and Iran, and strengthened their influence in the French and Italian Communist parties.<sup>22</sup> The Soviets were unrestrained in their efforts employing all means, including lies and deception in their efforts. This “growing Soviet propaganda offensive demonstrated as early as 1947 that the United States had either to respond in kind to this challenge or lose Europe without firing a shot.”<sup>23</sup> Following the rejection by the Soviets of the Marshall plan, the “Kremlin finalized plans to create the Communist Information Bureau” whose operations included not just dissemination of information but also rioting and work stoppages throughout France and Italy.<sup>24</sup> These efforts and inroads by the Soviets into Europe led the United States to assess their information programs to respond to Soviet propaganda activities.<sup>25</sup>

## **The Great Debate on Planning, Coordination, and Executing Political Warfare**

As a common consensus developed amongst the various cabinets, the President, and the NSC that the US should engage in political warfare, the debate shifted to who would be responsible for the planning and execution of political warfare operations. President Truman gave a speech to Congress on March 12, 1947 where he framed this challenge as an ideological issue, stating that “nations must choose between alternative ways of life...[where] one way of life is based on the will of the majority...distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections...[and] the second way of life based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority [and] relies on terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.”<sup>26</sup> The main idea of Truman’s speech, which became known as the Truman doctrine, was to sell Congress and the American public on providing aid to Greece and Turkey, which Truman was able to do. The administration recognized that only giving aid to Greece and Turkey would seem like a half-hearted attempt, given the destruction and plight of almost all European nations following the end of WWII. With this recognition came the impetus to deliver economic aid to Europe in what became known as the European Recovery Plan (ERP), aka the Marshall Plan, named for Secretary of State George C. Marshall.

The Marshall plan was not just an economic plan to give money and aid, the administration recognized that it was also a vehicle to provide an information campaign that directly linked the Truman doctrine and American ideals. Only two months after Truman’s speech, then Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson gave a speech that previewed the ERP, stating that the ERP was “not just an economic initiative but also an

ideological program to establish the superiority of US values in the battle against Soviet Communism.”<sup>27</sup>

At this time, Kennan was director of the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department and the US was already “engaged in black propaganda against the Soviet Union and its satellites,” most of which remain classified at this time.<sup>28</sup> The newly formed CIA was conducting operations in Italy following guidance from NSC memorandum 4-A where the NSC sanctioned the CIA to conduct a “covert psychological offensive,” leading the ad hoc Special Procedures Group for covert activity.<sup>29</sup>

One of the first real efforts to conduct propaganda was the administration’s efforts to sway the Italian elections in April 1948 and it highlights the very ad hoc, uncoordinated nature of these operations which would eventually lead to a series of reforms by the Truman administration to try and coordinate and synchronize political warfare operations in a more cohesive manner. While it was eventually successful, the US efforts in Italy will highlight the unorganized and ad hoc process the Truman administration was using and the side effects from an uncoordinated process.

### **Italy 1948**

The US already had concerns about leftist governments taking over European countries that was further exacerbated by a communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948. Through the newly formed CIA, the US began covert operations to support the Christian Democrats (DC) to help win the Italian elections. James Dunn, a senior Foreign Service Officer in the US Embassy in Italy defined for policymakers in Washington that there was “a psychological-political threat from leftist forces that

demanded American support for Italian Prime Minister and DC leader Alcide De Gasperi.”<sup>30</sup> The Embassy played a key role in executing American policy on the ground which proved crucial since NSC directives were often inappropriate or, due to review by military authorities, actions would take weeks before they were finalized and authorized by the President.<sup>31</sup> All of the efforts were “not a slickly orchestrated campaign by Washington, but an ad hoc arrangement between state and private sectors who shared a common objective of preventing the PCI [opposition] ascent to power.”<sup>32</sup>

Due to the Allied troop withdrawal, the US decided to provide military assistance to Italy, provided the Italians would purchase the equipment, which led to De Gasperi suggesting that this would provoke an already “volatile domestic situation by subjecting him to attack by the left.”<sup>33</sup> While the issue was being debated, the US Army, concerned by a leftist takeover, took the initiative and organized arms shipments to Italy, even though it still was not coordinated and approved by the Italians.<sup>34</sup> Truman belatedly approved the action while De Gasperi remarked he was concerned that the arms would offer a potential propaganda coup to the PCI. In response, the State department urged him to reconsider, which he eventually did while asserting the need for absolute secrecy.<sup>35</sup>

Also occurring at this time were efforts by James Forrestal, Robert Patterson, and Allen Dulles who were frustrated by the “slow American response to the Communist challenge,” and therefore formed an ad hoc committee to cultivate private funds for the secret funding of propaganda, newsprint, and radio and TV campaigns.<sup>36</sup> In the aftermath of the campaign, Forrestal and Kennan were both dissatisfied with Kennan’s

PPS arguing that “we cannot afford in the future...to scramble into impromptu covert operations as we did at the time of the Italian elections.”<sup>37</sup>

In one of the administration's first attempts to conduct political warfare operations it is clear that the efforts were clearly uncoordinated and ad hoc with multiple entities like State, the CIA, and the Army each making attempts to help in an effort that was unorganized, uncoordinated, and at times, executed without the consent of the President.

Due in part to the ad hoc and unorganized nature of the efforts in Italy, the NSC published NSC memo 10/2 that superseded NSC 4-A and provided updated guidance on the scope and authority of political warfare operations.<sup>38</sup> In the memo, issued on 18 June 1948, the Truman administration reaffirmed their position and also attempted, again, to organize the efforts for covert operations. NSC memo 10/2 stated: ‘The [NSC], taking cognizance of the vicious covert activities of the USSR, its satellite countries and Communist groups to discredit and defeat the aims and activities of the United States and other Western powers, has determined that, in the interests of world peace and U.S. national security, the overt foreign activities of the U.S. Government must be supplemented by covert operations.’<sup>39</sup> It then went on to state that “A new Office of Special Projects shall be created within the Central Intelligence Agency to plan and conduct covert operations; and in coordination with the Joint Chiefs of Staff to plan and prepare for the conduct of such operations in wartime.”<sup>40</sup> Shortly thereafter, the Office of Special Projects was renamed the Office of Policy Coordination (OPC). NSC 10/2 also help scope CIA activities by listing them as “covert” and not “psychological” and went onto to identify operations to include propaganda, economic warfare,

preventative direct action, sabotage, assistance to resistance movements, subversion and support of indigenous anti-Communist movements in threatened countries of the free world.<sup>41</sup> NSC 10/2 also “decreed that covert action would be run by a new office located in CIA but taking its guidance in peacetime from the Department of State, and from the military in wartime.”<sup>42</sup>

In April 1950, the NSC published NSC-68 that recognized the Soviet threat and stated that “intensification of affirmative and timely measures and operations by covert means in the fields of economic warfare and political and psychological warfare with a view to fomenting and supporting unrest and revolt in selected strategic satellite countries.”<sup>43</sup> As Greg Mitrovich notes in his book *Undermining the Kremlin*, NSC-68 “recommended a twofold response: an intensification of the political offensive against the Soviet bloc...and a quadrupling of the military budget.”<sup>44</sup>

The concern about Soviet expansion and the multiple NSC memos being produced continued the expansion of political warfare being conducted by different cabinets and agencies. By 1951, “US [political warfare] projects covered 93 countries...the Voice of America had increased broadcasting from 30 hours a day to 61 and from 24 languages to 45.<sup>45</sup> Printing capacity was increased substantially and the number of information centers increased from 105 to 128, and documentaries were made in 32 languages shown by 145 different mobile units.<sup>46</sup> With this vast expansion of political warfare operations, the debate over who controlled, planned, and executed political warfare operations intensified.

Problems of organization were created by a series of memorandums like “NSC documents 4-A, NSC 10/2, and NSC 20/4 [that] led to a patchwork of responsibilities

and tension between overt and covert activities.”<sup>47</sup> Each of the major organizations involved, White House, State, CIA, the office of OPC, and the military each had a share of the various psychological warfare offensives “without having overall control.”<sup>48</sup>

By 1951, the control of psychological operations crystallized into two schools of thought with the military and CIA arguing for the creation of a new organization which would handle psychological warfare and be responsible to either the NSC or the President, while the State Department wanted all operations under its control and direction.<sup>49</sup> The on-going debate over control, authority, and a clear definition of political warfare plus normal bureaucratic infighting was coupled with the frustrations of the newly appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs Edward Barret and the new CIA director Walter Bedell Smith. They both shared the sentiment that there was no effective organization to coordinate all of the information machinery into a cohesive and coherent message and they found the “system overwhelmed” and no “single-authority” concerned with political warfare exclusively.<sup>50</sup> Adding to this was the outbreak of the Korean War in which a debate about control surfaced again between the Defense Department fighting the war and the Department of State.<sup>51</sup> Also, occurring at this time was the Project Troy group, which was formed to improve radio transmissions into Europe and the Soviet Union, publishing a report which stated “that the most significant problem facing U.S. political warfare was the lack of centralized planning and the incessant and harmful competition between the State Department, Defense Department, and the CIA.”<sup>52</sup> By this time, there was a “sprawling apparatus for influencing foreign attitudes,” yet, “it was organizational chaos, with overlapping and contradictory jurisdictions, duplication of effort, lack of coordination, and incessant

interdepartmental squabbling.”<sup>53</sup> The inability to bring coherence and harmony to these activities “coupled with the increased commitments from NSC-68 and the Korean War, led to the consensus that a single organization should oversee these efforts.”<sup>54</sup>

### **The Formation of the Psychological Strategy Board**

As Edward Lilly stated in his comprehensive study on The Development of Psychological Operations, the “Psychological Strategy Board did not, like Minerva, spring unheralded into full-blown existence,” and that it was “one action in a long series of psychological activities.”<sup>55</sup> As Lilly notes, the PSB did not ‘spring forth’ but only came into existence when there was recognition by the senior leaders that they needed a way to bring together the many agencies into a cohesive process; help coordinate, integrate, and synchronize operations; and provide a common understanding of political warfare operations.

The State department made the first attempt by establishing the National Psychological Strategy Board which was soundly rejected by the military, “who saw it as an usurpation of their wartime prerogatives,” which was particularly sensitive since they were in Korea fighting a war.<sup>56</sup> It was clear that at this point the on-going debate and the many attempts to provide clarity through a series of NSC memos was not working and that this was now a Presidential issue causing President Truman to task Fred Lawton and Admiral Sydney Souers to develop a plan for an interdepartmental committee.<sup>57</sup> Highlighting the tension that existed on this issue, their ability to formulate a consensus took several months before Truman was finally able to sign a Presidential directive establishing the Psychological Strategy Board.

President Truman recognized the need for coherence and centralized control in political warfare operations when he wrote that “It is the purpose of this directive to authorize and provide for the more effective planning, coordination and conduct, within the framework of approved national policies, of psychological operations.”<sup>58</sup> The memo “established a Psychological Strategy Board responsible, within the purposes of this directive, for the formulation and promulgation, as guidance to the departments and agencies responsible for psychological operations, of over-all national psychological objectives, policies and programs, and for the coordination and evaluation of the national psychological effort.”<sup>59</sup> The board was to report to the NSC and be composed of the Undersecretary of State, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the Director of Central Intelligence. It also added that a representative of the Joint Chiefs shall sit as its principal military advisor in order to ensure that its objectives, policies and programs shall be related to approved plans for military operations.<sup>60</sup>

“To direct the agency, the White House selected Gordon Gray, who had been Secretary of the Army and a special assistant to Truman before becoming President of the University of North Carolina.”<sup>61</sup> From the start, the process, scope, and authority was still confusing to everyone involved. Although it was set-up as an independent organization, it functioned as a committee and they spent the first six months trying to clarify the exact meaning of the President’s directive.<sup>62</sup> State was trying to limit the PSB to psychological operations only while the CIA was lobbying for well-defined national objectives and an overall strategy for covert operations.<sup>63</sup> The director Gordon Gray was unable to resolve the disputes of an agreed upon definition of psychological warfare and jurisdiction.<sup>64</sup> This issue plagued the board for months and according to

James Webb, the executive officer of the NSC, “the inability to resolve those two divergent schools of thought was apparent in all areas of the Board’s work.”<sup>65</sup>

Also, on-going at this time was a fundamental question of the board's role. When President Truman formally invited Gordon Gray to be the director, he wrote “it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the possibility of averting a third World War may depend upon our strength and effectiveness of our efforts in the field of psychological warfare.”<sup>66</sup> As Lucas writes, this led to a fundamental question of whether the board's role was limited to devise information operations for other agencies or was their role to “equate psychological strategy with Cold War strategy, coordinating diplomatic, economic, and military planning?”<sup>67</sup>

The PSB was short lived as Eisenhower would take office 19 months after its formation. The series of policy memo’s and ad hoc nature of operations led to the concept of the PSB but even upon its formation, there was so much baggage that the PSB remained in a state of confusion with the bulk of their efforts focused on what their mission was versus actually executing psychological operations. However, the formation of the PSB was clear recognition that an organization was needed that could control, integrate, and synchronize political warfare operations. In the PSBs short life, it was beset by lack of clarity on their roles and functions, confusion over what constituted political warfare operations and the simple fact that, as noted above, during Truman’s administration they were clearly trying to bring some cohesion to their strategy. It is fair to state that during this time the Truman administration was clearly wrestling with producing a clear and cohesive grand strategy in the midst of extraordinary and constant change and shocks to the international order. The Marshall Plan, Berlin Airlift,

the Soviet Union exploding the atomic bomb, China's Communist revolution and the outbreak of the Korea War all occurred in just a few short years so formulating a clear, cohesive grand strategy was a monumental challenge. As Hal Brands writes, the "Truman-era grand strategy was often a messy affair," in which "containment did not spring forth fully formed...but was an idea had to be worked out – and reworked out" and that is plainly evident by the many documents pertaining to political warfare operations as well.<sup>68</sup> As the Truman administration ends, President Eisenhower and his team already had clear intentions on revamping the national security process for propaganda operations.

### **President Eisenhower and the OCB**

As Eisenhower was running for office in 1952, he continually criticized the Truman administration with the campaign theme of "Korea, Communism, Corruption."<sup>69</sup> Eisenhower blamed the Truman administration for the stalemate in Korea, the spread of communism, and corruption in the Truman administration.<sup>70</sup> Given his background as the Supreme Allied Commander during World War II, President Eisenhower "embraced the strategic use of overseas information from the outset of his administration."<sup>71</sup> He even made psychological warfare a campaign issue stating:

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."<sup>72</sup>

As stated previously, support for the short-lived PSB was waning with the DCI calling it "incompetent and its work irrelevant."<sup>73</sup> The thought was to abolish the PSB but "have

many of their functions continue, preferably under the NSC.”<sup>74</sup> President Eisenhower made the critique that the Truman administration “failed to bring into line its crisscrossing and overlapping and jealous departments.”<sup>75</sup> President Eisenhower already had announced his intentions to conduct a review of psychological warfare in earlier speeches and so six days after his inauguration, he formally appointed the President’s Committee on International Information Activities, also known as the “Jackson Committee,” due to the names of the members on the panel.

“The President appointed a panel under the direction of William H. Jackson to examine the effectiveness of American psychological warfare programs since the end of WWII. Also involved were CD Jackson (president of Radio Free Europe) and Wayne Jackson. The aptly titled ‘Jackson Committee’ argued that one of the reasons behind the failure of American covert operations – defined therein as those operations “intended primarily to contribute to a reduction of Soviet capabilities and a retraction of Soviet Power” – was that there existed a “serious gap between the formulation of general objectives and the detailed actions required to give effect to them.”<sup>76</sup>

As the Jackson Committee began their review, it should be noted they were not the only committee investigating information operations overseas. “There was also the Hickenlooper Committee, chaired by Senator Bourke B. Hickenlooper, the ‘President’s Advisory Committee on Government Organization,’ chaired by Senator Rockefeller, and hearings held by Senator McCarthy that at some level all directly or indirectly dealt with psychological operations in the US government.”<sup>77</sup>

### **Outcomes of the Jackson Committee**

The Jackson Committee held their first meeting on January 30, 1953 and interviewed over 250 witnesses over the course of six months, issuing their final report on June 30, 1953. The lengthy and detailed report clearly advocated for continued political warfare activities and also offered several philosophical statements and policy

recommendations on how to reorganize political warfare activities so the government could wield this powerful tool even better. In their statements, they recognized the issues confronted by the PSB by acknowledging the “wide difference of opinion on the role of propaganda and its inherent limitations” and that “one of the principal handicaps...that propaganda activities suffered is confusion regarding their mission.”<sup>78</sup> The committee recognized there was also “no unanimity of opinion regarding the overall mission of the United States information agencies,” and they also provided philosophical guidance on political warfare operations suggesting that propaganda “should not be the determining factor in deciding major issues,” and that it was most effective “when used as an auxiliary” to help achieve national objectives.<sup>79</sup> The report went further, stating they “found that psychological activity is not a field of endeavor separable from the main body of diplomatic, economic, and military measures by which the United States seeks to achieve its national objectives. It is an ingredient of such measures.”<sup>80</sup> Finally, “many of the current and past programs, committee members believed, had been ‘merely defensive,’ with committee members complaining that ‘the United States [had spoken] with a multitude of voices,’ resulting in a “haphazard projection of too many and too diffuse propaganda themes.”<sup>81</sup>

The Jackson Committee offers a very thorough rebuke of the Truman administration’s efforts and advocates for the abolishment of the PSB. In their report, they stated that the “conception of the PSB was unsound” and they stated that nowhere could they find an adequate definition of “psychological operations.”<sup>82</sup> They stated that “while the Psychological Strategy Board has concentrated heavily on planning it has possessed neither sufficient power to exercise effective coordination nor the techniques

adequate to produce meaningful evaluations” and that “planning function[s] has been carried on in the midst of ambiguity and serious interdepartmental controversy.”<sup>83</sup>

The report added that the directive assumes that in addition to national objectives from the NSC, the PSB would have “over-all national psychological objectives,” but the report states that they believe this concept is a “basic misconception, for we find that the ‘psychological aspect’ of policy is not separable from policy, but is inherent in every diplomatic, economic, or military action.<sup>84</sup> They elaborated that there is “psychological” implication in every act although there may be distinct psychological plans and specific activities “directed toward national objectives, there are no ‘national psychological objectives’ separate and distinct from national objectives.<sup>85</sup> Continuing, the committee explained psychological strategies are not “separate and distinct” from a “strategic concept for gaining national aims without war” and that even if the PSB developed a “regional psychological plan” it was really a plan for the achievement of “national aims involving the use of propaganda, diplomacy, economic pressure, and military strength in various combinations.”<sup>86</sup>

The Jackson committee made a number of policy recommendations for reorganization by the Eisenhower administration, one of which was to abolish the PSB and replace it with an Operations Coordination Board within the National Security Council (vice independent from and reporting to like the PSB) to “provide for the coordinated execution of approved national security policies.”<sup>87</sup> In essence, they folded up all planning and coordinating groups formed for political warfare under the Truman administration and rolled them into the OCB. They further stated that “the board would replace the PSB as the agency responsible for assuring coordination between the

foreign information program and covert activities,” helping to align and bring coherence to the various information activities.<sup>88</sup> As Robert Cutler writes in a 1956 Foreign Affairs article, “the Jackson Committee was unanimous in recommending a subaltern agency which would strive, not for more or for independent planning, but for better dovetailing of the programs of the departments and agencies responsible for carrying out approved national security policies.”<sup>89</sup>

Also, significant at this time was the Jackson Committee recommendation to establish a permanent agency responsible for “the strategic dissemination of an American message to foreign peoples.”<sup>90</sup> This would quickly lead to the establishment of the United States Information Agency (USIA) “which was created as an independent federal agency, responsible for public diplomacy through Executive Order 10477 signed by President Eisenhower.”<sup>91</sup> USIA began as an organization in August of 1953, two months upon the conclusion of the Jackson Committee. “USIA represented a consolidation of overseas information programs administered by the International Information Administration, the Mutual Security Agency, the Technical Cooperation Administration, and programs financed in connection with government in occupied areas.”<sup>92</sup> The USIA lasted until 1999 when it was abolished by the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act, splitting their duties between Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors.<sup>93</sup>

### **Operations Coordination Board**

As previously stated, the Jackson Committee recommended that the “President establish, within the NSC structure, an Operations Coordinating Board to provide for the coordinated execution of approved national security policies.”<sup>94</sup> The report stated that

the “coordination of departmental execution of national security policies” be the principal task and that the “distinctive role of the Operations Coordination Board would be to assign detailed planning responsibilities to departments, to examine the resulting plans for adequacy, consistency with policy and with each other, and then to coordinate and follow up the execution of such plans.”<sup>95</sup> The report went on to recommend that the OCB members should be “The Under Secretary of State, The Deputy Secretary of Defense, The Deputy Director for Mutual Security, The Director of CIA, and The Special Assistant to the President (for “cold war planning”).”<sup>96</sup>

With the benefit of watching the Truman administration wrestle with this issue and the Jackson Committee analysis and recommendations, the Eisenhower administration was able to build a more effective organization to coordinate political warfare. The OCB had many functions. As Robert Cutler stated, the OCB was designed to:

coordinate, ‘ride herd on’ and report to the council on the performance by the departments and agencies charged with responsibility to carry out national security policies approved by the president, and to be constantly mindful of such policies and performances psychological implications.<sup>97</sup>

Also, in accordance with the President’s orders, the OCB provided advice to the NSC and the President on implementation and supervision of plans, oversight of subordinate tasks to ensure they were aligned with policy goals and international opinion, and initiation of new ideas for policy consideration.<sup>98</sup> “Eisenhower’s special assistant, Dillon Anderson, added that the OCB ensured implementation programs did not conflict with existing policies.”<sup>99</sup> A more coherent process to wield information power was created

and its actions are highlighted by two major speeches given by Eisenhower within his first year of office.

### **“Chance for Peace” and “Atoms for Peace”**

Even before the Jackson Committee finalized their report and the NSC finalized their restructuring, the Eisenhower administration “began enacting its plan for a new global propaganda offensive, centered around two major presidential addresses: ‘Chance for Peace’ and ‘Atoms for Peace,’ with the OCB playing a key role in managing this global propaganda offensive.”<sup>100</sup> According to Martin J. Medhurst, following the death of Joseph Stalin in Mar, 1953, the “Chance for Peace” address given by Eisenhower in April 1953 was the start of a year-long “campaign to ‘exploit’ the changing events in the Soviet Union” while also representing the “opening shot in the psychological warfare advocate by [C.D.] Jackson as a means to stop potential Soviet peace offensives.”<sup>101</sup> The theme for the “Chance for Peace” address was to contrast the peaceful intent of the “free world” versus the war-like behavior of the Soviet Union after the war.<sup>102</sup> As part of the roll-out of this global propaganda offensive, the plan also included a “few universal products” in appropriate languages and idioms to promote the vision outlined by Eisenhower in the speech.<sup>103</sup> Examples included a paperback book written by an internationally known figure, a major motion picture, and a packaged radio series all promoting the vision established by Eisenhower in his speech and designed to motivate ‘people and groups’ to serves as carriers of the message.”<sup>104</sup>

Following the “Chance for Peace” the Eisenhower administration then moved to the “Atoms for Peace” campaign which, Medhurst notes, was “intended to appear as a ‘serious proposal that could...lead to a climate more conducive for nuclear

disarmament,' the address met three other less overt propaganda aims: to place the Soviet Union on the peace defensive; to inform the American people of the perils of nuclear weaponry; and to tell the world audience that everyone assumed a vested interest in the outcome of the Cold War."<sup>105</sup> Medhurst notes that the White House hoped to have the global audience believe the speech established a " framework for talks about the control of nuclear weapons," while an OCB document dated January 8, 1954, stated that another purpose of the speech was "to associate the 'peaceful development of atomic energy' with the United States, thus placing 'the USSR in a defensive position."<sup>106</sup> This hidden goal stressed that "we must not allow the peaceful image they [Soviets] have attempted to superimpose on ours to become fixed in people's minds" and in a letter from the "OCB on January 16, 1954, C. D. Jackson called upon both covert and overt propaganda channels to help achieve the psychological" edge."<sup>107</sup>

Highlighting the OCBs role, C.D. Jackson wrote the OCB after the speech acknowledging that "exploitation of the initial delivery of the speech" had already been "planned and implemented," and also called upon the OCB to develop more "specific programs for follow-up exploitation of the [address] in both the domestic and international public opinion fields."<sup>108</sup> After the speech, the OCB spearheaded a "working group on the implementation of the President's UN speech," designed for the "effective coordination of...domestic and overseas information."<sup>109</sup> According to the minutes of a January 19, 1954 meeting by the OCB, the campaign to promote the speech was substantial and included "500,000 illustrated pamphlets" titled "The Atoms for Peace and Progress," an Atomic Power for Peace Action Kit containing information, publicity, and speech materials, along with pictures and pamphlets which was designed

for the domestic audience.<sup>110</sup> Further, “even though similar ‘action kits’ and pamphlets were distributed internationally, the OCB warned against the duplication of American material overseas leading to a program seemingly more expansive than the domestic plan.<sup>111</sup> For the international audience, the “OCB developed exhibits, like the one built for Sao Paulo's Quadricentennial, seeking to ‘educate’ citizens there about the peaceful uses of atomic energy that stayed in the region some six months in 1954.”<sup>112</sup> With OCB planning, executed through the newly formed USIA and some private agencies, the Eisenhower administration executed a global campaign according to a document titled “Summary of Events Planned for Exploitation.”<sup>113</sup> In the document, they detail scripts and programs developed for Voice of America, motion pictures, educational exchanges, wireless bulletins, information centers and private agencies.<sup>114</sup> As an example, in one case a “a series was developed for the wireless bulletin entitled, ‘Eisenhower Deplores Wastefulness of Atomic Weapons,’ and in another case “movies were made that depicted the relationship between the “atom” and agriculture, industry, medicine, and physics.”<sup>115</sup>

In the first year of the Eisenhower administration they were able to develop a more coordinated, integrated, and synchronized propaganda operation through the NSC and OCB. “As the ‘Chance for Peace’ and the ‘Atoms for Peace’ campaigns revealed, every presidential message contained several ‘psychological’ aims.<sup>116</sup> Both nonofficial and official information channels “functioned to further the foreign policy goals of the Eisenhower administration,” with both campaigns being strategically structured to ensure that stated goals and hidden aims were intertwined within the public pronouncements.”<sup>117</sup> “Once the introductory addresses were delivered, the NSC and the

OCB insured that the broad-based campaigns strove to meet both international and domestic propaganda exigencies.”<sup>118</sup>

Right out of the gate, the Eisenhower administration produced and delivered a comprehensive information operation with several psychological aims, although in this case, the “Chance for Peace” and “Atoms for Peace” efforts were overt. To truly understand how comprehensive, and enduring the Eisenhower’s efforts were we will now look at the psychological effort by the Eisenhower administration in Singapore from 1955 to 1961. This is a great case study of the scale of efforts that highlights the number of different programs the administration executed, both overt and covert, in their psychological campaign.

### **Singapore 1955 to 1961**

The island nation of Singapore sits on the Straits of Malacca and was therefore considered strategically important to the Eisenhower administration. They also considered it “one of the most important regional air hubs,” and therefore they were concerned that if the “communists controlled Singapore, the United States would lose access to the island’s critical naval, airport, and refueling facilities.”<sup>119</sup> As Britain began relinquishing political control of Singapore US officials were alarmed when violence erupted on the island in 1955 creating concern that communists would exploit the unrest to start to control Singapore.<sup>120</sup> The fear that “Communists intended to subvert the strategic island moved Washington to intensify psy-war activities in Singapore.”<sup>121</sup> The OCB began to craft a plan that initially put Britain in charge but that eventually shifted to a more robust and direct US role in the efforts. NSC memo 5405 stated that the United States “support the British” in their anti-communist operations [in Singapore] but NSC

memo 5612/1 (which superseded 5405) stated that US agencies use “all available means” to “block Singapore’s potential slide into communism,” indicating the shift from working through the British to a more direct role by the US.<sup>122</sup>

The OCBs plans were extensive and included efforts to influence the local press, the opening of library’s, movies, radio broadcasts, exchanges for Singaporean’s to visit the US, and numerous “cultural ambassadors” and sports stars from the US visiting Singapore. Efforts were both overt and covert and all were coordinated and organized through the OCB.

Radio was the most dominant since at this time, TV had not arrived and 54% of the population was illiterate.<sup>123</sup> When it came to radio, the Eisenhower administration efforts paid off. By 1960, “some eighty thousand Malaysians and Singaporeans tuned in directly and regularly to VOA [Voice of America] programs while Radio Peking commanded only half that number.”<sup>124</sup> This was a great achievement considering that in 1955, the British High Commissioner in Malay “had observed that Radio Peking was more popular with Malaya’s Chinese community than were local radio stations” yet, “five to eight years later, little of the Communist radio’s influence, eroded by the appeal of Radio Singapore and the reformed VOA, remained.”<sup>125</sup>

As mentioned previously, the Eisenhower administration developed plans to expose “Singaporeans to American society, [with] distinguished cultural acts, and sporting achievements, via exchange of local programs; [and] the placement of USIA-produced films in local cinemas.<sup>126</sup> These efforts included an exchange program for locals, including labor leaders and journalists, to visit the United States to experience

American society or to participate in US training programs in order to “make the US known to Singaporeans.”<sup>127</sup>

The OCB issued directives to highlight the US artistic achievements “to be publicized in Singapore” that included artists, musicians, and sports stars.<sup>128</sup> “They included jazz maestro Benny Goodman, tenor Richard Tucker, soprano Eleanor Steber and Olympic Sprinter Jesse Owens.<sup>129</sup> Coupled with these efforts, the USIA also produced films to “acquaint Singapore’s residents with US society and ideals.”<sup>130</sup> Hollywood films were also very popular in Singapore at the time leading the administration to have a series of talks with Hollywood “to impress upon film executives the messages that it hoped would be conveyed through their movies.”<sup>131</sup> “President Eric Johnson and director Cecil B. Demille were consulted on making “one or more feature films based on the theme of America’s devotion to peace.”<sup>132</sup>

The government’s efforts also included covert efforts. “The CIA employed ‘insiders’ to edit the screenplays like *Elephant Walk* (1954) where the negative impact of brash American characters being insensitive to Ceylonese culture was diluted by the insertion of respectful Americans who demonstrated more reverence.<sup>133</sup> The agency also bought rights to George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, funded the British to produce the movie and paid for the covert distribution of an animated version in Singapore “to press home the message of Communist depravity.”<sup>134</sup>

In the written realm, the US pursued efforts via three institutions: the USIS-Singapore<sup>1</sup> library, the local government, and Singapore’s press.<sup>135</sup> The library was a huge success attracting large crowds. “Within six months of opening, it had 124,536

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<sup>1</sup> United States Information Service (USIS) is the term used by the Eisenhower administration internationally when referring to the United States Information Agency (USIA) efforts and programs.

visitors with 39,971 publications loaned out to locals.”<sup>136</sup> The US was careful about which types of books they would have in their inventory. “For the thousands who visited the USIS-Singapore Library, they would have found little that was laudable of communism.”<sup>137</sup> Through local authorities and an American-managed distribution network, US officials also disseminated publications to the populace to actively shape local opinion.<sup>138</sup> “For example, thirty thousand copies of *How to Speak Dialectics*, a pamphlet ‘ridiculing Communists double talk,’ were circulated to Chinese schools in September 1957.”<sup>139</sup>

Efforts in the written word also extended to the local press. The US had many methods to try and influence the press that included direct persuasion of local journalists, paying reporters for stories sympathetic to American interests, and bringing columnists to the US on a visitor program that lasted six weeks and included visits to US newspapers and discussions with leading academics and policy makers.<sup>140</sup> The US also lobbied the Singaporean government to successfully close a pro-communist newspaper. In August 1957, US diplomats lobbied Singaporean Minister Chew who eventually agreed and on 22 Aug, “in conjunction with a wider countersubversion operation, the proscription of *Xinbao* was finally undertaken.”<sup>141</sup>

As you can see by the efforts in Singapore, the efforts by the Eisenhower administration, through the OCB are vast, extensive, and coordinated across multiple government organizations. USIS provided libraries, VOA conducted radio broadcasts, the State Department lobbied to have *Xinbao* closed and the CIA conducted covert operations influencing the content, production, and distribution of certain movies. This case study also provides a snapshot as to the effectiveness of political warfare

operations. As mentioned previously, in a matter of five to eight years, Radio Peking's influence was greatly diminished. In an eighteen-month period, USIA produced films sold 32 million tickets with a population at the time of only eight million that included both Singapore and Malaya.<sup>142</sup> In a six-month period in 1958, 2,228 programs including USIS films were seen by a reported 550,271 persons in the Singapore area which has a population of 1,500,000.<sup>143</sup> "About one in three Singaporeans, therefore, was effectively inundated with US messages on subjects such as Communist deceit and oppression."<sup>144</sup>

A 1958 survey provided additional evidence of psychological warfare operations in Singapore. The survey was administered by a Singapore-based publishing firm and US officials were not involved in conducting interviews or tabulating results.<sup>145</sup> There were 231 respondents, 190 of whom were Chinese, and they were all kept unaware of the American sponsorship of the survey.<sup>146</sup> "The majority ranked the United States first under the categories "Freedom for the Individual" (35 percent), "Generosity" (52 percent), "Economic Opportunity (19 percent), and "Economic Domination of Other Countries (30 percent).<sup>147</sup> USSR and China (no distinction between Nationalist and Communist China) came in second (12%) and third (6%) respectively in "Freedom for the Individual; unranked and fourth (3%) in "Generosity;" sixth (3%) and third (6%) in "Economic Opportunity;" and second (9%) and unranked in "Economic Domination of Other Countries."<sup>148</sup> The one wrinkle here came from the question of "Stopping the Production of Nuclear Weapons" where 24% thought the Soviets were more serious than the US (20%). The efforts did not "substantially alter perceptions that Washington was more concerned about nuclear disarmament than Moscow," nevertheless, the survey results indicated that the American information operations had succeeded in

painting the United States, in contrast to the Communist states, as a country marked by altruism, political freedom, social mobility, and economic opportunities.<sup>149</sup> This positive outlook by the Singaporeans was further affirmed by a 1963 survey that had 498 Singaporeans respond. They were asked the question, “In the present world situation, do you personally think that, on the whole, Singapore should side with the United States, with the USSR, or with neither?”<sup>150</sup> Although 61 percent said neither, 26 percent favored the United States over the 3% who said USSR.<sup>151</sup> In the terms of “basic interests” between the US, USSR, and China, the 1963 survey revealed that US/Singapore relations were “very much in agreement (14%)” or “fairly well in agreement (48%)” while the USSR scored 1% and 7% and China 1% and 5% respectively.<sup>152</sup> It is clear that the efforts by the Eisenhower administration had a positive impact on Singaporeans view of the US versus the Soviets, China, and communism. A well-coordinated and thought through political warfare operation can have positive impacts on the ability to influence another countries behavior towards our ideals.

It is also evident from the Eisenhower administration that they continually conducted after-action reviews of their systems and organizations to ensure they were optimal. During his time in office, “Eisenhower conducted a number of organizational revisions of OCB membership as he sought ways to optimize the implementation of policy.”<sup>153</sup> By the end of his presidency, Eisenhower made modifications to the members of the OCB. “The special assistant served as chairman” with the following members: “undersecretary of state, the deputy secretary of defense, the director of central intelligence, the director of the U.S. Information agency, and the director of the

International Cooperation Administration,” with a new rule that any agency tasked with implementation of policy to have an undersecretary-level representative.”<sup>154</sup>

### **Lessons Learned**

In reviewing the literature on the Truman and Eisenhower presidencies, and their role in political warfare, it is clear that they both viewed these types of operations as a central element of their strategies in their efforts against the Soviet Union. There was also a real recognition that we needed ways and means that allowed the US to compete in the space between peace and war while avoiding conventional or nuclear war. It is also clear that they both understood the requirement for a mechanism to bring together the many disparate agencies conducting political warfare, nest with the current strategy, and properly coordinate, integrate, and synchronize those operations into a cohesive whole. If the US is going to conduct political warfare operations today, it is imperative to have an organization to bring it all together. The events and processes they attempted to put together during the time of Truman and Eisenhower offer some critical lessons to decision makers today in how best to bring coherence to the use of political warfare in their strategies.

To be fair, President Eisenhower and the Jackson committee were in the enviable position of having watched through the Truman administration's many attempts to bring order and structure to not only strategy and policy but also to a newly reorganized government from the National Security Act of 1947. Eisenhower certainly brought deep knowledge of running large organizations as the former Supreme Allied Commander during World War II and that, coupled with the knowledge gained from the Truman administration, the Solarium project, and the four reviews on the organization of

the government led to a more cohesive and efficient process. This did not mean they were flawless in their decisions, only that they built a system that tied together political warfare into the overall strategy of the United States in an efficient and informed manner.

The lessons learned are numerous but this paper will focus on seven. First, there has to be some agreement on the term political warfare and what it means across the US government. Second, there has to be some way to bring the already varied and currently existing elements of information operations into a coordinated, integrated, and synchronized element of national power into a coherent whole that is nested with all the other elements of national power. Third, is that a board like structure will help to bring process and a formal mechanism to ensure information power is a deliberative discussion for the National Security Council and most importantly the President. Fourth, it has to be embedded and part of the National Security Council and not be separate from the NSC, like the PSB that was built under Truman. This also fits Eisenhower's concept who stated that we select a man to handle this effort who "should have the full confidence of, and direct access to, the Chief Executive..." and that "this function may best be worked out through a revitalized National Security Council."<sup>155</sup> Fifth, information power should not be an ad hoc process, done after the fact and on the defense. Harnessing information power is not a new challenge and it is something that has been difficult from President Truman to the present day. However, the system will never build any process unless and until is built. It took the Truman administration from 1947 to 1951 to establish the PSB although they knew there were issues as early as 1948. If the US waits until a crisis occurs to begin political warfare operations, history has shown

that it will be contentious turf war between the various agencies with the potential for each agency to conduct operations in their own way, irrespective of the other cabinets and agencies. Sixth, the board has to be manned by senior level representatives from each agency. Information power crosscuts and is part of too many other domains of power and therefore will need someone at the senior level that has the appropriate understanding of the major initiatives and operations underway, the appropriate level of clearance in the case of covert information operations, and the power to make decisions in the meetings, if necessary. Finally, Eisenhower and the Jackson committee were in complete agreement on the philosophical underpinnings of using information power. The Eisenhower administration believed that information operations are part of and cross-cut every other domain of national power; that overt operations be based on the truth, be more “news like,” and provide objective, yet positive, analysis. They had a more subtle approach on the portrayal of the US to foreign, and domestic audiences, but to be clear, they made information operations part of every action.

Because of these lessons learned, this paper is recommending that the US establish a policy coordination committee with a corresponding staff directorate on the NSC for information power that can bring this vital element of national power into the government and help prevent the issues confronted by President Truman and, in some cases, President Eisenhower in their administrations.

*"Politics is War by other Means"*

-Unknown

### **Recommendations**

#### **Towards a Common Term and Definition of Political Warfare**

The very definition of what political warfare meant clearly had different interpretations based on the individuals involved and it did hamper efforts, especially during the Truman administration, to conduct this activity. As noted earlier in this paper, the Jackson Committee found that "there is still no unanimity of opinion regarding the overall mission of the United States information agencies. Some consider the mission to be the dissemination of truth, particularly about the United States; some emphasize the importance of winning friends for the United States; and others view the information services as a weapon against communism"

Deciding on a perfect definition for political warfare as George Kennan described it is a tall task as there are many actions and efforts that can be considered political warfare from overt public diplomacy, to something like the Marshall plan, to covert operations to help a particular political party win an election. Due to the depth and breadth of the term and the associated concepts, words like covert, political warfare, and propaganda were used interchangeably with each other during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. George Kennan's definition is expansive with a large number of subordinate terms and actions encompassing political warfare. Then there are covert operations, which cross agencies and departments and play a part in diplomatic, economic, or military efforts. In another definition of political warfare by Carnes Lord, he states that "political warfare is a general category of activities encompassing political action, coercive diplomacy, and covert political warfare. In

general, the first of these functions is performed by diplomatic personnel, the second by military and diplomatic personnel, and the third by intelligence personnel.”<sup>156</sup>

The military uses the term Information Operations. Joint publication 3-13 defines Information Operations (IO) as “the integrated employment of the core capabilities of electronic warfare, computer network operations, psychological operations, military deception and operations security, in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own.”<sup>157</sup> This definition is a good start as it helps to bring into the discussion a wide range of core capabilities with the reason being to “influence, disrupt, corrupt or usurp.”

However, at the grand strategy level, this paper will put forth a definition used by Dennis Murphy and Daniel Kuehl in their article titled “The Case for a National Information Strategy.” The authors base their definition on the National Security Strategies issued by President Ronald Reagan and they propose the term “information power.”<sup>158</sup> They stated that “information power” is the use of informational content and the technologies and capabilities that enable the exchange of that content, used globally to influence the social, political, economic, or military behavior of human beings, whether one or one billion, in the support of national security objectives.”<sup>159</sup> This paper argues that this definition appropriately captures the reason for information as an element of national power, its crosscutting and ubiquitous nature, and its ability to capture the numerous agencies and functions that currently exist throughout the government.

This paper will also contend that it will always be difficult to find a perfect term for a concept that is pervasive in every other government function. At some point with a concept like “information power” it will leave you unfulfilled as a term which is why this paper advocates for a PCC which would have the ability to add or subtract from the term and provide clarity and resolve confusion on the objectives of information power operations.

### **A Policy Coordination Committee for Information Operations**

For the United States to conduct Information Operations effectively, it is vital that they establish a policy coordination committee on the National Security Council with an associated staff directorate. The PCC shall require a minimum of assistant secretary level members that are subject matter experts from Department of State, Defense, Justice, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, The National Security Agency, and the White House Communications director. This PCC will have the associated staff directorate for information operations manned by a deputy national security advisor. In reviewing the first National Security Memorandums/Directives from the Trump, Obama, and Bush administrations, you will not find a committee focused on information power.<sup>160</sup>

President Obama’s administration established the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC) within the State Department’s Bureau of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs which functioned as an “interagency war room that attempts to coordinate messaging through participating departments, provide guidance to embassies, and put out brush fires as they arise.”<sup>161</sup> The CSCC is a step in the right direction but its scope is limited to counter-messaging ISIS and further, although

interagency, it is housed in the State Department so it will not come with the full authority of plans or strategies coming out of the National Security Council.

It is important to remember that one of the problems plaguing the PSB that was fixed by the Eisenhower and the Jackson Committee for the OCB is that the organization has to sit within the National Security Council so it is in a position to “convince or force agreement between departments that were following different paths.”<sup>162</sup> The “mechanism he [Truman] created to do this was simply not close enough to the only organ powerful enough to encourage coordination – the Presidency and the NSC.”<sup>163</sup> Another reason for being a part of the NSC is that certain information operations will be covert in nature.

The collection of individuals on the panel provides representation from every sector of the government that conducts or has the capacity to wield information power. Three additions are added to the boards Truman and Eisenhower built. One is a legal expert from the Department of Justice to build subject matter expertise across the portfolio of information operations to include covert actions. The second is the addition of an expert from the National Security Agency to provide cyber expertise due to the proliferation of internet, and cellular means of communication that did not exist in the past. Third, the White House Communications advisor will be a part of the committee to ensure that the narrative and messaging from the President down to the individual agencies is nested and consistent.

The PCC manning should be filled by those of the rank of under or assistant secretaries for the following reasons. The first is that other elements of national power already have an existing agency, cabinet, or other government organization to represent

their domain to the National Security Council on the Principals committee. Diplomacy is covered by the Department of State, military by the Department of Defense, and economic power is applied through State and Defense actions but also through the National Economic Council and/or Congress through their congressional authority for budgets where they write specific language into law for specific economic actions to be used as an element of US foreign policy. The domain of information power does not have a corresponding entity or agency to ensure their equities are represented. Second, having PCC members of this stature would help to ensure that this element of national power is brought into the discussion and conducted in a way that allows decisions to be made while in sessions given the seniority of personnel involved. Third, you need senior level personnel on the committee due to the covert nature of information operations. Covert operations have the highest chance of being misaligned or thwarting information power and due to their classification and the fact that covert operations only begin with a presidential finding, it is imperative to have an organization that deals with information power embedded in the National Security Council. Having the senior members in the PCC will help streamline efforts since these individuals will have a broad understanding of the efforts underway in the cabinets and agencies they represent. They will have the power to make decisions in the meetings and finally they will also have appropriate clearances for and covert actions in their domain that were authorized by a Presidential finding.

Not having a PCC leads to a natural disconnect of activities and functions across the many agencies which is coupled with each agency interpreting various policy memorandums and executing operations as they see fit. This leads to duplication of

effort, misaligned priorities, loss of capacity, and the potential to leave tools on the table that could've been used to advance national interests.

Finally, the use of information as an element of national strategy should not be a pick-up game that you try and figure out on the fly or be an ad-hoc process.

Establishing a PCC for information operations will ensure that the information element of national power is inculcated into national security policies and recommendations and they are all properly coordinated, integrated, and synchronized across the US government.

### **PCC Functions**

Given the various documents and NSC memos produced during the Truman administration to provide clarity and guidance and the information gleaned from the Eisenhower administration and the Jackson Committee, it is important that the PCC has a charter to help frame their roles and functions. As mentioned previously, information power affects all of the other elements of national power. Since economic power also has crosscutting aspects, the functions of the National Economic Council (NEC) provides a useful model for the PCC.<sup>164</sup> The NEC's "four principal functions are "to coordinate policy-making for domestic and international economic issues, to coordinate economic policy advice ..., ensure that policy decisions ... are consistent with the president's economic goals, and to monitor implementation..."<sup>165</sup>

For the purposes of the information PCC, the four principal functions could be "to coordinate policy-making for information power issues across the US government; to coordinate, integrate, and synchronize information activities from strategic communications, public diplomacy, and covert actions to ensure they are consistent and

nested with each other; ensure that policy decisions are consistent with the President's strategy and goals and; finally, to monitor implementation. The PCC can also provide feedback into the policy making process to continually refine, update, and adapt the use of this vital and necessary element of national power and ensure it is part of (and not an afterthought) to the national security decision-making process. An important point to understand is that the PCC for information operations is not intended to be a policy-making body, that is intended to continue as part of the normal functions of the NSC. However, once a policy is approved by the President through the NSC, the PCC for information operations would provide guidance to the various cabinets and agencies with information operation capabilities to provide plans for information activities that would augment the policy and dovetail information operations into all the other domains of national power represented by the policy. The PCC would then ensure that the plans provided were nested, consistent, and synchronized across the various cabinets and agencies, then monitor their implementation and provide feedback into the NSC. The PCC would ensure that this vital element of national power can be wielded in an effective, coordinatized, and synchronized manner and allow the US to once again employ this vital tool as an element of national policy.

### **Conclusion**

As Dr. Nadia Schadlow states: "The tragedy of America's inability (or unwillingness) to develop the mindset and the mechanisms to compete in this "space between" means that we reduce our options and in the end, resort to the military instrument. Peace does not exist in a state of inertia. It must be actively and consistently maintained by engaging in the political competitions that are its constant feature."<sup>166</sup>

The US should revive its ability to conduct information operations to provide another tool for the President to use if needed in this messy gray area. We should learn from the past to ensure we don't repeat the same mistakes in the future.

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