



WEAPONS OF MASS PERSUASION

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION
TO COMBAT VIOLENT EXTREMISM



EDITED BY STEVEN R. CORMAN,
ANGELA TRETHEWEY, & H.L. GOODALL, JR.

NEW FROM PETER LANG!

Available May 2008

How has the United States mishandled the effort to win hearts and minds since the terrorist attacks of 9/11? This book—the first to articulate an answer based on principles of human communication—explains strategic errors in the “war of ideas” and how the United States can do a better job going forward.

Part I explains the context. It details missed opportunities resulting from a communication approach that dates to the Eisenhower administration, a strategy that is desperate for certainty, and a stale concept of leadership from the Cold War.

Part II chronicles contemporary failures of U.S. communication strategy including

- Allowing terrorists to execute a coherent communication strategy designed to legitimize themselves and build a base of supporters
- Making the U.S. appear afraid to talk in dealings with Iran by treating communication as a scarce commodity
- Turning the death of Abu Musab al Zarqawi into a propaganda opportunity for the Bad Guys

Using war language to create expectations in the struggle against violent extremism that are impossible to meet

Part III gives the solutions. It proposes a new, complexity-based communication model to supplant the 60 year old approach now in use. Then it analyzes the State Department’s latest U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication in detail, exposing its questionable assumptions, and outlining new assumptions and strategic communication objectives to go with them.

This is the first book written by leading communication experts to offer practical solutions to our current global crisis. It is grounded in contemporary research from a wide variety of fields like counterterrorism, public diplomacy, media, propaganda, and contemporary culture. Yet the ideas are presented in an accessible style with concrete recommendations for practitioners and policymakers alike.

ADVANCE PRAISE

“Beyond the incisive analysis of America’s strategic communication challenges and the hard-hitting policy recommendations for crafting an effective way forward, the authors open the terrorism studies discipline to a virtually untapped literature, that of communication theory. This book is a must read for practitioners, scholars, and students of global politics and counterterrorism.”

Jarret Brachman, Director of Research,
Combating Terrorism Center
United States Military Academy

“A virtual dissection of America’s troubled ‘information strategy’ since 9/11. [This book is] full of trenchant analysis that explains what went wrong, yet replete with practical recommendations for repairing damaged credibility and focusing on the right ‘story.’ Mandatory reading for all who conduct public diplomacy, those who study it, and those who feel its pervasive effects.”

John Arquilla, Director
Information Operations Center
United States Naval Postgraduate School



Steven R. Corman (center), Angela Trethewey (right), and H.L. (Bud) Goodall (left)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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