

**Osgood, Kenneth. *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad*. Lawrence, KS.: University Press of Kansas, 2006. 506pp.**

**Bevan Sewell  
De Montfort University**

Increasingly, public diplomacy has come to be seen as a vital component in the making of US foreign policy in the Cold War.<sup>1</sup> In his new book, Kenneth Osgood builds on this developing trend and offers a new appraisal of the Eisenhower administration's use of psychological warfare and public diplomacy to wage the Cold War. Supported by a thorough reading of secondary literature relating to the Eisenhower era, and a prodigious amount of archival research, Osgood's work provides a timely and expansive investigation of Eisenhower's foreign policy.

Writing in 2002, Scott Lucas argued that: "When political warfare was established as a method and the break-up of the Soviet bloc enshrined as an objective, US strategy became far more than a quest for national security or the pursuit of economic advantage...the appeal for hearts and minds abroad would best succeed if it touched on the 'everyday' aspects of life."<sup>2</sup> Osgood takes this idea further noting, "the untold story of America's cold war of words did not lie in the tale of psychological operations to foment unrest behind the Iron Curtain...rather, it was in the broader effort to win the hearts and minds of people on the other side of that curtain, in the areas of the world that were non-communist, neutral, or tied to the United States through formal alliances – the area that Americans liked to call the 'free world'" (pp.2-3). Osgood builds his examination of US policy in this period around this central theme – the enduring quest to secure the "hearts and minds" of the free world in the ongoing battle against communism. Furthermore, in adopting such an approach, Osgood puts forward a novel argument that significantly reappraises the prevailing wisdom on Eisenhower's foreign policies. Rather than confirming the Eisenhower Revisionists<sup>3</sup> claim that Eisenhower was pursuing a form of detente with the Soviet Union,<sup>4</sup> Osgood argues that they (the Revisionists) "have been able to make this argument only by ignoring or sidelining the massive documentation on Eisenhower's use of psychological warfare." Through adopting such an approach, Osgood is led to the conclusion that: "Close examination of this evidence indicates that shrewd Cold War calculations took precedence over an altruistic desire for world peace. Eisenhower attached far greater value to waging and to winning the Cold War than to ending it through negotiations" (pp.6-7).<sup>5</sup>

By examining the Eisenhower administration's waging of the Cold War through psychological warfare, Osgood does, indeed, successfully manage to posit a new and invigorating analysis of the fight against Soviet communism. Familiar events such as Eisenhower's "Chance for Peace" speech or "Open Skies" proposal are re-analysed and reframed via the subsequent efforts by US officials (namely CD Jackson and Nelson Rockefeller) and institutions (such as the Psychological Strategy Board, Operations Coordinating Board and the United States Information

Agency) to use these events as tools for securing the ‘hearts and minds’ of the free world.

And yet, by successfully achieving this, Osgood’s book contains an underlying problem. By focusing so heavily on the use of propaganda, Osgood does not give sufficient emphasis to the strategic and economic aspects of US foreign policy. Though he notes that, “political warfare emerged as a critical component of the Eisenhower administration’s strategy for winning the Cold War,” (p.362) this is not linked directly enough to an evaluation of strategic and economic aspects of US policy. Moreover, he does not take up the opportunity to use his approach to re-examine the New Look (NSC 162/2).<sup>6</sup> As such, he portrays the administration’s foreign policies as being far more singular in purpose than was actually the case. As he outlines late on in the book, “Eisenhower believed that the ideological competition with the Soviet Union...suffused all US actions and policies with psychological significance” (p.363).

However, these are minor criticisms. The need for a reappraisal of the New Look requires a more specific study, to meet the challenge set down by Saki Dockrill in her own book on the period when she conceded, “There is certainly room for further research.”<sup>7</sup> Instead, Osgood has significantly widened academic understanding of the Eisenhower era and made a convincing argument about US methods in the Cold War, emphasising the centrality of the fight against communism and the use of psychological warfare and propaganda to successfully meet US aims with regard to winning the “hearts and minds” of the free world. The book’s most enduring image is of an administration attempting to prioritise the fighting and, ultimately the winning, of the Cold War through the use of world-wide propaganda; a mission statement that necessitated a national consensus. As such, he finishes the book by noting, “The American people, Eisenhower might have said if he had had a different speech writer, should pay any price and bear any burden to win the Cold War” (p.369).

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<sup>1</sup> See: Scott Lucas, *Freedom’s War: The US Crusade Against the Soviet Union* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Walter Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (London: MacMillan, 1997); Frances Stonor-Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta, 1999)

<sup>2</sup> Scott Lucas, “Mobilizing Culture: The State-Private Network and the CIA in the Early Cold War” in Dale Carter and Robin Clifton (eds) *War and Cold War in American Foreign Policy, 1942-1962* (London: Palgrave, 2002) pp.83-4

<sup>3</sup> The school of thought that suggested that Eisenhower was, in fact, a decisive and active leader. See: Robert McMahon, “Eisenhower and Third World Nationalism: A Critique of the Revisionists” in *Political Science Quarterly* Volume 101, Part 3 (1986); Fred Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994); Richard Immerman, “Confessions of an Eisenhower Revisionist: An Agonizing Reappraisal” in *Diplomatic History* Volume 14 (Summer 1990) pp.319-342; Stephen Rabe, “Eisenhower Revisionism: A Decade of Scholarship” in *Diplomatic History* Volume 17 (Winter 1993) pp.97-115

<sup>4</sup> See: Robert Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring*

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*Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: The President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984)

<sup>5</sup> H-Diplo *Total Cold War* Roundtable Review by Hugh Wilford. February 26 2007 Taken From: <http://www.h-net.org/%7Ediplo/roundtables/PDF/TotalColdWar-Wilford.pdf> Accessed on February 28 2007

<sup>6</sup> H-Diplo *Total Cold War* Roundtable Review – editors introduction by Scott Lucas, February 26 2007. Taken From: <http://www.h-net.org/%7Ediplo/roundtables/PDF/TotalColdWar-Wilford.pdf> Accessed on February 28 2007

<sup>7</sup> Saki Dockrill, *Eisenhower's New Look National Security Policy, 1953-1961* (London: MacMillan, 1996) pp.xv-xvi