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Military Social Influence in the Global Information Environment: A Civilian Primer

Sara B. King*

Saint Francis University

This article provides an overview of the role of social influence in modern U.S. military affairs. Many military strategists are now convinced that modern warfare is centered on a battle for public opinion, rather than a battle for physical terrain. As a result, new military periodic literature, texts, doctrine, and initiatives are increasingly likely to place social influence at the core of military operations. Unfortunately, this literature and doctrine is developing in a conversation that is almost completely independent of civilian university-based scholarly consideration. The goal of this civilian "primer" is to help bridge the gap between civilian and military scholarship by providing (1) an introduction to competing conceptions of the role of influence in modern war, (2) a brief description of current military initiatives using information operations, and (3) examples of influence tactics employed in recent U.S. military action. The article concludes by considering questions that modern military information operations raise about the intersection of social science, democracy, and war.

In a 2006 article published in *Armed Forces Journal*, Maj. Gen. Robert H. Scales predicted that social scientists—especially those who study social influence and cultural difference—will soon be as instrumental in war as chemists and physicists have been in wars past.

Citing the work of historian Alan Beyerchen, Scales explained that modern wars have been shaped by "amplifying factors," factors which "don't simply accelerate the trends of the past, they make war different" (2006, p. 17). For example, in World War I, new applications of chemistry determined advantage on the battlefield. World War II, by contrast, was "a physicists' war" (2006, p. 17). America's victory in the Cold War—which Scales (2006) identifies as World War III—was, he said, the result of U.S. superiority in gathering and using intelligence

*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Sara B. King, Psychology Department, Saint Francis University, Loretto, PA 15940 [e-mail: sbkfa1@mail.Francis.edu].

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and knowledge about the enemy. World War IV, argues this military expert, "will cause a shift in classical centers of gravity from the will of governments and armies to the perceptions of populations. Victory will be defined more in terms of capturing the psycho-cultural rather than the geographical highground" (2006, p. 18). World War IV, Scales argued, will be "the social scientists' war" (2006, p. 19).

According to Scales (2006) and others (Boyd, 2007; Darley, 2007) this new era of "psycho-cultural battle"—otherwise termed a "war of ideas" (Murphy, 2010, p. 90) or a battle for "hearts and minds" (Claessen, 2007, p. 97)—is already underway in Iraq and Afghanistan. Modern battle is likely to be more about winning public opinion than about seizing contested geophysical terrain. The modern battlefield is likely to be in the information environment.

The U.S. military has been anticipating this increase in the importance of information—including information acquisition, protection, communication, and persuasion—in military affairs for over a decade. By June 2000, the centrality of information operations, or information-related military activities, was clearly articulated in a military Joint Force planning document: *Joint Vision 2020* (Department of Defense, *Joint Vision 2020* [DOD JV 2020], 2000). The document declared the U.S. military's goal of achieving "full-spectrum dominance" (p. 3) in every sphere of operations, including the "information domain" (p. 36).

More recent documents continue to emphasize the significance of this goal (Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3–13, *Information Operations*, [DOD JP 3–13], 2006; Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3–24, *Counterinsurgency Operations* [DOD JP 3-24], 2009). The ability to be "persuasive in peace, decisive in war, [and] preeminent in any form of conflict" (DOD JV 2020, 2000, p. 1), according to the Department of Defense (DOD), now requires that Information Operations (IO) be regarded as a military *core competency,* "on par with air, ground, maritime, and special operations" (Department of Defense, *Information Operations Roadmap* [DOD IO Roadmap], 2003, p. 4). The ability to control the information environment, including interrelated physical, informational, and cognitive dimensions, is now seen as vital to national security (DOD JP 3–13, 2006). And it is the cognitive dimension, in which "people think, perceive, visualize, and decide," that is seen as most important (DOD JP 3–13, 2006, p. I–2).

This ongoing "revolution in military affairs" (Metz & Kievit, 1995, p. iii) has precipitated, among other things, a steady increase in U.S. military capacity to conduct social influence campaigns at every level of the modern world's information environment: in local, national, regional (or "theater"), and global spheres; in domestic and foreign populations; among individuals, groups, organizations, and governments (Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3–13.2, *Doctrine for Joint Psychological Operations* [DOD JP 3–13.2], 2010). It has, at the same time,

renewed the need for psychologists and other social scientists to reconsider the optimal relationship between social science and war, and between influence and democracy.

Not surprisingly, military information strategists and educators often rely on the work of social scientists. But the conversation between the U.S. military and academic scholars is almost entirely one-way: Very few civilian journal articles or textbooks [with the exception of the brief, yet notable, discussions of IO presented by Taylor (2003) and Miller (2004), along with some consideration of specific IO components by Jowett and O'Donnell (2006)] even reference, much less study, the multifaceted, multilayered, increasingly synchronized "perception management" campaigns planned and conducted by the U.S. military.

An important factor in the failure of social scientists to keep pace with the military's increasing emphasis on persuasion is that almost all IO doctrine was classified until the mid-1990s (Armistead, 2004; Shou, Kuehl, & Armistead, 2007), and some remains classified still. But much IO doctrine, along with military research reports, periodic literature, and university textbooks, is now accessible. And though the doctrine, strategy, administrative structure, and even terminology is still in flux, it is now possible, if not imperative, for those who study and teach about social influence to understand U.S. information operations, arguably among the largest, most controversial, and most influential social influence campaigns in modern times.

This article is designed to help meet that goal. Essentially a primer for civilian scholars, this article is designed to introduce the premises, goals, structure, and implementation of modern U.S. military information operations. In the interest of promoting scholarly consideration of, and contribution to, the ongoing development of military information campaigns, this civilian IO primer provides (1) an introduction to competing conceptions of the role of influence in modern war; (2) a brief description of current military initiatives using information operations; and (3) examples of influence tactics employed in recent U.S. military action. The article concludes with a consideration of questions that modern military information operations raise for psychologists and others who study influence.

Competing Conceptions of the Relationship between Social Influence and War

As might be expected in any complex social influence campaign, though military Information Operations initiatives are already in place, disagreement about appropriate goals, tactics, and administrative structures continues. There is general agreement among military theorists that the expanding information environment—along with the associated revolutions in technology and social influence—has changed war. But both the degree and the direction of that change are widely debated. Five competing perspectives are noted below. Each, of course,

has varying implications for future military force structure, budgets, Department of Defense civilian contracts, and research in social influence:

1. *More power in an old weapon:* Some conservative information warriors believe that the future of information warfare looks much like its past (de Czege, 2008; Gray, 2005: Henry & Peartree, 1998). Shaping the information environment—defined as persuasion and propaganda, in old-fashioned terms—is an important means of enhancing troop effectiveness. Persuasion, from this perspective, is a "force multiplier" (DOD JV 2020, 2000, p. 27) in that it can help our military forces succeed by increasing rates of enemy troop surrender, minimizing civilian casualties, shrinking public support for adversaries, and increasing support from allies or neutral populations. All that is new in our information age is the increasing size of accessible audiences, the speed of communication, and the effectiveness of influence techniques. The nature of war is unchanged.
2. *New battlefields and new weapons:* A more prominent view among information warriors is that changes in information, technology, and social influence capabilities have actually transformed the terms of war. War between standing armies of nation-states is seen as increasingly unlikely, both because the United States is an unmatched military superpower and because damage that would result from use of modern physical weapon systems is deemed intolerable. Our military's enemies, experts predict, are most likely to be small, rogue groups who attempt to prevail by winning popular support and undermining U.S. political will for war (Nagl & Yingling, 2006).
   The argument here is that in most modern war, physical battles, if they exist, will be for the purpose of defining psychological battlespace (Emery, Werchan, & Mowles, 2005; Scales 2006). For example, insurgents in Iraq may blow up U.S. military vehicles because they want spectacular video footage (Kilcullen, in Packer, 2006) that can appear on the evening news, a jihadist recruiting website, or YouTube. And terrorists may time a vicious attack—such as the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center—to make sure it appears on live television (Kuehl, 2004). Modern insurgent campaigns are essentially information operations supported by violent activity (Emery et al., 2005; Hammes, 2007) and terrorists are "armed propaganda organizations" (Kilcullen, in Packer, 2006) who are waging psychological warfare through the media (Post, 2005, p. 106). Information, these military theorists argue, is now the primary battlefield and persuasion the essential weapon.
3. *A new instrument of national power:* Other military experts, concurring that perception management may be a key to victory in battle, also argue that military Information Operations should play a large role in U.S. international affairs. From this perspective, the military, in concert with the civilian

government, must work to shape the global information environment before, during, and after conflict, to advance U.S. interests (Halloran, 2007; Jones, 2005; Murphy, 2007; Murphy & White, 2007). What is needed, according to this point of view, are coordinated perception management initiatives, spanning military and civilian offices, to exploit global media as a primary means for achieving U.S. goals (Halloran, 2007; Jones, 2005; Hendricks, Wenner, & Weaver, 2010; Murphy, 2007).

4. *Education for democracy*: In his 2006 monograph for the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, former Marine officer and CIA analyst Robert D. Steele offers another, sharply contrasting, view of the future role of information and influence in the military. While also identifying information as an element of national power, Steele locates the source of that power in education, rather than in perception management: "Modern IO is not about the old messages of psychological operations (PSYOPS), but rather about empowering billions of people with both information tools and access to truthful information. It is about education, not manipulation" (Steele, 2006, p. 3).
5. *New soldiers and new skills:* Other writers envision yet one other direction of change. Their concern is with the transformation of the role of the individual soldier in the context of the increasing transparency of the global information environment, the decreasing utility of conventional weaponry, and the increasing power of social influence. It has been suggested that the modern soldiers of western democracies are essentially "heavily armed social workers" (Taylor, 2003, p. 312). These troops work to change behavior in the glare of a multi-technology-based global media. They are obligated to minimize casualties, manage the perceptions of the global audience, and influence behavior through nonviolent means.

Each of these five perspectives is reflected to some degree in the now-ongoing military information-based initiatives. Which, if any, of these points of view will predominate in the future is likely to be a function of debate among military theorists, conclusions drawn from trial and error in warfare, and input from civilian scholars—if they so choose.

At present, there are two broad information-related initiatives in the U.S. military aimed, at least in part, at shaping attitude, emotions, perceptions, and behavior: Information Operations and Strategic Communication. Both initiatives are relatively new, both require extensive coordination and force restructuring, and, therefore, both are in the process of continuing development (Boyd, 2007; Hubbard, 2007; Rohm, 2008). I will address Information Operations and Strategic Communication in turn.

Information Operations (IO): Doctrine and Definition

Information Operations (IO) is the best-established military initiative charged with shaping the information environment. It is supported by extensive doctrine and documents (DOD *IO Roadmap*, 2003; DOD JP 3–13, 2006; U.S. Army FM 3–0, 2008), permanent budget lines (Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2007), pools of personnel, and university-based training programs (Lamb, 2005b; Shou et al., 2007).

The general goal of IO is to "influence, disrupt, corrupt or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own" (DOD JP 3–13, 2006, p. ix). More specifically, IO is responsible for establishing U.S. superiority in every dimension of the information environment: physical (e.g., infrastructure and technology), informational (e.g., information content and flow), and cognitive (the mind of the decision maker and of the target audience).

IO integrates five *core* military competencies and three *related* capabilities. The *core* competencies are Psychological Operations, Military Deception, Electronic Warfare, Computer Network Operations, and Operations Security. The *related* capabilities are Public Affairs, Defense Support to Public Diplomacy, and Civil-Military Operations (DOD JP 3–13, 2006; DOD JP 3–24, 2009). IO doctrine also identifies a number of *supporting* capabilities, such as Counter-intelligence and Combat Camera, the latter charged with "rapid development and dissemination of products that support strategic and operational IO objectives," (DOD JP 3–13, 2006, p. II 7–8), including digital video and still photography that can be "provided to professional news organizations," (DOD JP 3–13, 2006, p. II–8).

In essence, IO combines both a "hard" and a "soft" focus: Some components of IO, such as Electronic Warfare and Computer Network Operations, are concerned with information content and technology; some, including Psychological Operations and Public Affairs, concentrate on influencing human emotion, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. Because Psychological Operations and Public Affairs are primarily responsible for broad military influence campaigns directed toward foreign and domestic civilians and soldiers, these components will be the primary focus of the remainder of this introduction to IO.

Psychological Operations (PSYOP)

PSYOP are defined as planned operations to "convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals." (U.S. Army FM 3–05.30, 2005, p. 1–1). PSYOP may be wholly truthful ("white"); truthful, though masking the actual source ("gray"); or deceptive ("black") (U.S. Army FM 3–05.30, 2005, p. 1–8).

PSYOP are also classified as "tactical" or "strategic" based on intended audience, circumstance of use, and, to some degree, the rank or status of those involved in planning or implementation (Lamb, 2005a). *Tactical* PSYOP occur within a local area or battlefield; s*trategic* PSYOP have global implications and are planned and executed at a national level (DOD JP 3–13.2, 2010). It should be noted, however, that PSYOP and IO analysts acknowledge that clear distinctions between strategic and tactical PSYOP do not, in practice, hold (Lamb, 2005a; Mullen, 2009): "The world's almost instantaneous access to news and information makes it nearly impossible to localize any information campaign" (Defense Science Board, *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on The Creation and Dissemination of All Forms of Information in Support of Psychological Operations (PSYOP) in Time of Military Conflict* [DSB PSYOP], 2000, p. 11).

The importance of PSYOP in modern IO is reflected by a 2006 change in PSYOP status and, also, by current plans to substantially increase the number of PSYOP troops: In October, 2006, PSYOP was made a basic branch of the Army (United States Army, General Orders No. 30 [GO 30], 12 January, 2007) and the Department of Defense is in the process of expanding the size of the PSYOP force by one third (Hubbard, 2007).

Unfortunately, the relationship between IO and PSYOP has been almost impossible to discern from popular media reports. According to Army Colonel Curtis D. Boyd (2007) and others (Collins, 2003; Rohm, 2008), because PSYOP is thought of in pejorative terms, even the most prominent military and civilian leaders often "routinely and improperly use IO and PSYOP interchangeably" (Boyd, 2007, p. 69).

Public Affairs

Public Affairs, officially defined as one of three *related* IO capabilities (DOD JP 3–13, 2006), has a traditional charge of providing information about military activities to domestic civilian, government, and internal military audiences, such as soldiers and their families. Public Affairs officers customarily have defined their work as that of "informing," rather than "persuading," internal and external audiences, a definition called into question by modern IO (Boyd, 2007; Scanlon, 2007). Coordinated PSYOP and Public Affairs influence campaigns, including those in Afghanistan (Hemming, 2008) and Iraq (Mazzetti, 2004), have been particularly controversial both in and out of the military because, at the very least, such an association threatens the credibility of Public Affairs and, in a worst case scenario, corrupts the open flow of truthful information (Keeton & McCann, 2005; Scanlon, 2007).

The U.S. military has made extensive use of IO in the past few years. Consideration of specific examples of its application provides a much better understanding

of how such initiatives actually work. Such a review also provides access to the multitude of scholarly questions raised by IO campaigns.

Information Operations (IO): Implementation in Recent Wars

What follows is an overview of modern IO as employed in two recent wars, including a general listing of communication media, as well as examples of specific influence strategies employed in combat and postcombat stability operations in Afghanistan and in Iraq. It should be noted that IO are categorized here in terms of the type of influence tactic employed, both for reader convenience and to underscore the military's application of social science research.

Communication Media

IO influence campaigns are conducted face-to-face, with loudspeakers, through leaflets, letters, flyers, posters, billboards, magazines, and newspapers, via CDs, DVDs, video, radio, broadcast and cable television, cell phones, email, and the Internet (Armistead, 2004; Collins, 2003; U.S. Army FM 3–05.30, 2005; Lamb, 2005a; Roberts, 2005). IO hosts web sites (DOD JP 3–13.2, 2010; Silverberg & Heimann, 2009). It has, or is pursuing, both satellite radio and television capabilities, cultivating the ability to jam others' signals and to broadcast our own (DSB PSYOP, 2000; DOD IO Roadmap, 2003; Lamb, 2005a). "New media," which include cell phones with video capacity and Internet connectivity, blogs, and Internet-based social networking sites, have recently drawn much interest from IO experts (Caldwell, Murphy, & Menning, 2009; Murphy, 2010). Social networking sites are thought to hold particular power for IO, both because the information that an individual site member receives on the network is assumed to come from a trusted source and, also, because information can move across these networks almost instantaneously.

The selection of media channels for an IO campaign is, of course, partly dependent on the characteristics of the media environment of the particular military theatre of operation. For instance, the very lean media environment of Afghanistan offered very few venues for distributing messages of any kind. As such, thousands of hand-cranked radios locked to U.S. PSYOP frequencies were dropped into Afghanistan in concert with the U.S. ground invasion there in an effort to help explain to Afghanis what happened in the United States on September 11, 2001, and why our government had decided to invade their country (Armistead, 2004; Lamb, 2005a).

Leafleting is a traditional PSYOP specialty, still widely used. Millions of leaflets, including at least 40 million leaflets in Iraq alone (Collins, 2003; Hubbard, 2007; Lamb, 2005a), were airdropped in the two recent U.S. military actions.

Samples of PSYOP leaflets dropped in Afghanistan and Iraq are available at http://www.psywarrior.com.

Influence Strategies: Selected Examples

Attitude change—central route. Some IO are appropriately classified as persuasion attempts, according to the definitions provided by modern influence scholars (Jowett & O'Donnel, 2006; Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001; Taylor, 2003). As such, these influence attempts openly acknowledge intent to persuade, accurately acknowledge the message source, and largely rely on reason—that is, they use the central route to effect attitude change (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). PSYOP leaflets warning Afghani civilians away from mine fields and bombing targets, along with mass media-based public service announcements directing these citizens to humanitarian supplies or explaining U.S. policy, are examples of IO efforts to persuade (Lamb, 2005a; http://www.psywarrior.com/Afghanleaflinks.html).

Attitude change—peripheral route. IO also rely extensively on exploitation of nonrational, or peripheral, route factors (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), such as communicator credibility and the activation of emotion in attempts to change attitudes and behavior (Baker, 2006; Lamb, 2005a). Because U.S. credibility is so diminished in much of the world today (DSB SC, 2008; Jones, 2005; Lamb, 2005a), IO experts have urged special effort in finding new ways to associate U.S. messages with credible third-party sources, including the use of Internet chatrooms and third-party evangelists (Lamb, 2005a). One much publicized effort to enhance the source credibility of pro-U.S. messages is that of planting ghostwritten articles in Iraqi newspapers, falsely attributed to Iraqi authors (Julian, 2007; Marx, 2006)—a practice declared to be legal in a military court review (Murphy & White, 2007).

IO has traditionally relied on the creation of emotion, including fear, to alter enemy soldier and civilian behavior (Lamb, 2005a). For example, leaflet-based fear appeals are employed to urge enemy troop surrender. IO has also, in recent years, dramatically increased its reliance on emotion as a persuasive tool by increasing its use of images instead of words to communicate with its external publics: Combat Camera, which captures digital images of military operations that can be distributed worldwide instantly, has become an integral part of IO planning and execution (U.S. Army FM 3-0, 2008).

Compliance gaining. Other IO, particularly tactical PSYOP (psychological operations conducted in a small battle zone or community), employ compliance-gaining techniques such as reciprocity, social proof, and commitment and consistency (Cialdini, 2004; Lamb, 2005a). For instance, Tactical PSYOP soldiers in postinvasion Afghanistan distributed soap and kites (both previously prohibited

by the Taliban), along with greeting cards sent at the end of Ramadan, blankets, medical supplies, and school supplies (Lamb, 2005a; Roberts, 2005; U.S. Army FM 3-05.30, 2005) in efforts to trigger reciprocity and, as such, the willingness of citizens to provide necessary assistance to U.S. troops. In Iraq, tactical PSYOP troops distributed coloring books, soccer balls, t-shirts, comic books, water bottles, and other "logo" items, as well (Crawley, 2005; Paschall, 2005; U.S. Army Comics, 2005). Of course, blunting similar enemy persuasive efforts is an important component of PSYOP, too. As such, some U.S. PSYOP troops fought the information war by spending time in Afghani markets trying to buy up "all the Osama/pro Al Qaeda [logo] merchandise they could find"(Roberts, 2005, p. 75).

To maximize the power of social proof, PSYOP personnel in Iraq built a crowd for a staged pro-U.S. demonstration (Zucchino, 2004), and have been generally instructed to build crowds to listen to U.S. military messages (United States Army, Field Manual 33-1-1 [FM 33-1-1], 1994).

In one application of commitment and consistency, or the "self-sell" (Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001, p. 166), PSYOP troops in Afghanistan sponsored a school writing contest on the theme of how the student writer's life had changed since the U.S. invasion (Roberts, 2005, p. 129). In Iraq, U.S. military commanders worked to establish citizen commitment to U.S. policy by inviting selected community leaders to weekly meetings to voice complaints and request changes in military policy (Baker, 2006).

Normative influence, group formation, and group function. Post (2005), in his recent article in *Joint Force Quarterly*, argued that IO should do more to exploit influence factors related to successful terrorist recruitment. Post suggested addressing what other recent authors have termed "descriptive" and "injunctive norms" (Cialdini et al., 2006, p. 4): (1) challenging the wide-spread belief in some Middle Eastern communities that terrorist membership was common behavior and (2) identifying means to diminish the public celebration of terrorist bombers. Post (2005) also argued that IO should attempt to weaken terrorist group cohesiveness, by magnifying dissention within the group and by providing support for defectors.

Direct reinforcement. IO has also attempted to shape pro-U.S. attitudes in selected target populations by associating U.S. troops or activities with tangible reinforcement. PSYOP and Civil-Military Affairs worked together to secure appreciation for U.S. efforts, by rebuilding schools and repairing infrastructure (Armistead, 2004; Baker, 2006). The schedule of reconstruction was established, where possible, for maximum influence in critical circumstances (Paschall, 2005). Medical care has also been employed to win hearts and minds in Iraq (Baker, 2007).

Control of information sources. Much IO attention in recent campaigns has been devoted to maximizing informational influence by controlling available information sources (Lamb, 2005a). For example, as the recent U.S. invasion of Afghanistan began, the single Taliban radio transmitter in Kabul was destroyed by U.S. cruise missiles and the frequency was taken over by U.S. PSYOP (Armistead, 2004). Similarly, PSYOP forces in Baghdad disabled or destroyed Iraqi communication facilities (Cox, 2006) as U.S. forces approached that city 7 years ago.

In both postinvasion Afghanistan and Iraq, efforts to control the information environment were even more extensive. In fact, U.S. PSYOP units worked to build a new media environment, now widely judged to be an important component of nation-building (Taylor, 2003). PSYOP troops converted to permanent status those broadcast media launched prior to the war (Roberts, 2005), established, or assisted other U.S. government agencies in establishing, new television and radio stations (Cox, 2006; Hubbard, 2007; Pryor, 2005), published newspapers and magazines (Cox, 2006; Hubbard, 2007; Roberts, 2005), and established Internet sites (Crawley, 2005; Marx, 2006). They also assisted with funds and programming for private Iraqi TV and radio (Freeburg & Todd, 2004; Harris, 2004).

Propaganda. Modern IO campaigns also employ propaganda. To be sure, scholarly definitions of propaganda differ widely with regard to breadth, specific components, and essential contexts (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006; Miller, 1937–1938; Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001; Sproule, 1997). But most modern definitions argue that propaganda is distinguished by a focus on mass audiences, a deliberate intent to deceive and manipulate, an effort to create an advantage for the propagandist, and a reliance on nonrational influence mechanisms (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006; Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001). At least two recent PSYOP clearly fit this definition. The toppling of the huge statue of Saddam Hussein, one of the most widely reproduced images symbolizing popular Iraqi support for the U.S. invasion of Iraq, was "stage-managed" for photographers by U.S. PSYOP troops (Cox, 2006; Zucchino, 2004). Another PSYOP-sponsored campaign was the "The Zarquawi Campaign" (Ricks, 2006; Schulman, 2006), which overstated the role of the Al Qaeda leader in Iraq in order to enlist Iraqi citizen support for continued U.S. military battle against insurgents. Each of these operations ostensibly targeted the Iraqi population, but was widely reported in U.S. and global media.

Strategic Communication (SC): Doctrine and Definition

Strategic Communication (SC) is the newest Department of Defense initiative aimed at perception management, and, like IO, is backed by doctrine, permanent budget lines, and personnel resources. Strategic Communication differs from Information Operations in key ways. Strategic Communication doctrine

stipulates that SC, in contrast to Information Operations, can be intentionally aimed at global audiences, domestic as well as foreign. And SC need not be associated with a military campaign (DOD SC Execution Roadmap, 2006; DSB SC, 2008).

SC is defined as "Focused U.S. Government (USG) processes and efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable to advance national interests and objectives through the use of coordinated information, themes, plans, programs, and synchronized with other elements of national power " (DOD SC Execution Roadmap, 2006, p. 3). Strategic Communication is supported by military Public Affairs, Visual Information, Defense Support to Public Diplomacy, and Psychological Operations (DOD SC Execution Roadmap, 2006, p. 3).

Military experts have identified the widely supported World War II Office of War Information, as well as the much-criticized World War I Committee on Public Information (the Creel Committee) and the short-lived 2002 Office of Strategic Influence, as forerunners to Strategic Communication (Halloran, 2007; Kuehl & Armistead, 2007; Murphy & White, 2007). One military writer recently described current SC as "PSYOP at the strategic [global] level" (Rohm, 2008). For some, the term "strategic communication" is simply the new, less controversial, term for "propaganda" (Halloran, 2007; Murphy & White, 2007; Taylor, 2002).

SC, though well established, remains controversial even in the military. Silverberg and Heimann (2009) point to two serious concerns: The goal of SC is to influence; however, PSYOP is the only military arm with statutory authority to do so—and PSYOP is to be aimed only at foreign audiences. Further, the Defense Department's Strategic Communication initiative draws the U.S. military into foreign policy activities, sometimes wholly independent of military battle, which used to be the province of civilian government agencies.

In the Cold War, global influence campaigns similar to those espoused by SC were coordinated by the civilian government. But now, largely because the Department of Defense has the resources and organization to do so—and civilian agencies such as the Department of State do not—it is Defense that is taking the lead in U.S. government SC (Gates, 2008; Kilcullen, 2007; Ludowese, 2006).

Strategic Communication (SC): Tactics

Shaping the Information Environment

Naming. "Since 1989, major U.S. military operations [e.g., Iraqi Freedom; Afghanistan-Operation Enduring Freedom] have been nicknamed with an eye toward shaping domestic and international perceptions about the activities they describe" (Sieminski, 1995, p. 81). Prior to that time, the U.S. military chose meaningless code names or pragmatic descriptive names for specific combat

operations. Sieminski (1995) suggests that at least some of the time, senior military officers are involved in operation naming.

Agenda setting. According to U.S. Army Brigadier General Mari K. Eder and others (Baker, 2006), one essential function of strategic communication is agenda setting: "manag[ing] public discourse not by attempting to tell people what to think," but by telling them "what to think about" (Eder, 2007, p. 62). SC experts argue that it is risky to allow enemies to frame the discourse surrounding conflict. We need to "push" information, so that we "scoop" our adversaries, pre-empt their stories, and have a pro-active media posture (Collings & Rohozinski, 2008; Jones, Kuehl, Burgess, & Rochte, 2009).

Embedded media. In the Department of Defense's embedded media program, reporters are assigned to live with, travel with, and report on the activities of a particular military unit for an extended period of time. Military reports, (DSB SC, 2004; DSB SC, 2008), texts (Hubbard, 2007), and journal articles (Collins, 2003; Payne, 2005) identify the U.S. military embedded media policy as one of the outstanding examples of strategic communication success. One military author recently pointed out that the embedded media policy keeps media attention on small details, rather than on the "big picture"—such as questions concerning overall progress of the war or the propriety of a particular strategy or procedure (Payne, 2005).

The Army newspaper *Stars and Stripes* reported recently that the Pentagon has hired The Rendon Group, a public relations firm, to screen reporters prior to assignment in the embed program (Reed, 2009; Reed, Baron, & Shane, 2009): Rendon develops a reporter profile, assessing the journalist's previous writing to see if it presents a complimentary picture of U.S. military activities. For instance, a *Stars and Stripes* reporter was prohibited from embedding with a unit in Iraq in June 2009 because of the judgment that he had, in past work, failed to highlight positive war stories (Reed, 2009).

Department of Defense Digital Video Imagery Distribution System. The Department of Defense Digital Video Imagery Distribution System (DVIDS), initiated in 2004, provides one example of current Department of Defense SC (DOD SC Execution Roadmap, 2006; Julian, 2007). This system, now with a permanent budget line (DOD SC Execution Roadmap, 2006), supplies prepackaged video, audio, news stories, and images of U.S. military activity, without charge, to any broadcast news organization in the world, including U.S. domestic channels. DVIDS provides up-to-the minute images and broadcast-quality video of military activity, along with interviews with military personnel. The system also maintains a huge, accessible electronic library of previously produced images, video, and stories. U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Gregory Julian (2007) reported that from

2004–2006, media downloaded more than 72,000 video files. According to Zewe (2004) all major U.S. networks, both over-the-air and cable, use DVIDS material. Information provided by DVIDS is identified as "public" and users are not required to credit DVIDS when using the products that it provides. One U.S. Army Iraq commander argued recently that the prepackaged news stories are especially effective because "the current global media gravitates toward information that is packaged for ease of dissemination and consumption; the media will favor a timely, complete story" (Metz, Garrett, Hutton, & Bush, 2006, p. 110).

Defense Media Activity. Established in October 2008, Defense Media Activity's vision, according to its website, is to provide multimedia products and services to inform, educate, and entertain both military and civilian audiences around the world. This agency consolidates a number of long-standing and recently created Department of Defense media and internal communications offices into one organization. Some Defense Media Activity components, including Hometown Link (providing news stories that target a soldier's hometown media market), DefenseImagery.Mil (home of Joint Combat Camera), and DODvClips.org, provide free "news products" for use by civilian news outlets.

Pentagon channel. The Pentagon Channel (*TPC*) is a Department of Defense-sponsored cable news channel available to 1.4 million active duty troops, 1.2 million National Guard members and reservists, 650,000 civilian employees, 25.3 million veterans and their families—and is also free to any U.S. cable or satellite television service (Zewe, 2004). Distribution to a general domestic audience is, of course, the factor which defines this Pentagon television news service as SC. Pentagon Channel senior producer Scot Howe declared that "[w]e are an advocate of the Department of Defense and its voice" (Dotinga, 2005; p. 11).

YouTube channel. One of the newest Pentagon SC initiatives is the YouTube Multi-National Force Iraq (MNFIRAQ) channel, which features one much-viewed clip, "Battle on Haifi Street" (Chinni, 2007). U.S. military officials acknowledge that one purpose of this YouTube channel is to present information from the Pentagon's point of view, in lieu of reliance on an independent press, which fails, from a military perspective, to do so (Chinni, 2007).

Talking points and bloggers. U.S. Army Central Command deploys a number of official bloggers (Collings & Rohozinski, 2008). In addition, Silverstein (2007) reported that the Pentagon has an SC project, called "Communications Outreach," that provides retired military officers with talking points that can be used to deliver information directly to politically conservative civilian bloggers and talk radio hosts.

Film and television industry liaison. The Office of the Chief of Public Affairs—Western Region offers assistance for film or television productions about the U.S. Army. Representatives of this office will review scripts, provide equipment and personnel, access to military facilities and on-site technical assistance when the film is judged by the military to reflect a reasonable representation of military activities and life. Otherwise, the office will decline to participate in the project (Barnes, 2008). Recent films produced with the assistance of this Los Angeles-based U.S. Army Public Affairs office include *GI Joe: The Rise of the Cobra* and *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (Hames, 2009).

Network news analysts. From 2001 until the program was suspended in late April 2008 (Barstow, 2008), the Department of Defense recruited a select group of former military officers to serve as "a rapid reaction force to rebut what it considered as critical news coverage" (Barstow, 2008) on major U.S. television networks, including Fox, CNN, ABC, NBC, and CBS. A study by Media Matters (2008) indicated that these analysts were quoted more than 4,500 times on National Public Radio, and network and cable television, combined.

Marketing and (Other) Propaganda

PR firm coordination of post-9/11 advocacy for U.S. military activity. Though there has been much criticism of the White House for use of marketing techniques to garner U.S. citizen support for recent wars (Altheide & Grimes, 2005), it was, according to military writers, the Pentagon that took the lead in these strategic communication campaigns: "In response to the apparent perception management policy vacuum, the Department of Defense (DOD) initially contracted the Rendon Group—a civilian company that specializes in strategic communications advice—to assist with a perception management campaign centered on military operations in Afghanistan" (Malone & Armistead, 2007, p. 145). Rendon subsequently helped market the Iraq war to the U.S. public, working with high-level civilian and military officials to identify talking points or themes for the day (Bamford, 2005; DSB SC, 2004) in this coordinated strategic communication campaign.

Domestic support for fall 2007 troop escalation. A Department of Defense-based SC campaign, reported to Congress in July 2007, was launched in the United States to secure domestic support for the fall 2007 escalation—or "surge"—of U.S. forces in Iraq (Wells, 2007).

Effectiveness of Military Influence Campaigns

Does military influence work? The simple answer, at least when looking at PSYOP which targets a specific battlefield, or "Tactical PSYOP," is yes.

Certainly, trying to precipitate specific behavior change by modifying attitudes first, as PSYOP often does, can be difficult. And measuring the impact of an influence attempt in a battle zone, where multiple variables beyond the control of an influence practitioner are at play, is no easy task, either (Lamb, 2005a; Seese & Smith, 2008). Still, U.S. Tactical PSYOP has documented success in recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, facilitating high rates of enemy troop surrender during the initial phases of invasion (Lamb, 2005a) and reducing civilian casualties both during and after initial combat operations and (Dunbar, 2009; Lamb, 2005a).

The success of SC and IO's Strategic PSYOP, the broad perception-management initiatives aimed at foreign and, in the case of SC, domestic populations, is far more questionable—and even harder to measure (Jones et al., 2009; Lamb, 2005a; Shanker & Hertling, 2009). There is documentation that some recent U.S. military-coordinated perception campaigns (campaigns run in concert with the Bush Administration) were successful in the *short run*, at least with the U.S. domestic population: A large majority of Americans initially supported the U.S. invasion of Iraq (Stevenson & Elder, 2004), basing their support on heavily promoted, though erroneous, assertions (1) that Al Qaeda had ties to Iraq, (2) that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, or (3) that world opinion backed the U.S. invasion (Brewer, 2009).

When considering the *potential* for information operations' success, both military and civilian writers (Brewer, 2009; Goldstein, 2008; Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006; Murphy & White, 2007; Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001; Simpson, 1994; Sproule, 1997; Taylor, 2003;) point to the success of military information campaigns in WWI and WWII. The recent military information operation in Bosnia, coordinated by United Nations troops, is also regarded as an example of an effective initiative (Taylor, 2003).

Beyond this, U.S. military perception management specialists are convinced that modern *enemy* information campaigns have been so successful that they have tipped the balance in recent conflict, successfully frustrating U.S. and allied forces (Collings & Rohozinski, 2008; Murphy, 2010; Seib, 2008). For instance, it has been argued that optimal management of satellite television, Internet-based media, and journalist access to information thwarted Israeli Defense Force (IDF) activity in Lebanon in 2006 (Caldwell et al., 2009). And Al Qaeda, many believe, continues to be a formidable foe, not because of military resources, but as a result of their highly coordinated global media campaign (Kilcullen, in Packer, 2006; Seib, 2008).

In contrast, almost all military literature describes the U.S. Army's Iraq and Afghanistan-related perception management campaigns as falling short (de Czege, 2008; Goldstein, 2008; Jones et al., 2009; Richter, 2009). Some military officers cite this failure as evidence that policy and action, not mass persuasion, win a war (Mullen, 2009). But many military analysts insist that lack of success in perception

management only underscores the need to do it better (Collings & Rohozinski, 2008; Goldstein, 2008; Richter, 2009).

What is clear is that IO and SC are firmly established in Department of Defense doctrine and budget and are significantly supported by defense contractors. It does not seem likely that either initiative will fade away soon.

Conclusion: Questions for Civilian Scholars

Efforts to leverage the power of social influence in war, whether through deception, persuasion, creation of fear, shaping available information, or even shaping the information environment, are as old as war itself. And the contributions of influence scholars to U.S. war efforts to shape the perceptions, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors in domestic, enemy, allied, and neutral populations date from WWII (Hoffman, 1992; Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006; Lee, 1986; Simpson, 1994; Sproule, 1997).

In a very significant way, therefore, IO and SC reflect the continuation of a long tradition. They also resurrect long-standing questions—first propelled by Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) associates and by the 1930s Institute for Propaganda Analysis contributors—about the proper relationship between science and war and about the role of mass persuasion in American democracy (Lee, 1986; Sproule, 1997). Is it our patriotic duty to assist our nation's war effort? If so, how should we help? Is our first obligation to protect the integrity of science? Should our clearest commitment, in any foray into public policy, be to the health of democracy?

But these questions take on new urgency, maybe even a new shape, in a modern world transformed by globalization, rapidly changing information technologies, a media environment saturated by ever-more sophisticated persuasion campaigns, and the U.S. military's embrace of influence as a primary weapon of war. When foreign and domestic audiences cannot be demarcated, is military mass persuasion in a democratic society significantly more problematic? Are psychologists' ethical problems increased as our power to transform behavior expands?

The American Psychological Association's (2002) ethical guidelines for psychologists underscore our obligation to use psychological knowledge to improve the condition of society. We are charged to correct any misuse of the application of knowledge we produce. We must "take care to do no harm" (American Psychological Association, 2002, p. 3) and psychologists, particularly those associated with SPSSI, have a long history of devotion to fostering democratic process (Allport, 1955; Lanning, 2008; Lewin, 1992, Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001). We can identify the general principles of our ethical obligations. And we are committed to them. The devil, of course, is in the details—the topics and application of our research, along with the choices we make about advocacy in the public sphere.

The Relationship between Science and War: Assisting the War Effort

Scientists who join the effort to assist the U.S. government in waging war follow a much-honored tradition. Prominent social scientists who joined U.S. government and military efforts during World War II—including Carl Hovland, Kurt Lewin, Rensis Likert, and many more (Lee, 1986; Simpson, 1994; Sproule, 1997)—were convinced that their participation was warranted and that their efforts would be beneficial both to the nation and to the development of social science. Opposition to fascism, in general, and Hitler's genocidal regime, in particular, seemed—both then as now—a clear moral imperative.

The "justness" of recent U.S. wars has been more controversial. Still, psychology in the service of national security (Kennedy & Zillmer, 2006; Mangelsdorff, 2006) is regarded by many as both honorable and important. The question for some, then, is not if service to the military is appropriate, but, rather, what sort of service is consistent with psychologists' ethical concerns. Recent debate about the role of psychologists in military torture exemplified this point (Costanzo, Gerrity, & Lykes, 2007; Suedfel, 2007; Zimbardo, 2007).

Assisting with Tactical PSYOP, at least from some traditional vantage points, would be consistent with psychologists' ethical obligations: Tactical PSYOP has fairly straightforward goals of abbreviating conflict, reducing casualties, and increasing cooperation with the U.S. military among the population in a small geographic area.

The ethicality of Strategic PYSOP and SC, as now employed, is more opaque. In contrast to Tactical PSYOP, Strategic PSYOP and SC introduce clear costs in concert with any advantage they might offer. These broad-based military perception management initiatives, argue some, have the potential to endanger both science and democracy.

The Relationship between Science and War: Endangering Science

It is possible that any association with global PSYOP and SC poses a risk for academics who study influence. Lasswell (1970) charged that the long-term connections between social science and war have been costly for both science and society. In his 1969 address to the American Psychological Association, Lasswell argued that the social sciences' continuing service to the "the institutions of war and oligarchy" (Lasswell, 1970, p. 117) has been both ethically and practically dangerous. The allegiance, he said, has done little to help the commonwealth. Social science could have been devoted to enhancing the dignity of average individuals. But, instead, "more men are manipulated without their consent for more purposes, by more techniques by fewer men than at any time in history" (Lasswell, 1970, p. 119). In addition, Lasswell (1970) believed that the general public will eventually recognize that science rarely works on their behalf. And to whatever

degree science is distrusted by the general population, its potential for influence becomes ever-more limited.

The Relationship between Propaganda and Democracy

U.S. military Strategic PSYOP and SC—both aimed at global populations, reliant on mass communication, and, at the extreme, geared toward domination of global media—raise anew another discussion once prominent in the past: a debate about the relationship between mass persuasion and the health of democracy. There are a number of key questions inherent in this debate: What responsibility does science have to American democracy? Do some applications of science help build—or help weaken—democratic "character"? "What are the implications of a fully matured social science for individual human freedom and for democracy?" (Vallance, 1972, p. 112).

Debate among social scientists, including those in SPSSI and in the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, about these questions was most vital in the decades between WWI and WWII, as technologies of mass persuasion, including radio, were beginning to take hold. The scientists' concern about the impact of propaganda also came in the wake of the infamous, and successful, WWI Creel Committee, the coordinator of U.S. government propaganda widely criticized for its use of blatantly false information and highly effective compliance-gaining techniques to help draw the United States into a world war (Simpson, 1994; Sproule, 1997).

According to Sproule (1997), those who have weighed in on questions concerning the relationship between mass persuasion and democracy have generally fallen into one of the two camps: (1) proponents of a "managed democracy," who characterize propaganda as an essential tool used by elites to shape the behavior of the larger population in ways consistent with the national interest and (2) propaganda critics, who regard reliance on propaganda as antithetical to democratic process.

Proponents of "managed democracy," or "social engineering," says Sproule (1997), put forth the argument that elites, perhaps even scientists, should determine the goals of a society, as well as the optimal behaviors for individual citizens. The job of influence scholars, these advocates believed, was to persuade people, using nonviolent means, to behave in the desired ways (Sproule, 1997). For proponents of managed democracies, neither psychological freedom nor participatory democracy are seen as particularly important concerns (Bernays, 2005; Cone, 2004; Lee, 1986; Sproule, 1997).

Propaganda critics have offered a variety of arguments in reply (Cone, 2004; Lee, 1950; Sproule, 1997). Some have worried about the degradation of democratic political process in the absence of access to accurate, in-depth information; others have expressed concern about the lack of opportunity for reasoned analysis of persuasive messages (Cone, 2004; Lee, 1950; Miller, 1938; Pratkanis, 2001;

Pratkanis & Turner, 1996; Sproule, 1997). Still others have argued that "propaganda for democracy" is simply a contradiction in terms, because pervasive propaganda inevitably shapes totalitarian, rather than democratic, psychological process. "With the help of propaganda, one can do almost anything, but certainly not create the behavior of a free man" (Ellul, 1973, p. 256). The job of influence scholars, say (the hopeful) propaganda critics, is to find ways to insulate, or inoculate, citizens from propaganda's damaging effects.

A small contingent of social science writers has, in the decades since WWII, worked to draw attention to the impact and potential danger of mass persuasion (Brady, 2009; Curnalia, 2005; Hoffman, 1992; Kipnis, 1994; Lee, 1950; Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001; Pratkanis & Turner, 1996; Simpson, 1994; Vallance, 1972). But the social science-based anti-propaganda critique in modern times is nearly invisible in contrast to years past. McCarthy-era investigations of social scientists associated with the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, along with Cold War-era suspicion of any who did not support the U.S. battle against Communism, helped derail the social science critique of propaganda. The establishment of the discipline of Communications, along with the Department of Defense's investment in mass persuasion research, further marginalized academic criticism of mass perception management (Cone 2004; Hoffman, 1992; Lee, 1986; Simpson, 1994; Sproule, 1997). After WWII, few scientists devoted attention to protecting citizens from propaganda; far more spent their time trying to figure out how to make mass persuasion work.

Engaging the debate. Americans are now faced with coordinated, extensive, U.S. military and enemy-sponsored influence campaigns surely equal to, and probably greater than, those associated with WWII. Modern U.S. information warriors believe that the need to establish information dominance is now central to "the American way of war" (Lamb, 2005b; p. 88). But civilian scholarly engagement in the study of Joint Force influence initiatives has not yet begun to mirror the level of importance that the U.S. military assigns to "perception wars." This omission will certainly limit our understanding of the military's application of basic scientific findings. And it leaves us oblivious to any related cost to social science that such application brings. Perhaps most importantly, our inattention to military influence operations is likely to limit significantly our ability to help shape the role of influence in modern war—and, as a consequence, in democracy.

Robert Oppenheimer (1956) once observed that both physics and psychology have developed technologies that pose a threat to modern society. Psychology's capacity for the control of human behavior, he argued, was probably the more dangerous of the two. As the impact of scientific knowledge on human destiny grows, said Oppenheimer (1956), with it grows the responsibility of scientists to explicate, explain, communicate and teach (p. 128) about the implications of its use. IO and SC seem to exemplify his point.

But Kipnis (1994) argued that psychology's capacity for individual influence demands more than increased education. He insisted that such power requires that psychologists engage with greater determination than ever before in the debate that has shadowed Psychology since its inception: Who should psychology be for? What groups or goals should our now effective behavioral technologies serve?

Our primary ethical obligation with regard to IO and SC is that of asking questions and provoking debate. It is past time for psychologists to consider again the costs as well as the benefits of military influence.

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SARA KING is a professor in the Department of Psychology at Saint Francis University, in Loretto, Pennsylvania, and serves as coordinator of SFU's Social Responsibility Minor. She holds a doctoral degree in social psychology from Oklahoma State University.