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Selling Taiwan: Diplomacy and Propaganda

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This article discusses the relationship between propaganda and diplomacy, and focuses on the Republic of China as an example of an international actor with few formal diplomatic relations. It discusses the objectives and structure of propaganda, and considers the way that foreign news organisations report the ROC.

KEYWORDS: Diplomacy; propaganda; Government Information Office; media; unofficial lobbies

Few discussions of either diplomacy or propaganda make the required distinction between those states and governments that are accepted as legitimate international actors, and those states and/or governments that are not recognised as legitimate. The former enjoy all the benefits that are associated with diplomatic relations, including membership of the myriad intergovernmental organisations that now exist. The latter are denied the opportunity to interact with many other states on a formal and mutually beneficial basis. Such a situation by necessity magnifies the importance of propaganda: because they are deprived of the liberty to use established diplomatic links and procedures, these states and governments must use alternative channels of expressing their opinions and conveying information to a global audience. They have to use every avenue of publicity available to project their image and their policies.[1] For such states and governments, propaganda does sometimes become diplomacy out of necessity, and is sometimes a means of surviving in a hostile environment. They must also confront a barrage of propaganda against them that seeks to reinforce their isolation, even demonise them.[2] The Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan is in such a situation, and its predicament is worth detailed consideration.

This discussion is driven by four key questions:

- How do governments sell their foreign polices overseas if they are denied international recognition, legitimacy, and therefore the opportunity to engage in formal diplomatic relations with other governments?
- How do such governments structure and organise their propaganda?
- Has diplomacy become nothing more than public relations in disguise?
- If so, is this something that we should worry about?

In short, why has the ROC considered it necessary to engage in propaganda, how is this activity structured, and most important, how has propaganda reinforced the ROC's diplomacy? The following discussion refers to *informal* diplomacy to describe the unique set of relations that structure the interaction of two governments, one of whom does not legally recognise the other.[3]

Propaganda and Diplomacy

Understanding that propaganda is merely the means to a predetermined end is essential. As a concept, it should be without moral judgement, since history has demonstrated that propaganda can serve either constructive or destructive interests.[4] This is reflected in the earliest definitions of propaganda, proposed by Harold Lasswell. He described propaganda as a 'mere tool' which is 'no more moral or immoral than a pump handle'.[5] In this way, Lasswell alerts us to the hypothesis that it is the *intention* of the propaganda that should forge our moral opinion of it. These arguments are skilfully captured by Peter Kenez's description of propaganda as

> nothing more than an attempt to transmit social and political values in the hope of affecting people's thinking, emotions, and thereby behaviour. The intent of influencing others is hardly objectionable. When we think we disapprove of propaganda, it usually turns out that we object to its goals or methods. … [T]o rail against propaganda is useless, for it is an integral part of the modern world.[6]

We might also share the sentiments expressed by Gregg Wolper in an article on 'Wilsonian Public Diplomacy'. He wrote that propaganda 'remains the most useful term as long as readers understand that it does not imply the use of dishonest methods

of false information, *although it does not necessarily exclude them either* [emphasis added].'[7] Still, we should not be surprised that popular thinking still maintains that propaganda is a sinister activity, since we are still too close to the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century that developed and used propaganda precisely in this way. During interviews for this paper, many of the ROC's diplomats who staff both embassies and representative offices throughout the world, maintained that 'we' do not engage in propaganda; rather, 'we' tell the truth and simply provide factual information about the ROC on Taiwan. 'They' – meaning the Chinese communists – engage in propaganda. Yet this approach not only accepts that the ROC remain forever on the defensive against hostile propaganda, it also overlooks how credibility, balance, objectivity, accuracy and a penchant for providing only information and 'the facts' are all used to sell a political message in much the same way that one might use more overt propaganda techniques. This is what Nicholas Pronay has labelled 'propaganda with facts'.[8] Moreover, a factual based propaganda raises questions of selection: who is deciding which 'facts' to report? Which 'facts' are hidden, and why?

What of diplomacy? The *doyen* of realist diplomacy studies, Hans J. Morgenthau, defined diplomacy as the 'promotion of the national interest by peaceful means' in which communication and propaganda can play an integral role.[9] If we accept that diplomacy is about communication, persuasion, and negotiation – and not about 'war by other means' – then involvement in propaganda is not something that diplomats can, or indeed should, ignore. Some, especially Americans, prefer such terms as 'public diplomacy', or 'public relations' since these seem to satisfy their sensitivity towards the more pejorative associations with propaganda, though I contest that the difference is semantic.[10] To reiterate, popular opinion assumes that propaganda is done only by others whose cause we repudiate. As Philip Taylor has

written, 'The euphemism business is … a response to the bad smell, but merely serves to add more layers obscuring the reality'.[11]

Practitioners and scholars alike have long acknowledged the need to integrate communication with diplomacy. Sir Henry Wotton, an English Ambassador in the 17th Century, described the diplomat as 'an honest man sent abroad to lie for his country'. More recently, Garret Mattingley, the author of *Renaissance Diplomacy* (1965), said, 'The art of diplomacy would become impossible if more people knew how to hold their tongues'.[12] Wotton's is a traditional perception of propaganda and its relationship with diplomacy, one that reinforces the subversive character of both activities. Mattingley's is a more acceptable and sensible approach, one that captures what I have termed 'Selling Taiwan'. Propaganda is all about salesmanship, whether of an ideology, a particular political system, or a particular government/state. The papers of a former Ambassador from the ROC to the United States, Wellington Koo, archived at Columbia University in New York, reveal that in 1949 he was advised to hire a prominent American public relations specialist whose clients had included an airline and Coca-cola.[13] This is quite a revelation, as much of the literature tends to suggest that the packaging, or commodification of politics[14] is a modern concept that only really gained relevance in the television age.

Hans J. Morgenthau has been more explicit than most on the relationship between propaganda and diplomacy. For this reason, the following passage is worth quoting in detail:

> Regardless of the instrument employed, the ultimate aim of foreign policy is always the same: the promote one's interests by changing the mind of the opponents. To that end, diplomacy uses the persuasiveness of promises and

> threats in terms of the satisfaction of the denial of interests; military force … [and] propaganda, the use and creation of intellectual convictions, moral valuations, and emotional preferences in support of one's own interests. All foreign policy, then, is the struggle for the minds of men; but propaganda is so in the specific sense that it endeavours to mould the minds of men directly rather than through the intermediary of the manipulation of interests or physical violence.[15]

More recently, Peter Marshall, a former diplomat, captured Mogenthau's rather convoluted ideas on the importance of winning hearts and minds in a single sentence: diplomacy is about persuasion, not imposition.[16]

However, there is need for caution. While such convictions are welcome in a discipline that has taken far too long to appreciate the significance of international communications, media, and propaganda, they nevertheless threaten to blur the very real distinction between propaganda and diplomacy. Propaganda is not a species of diplomacy; it does not become diplomacy simply because diplomats do it. Rather it is essential to remember that as an activity, propaganda differs from diplomacy in terms of target and intention, and that only in very specific circumstances are diplomats required to engage in propaganda. Both activities are part of a process that might be called 'international political communications', a term that is sufficiently broad to envelope all the different forms of communication that exist today. Diplomacy is an act of communication that operates on a government to government level. It may involve the media – in 1994 President Clinton addressed via CNN the leadership of North Korea at a most critical point in their relationship with the US – but diplomacy still proceeds most efficiently if it is confidential and bilateral.[17]

Propaganda is also an act of communication, but differs from diplomacy because by definition it cannot function without the oxygen of publicity. It targets public opinion to elicit support or sympathy for the source on the premise that, once harnessed, 'people power' can be a formidable force. But for those actors, such as the ROC, that are denied access to conventional diplomatic procedures, propaganda does sometimes out of necessity become diplomacy as it can be a means of survival.

Unless actors accept that they engage in propaganda they will never be in a position to understand fully how to do it and what it can achieve. By resorting to the Cold War reasoning that propaganda is something that only the communists in Beijing do, the Government Information Office (GIO) and diplomats are simply feeding the popular opinion of propaganda as something evil and inviting audiences to switch off from ALL forms of persuasion, including their own.

Diplomacy is not public relations in disguise. However, we cannot pretend that in the present era of – political, economic and cultural – globalisation and increasing interdependence, diplomats are not required to engage in public relations as a *necessary and valuable part of their duties*. Reflecting on his time as British ambassador to the United States, Sir Nicholas Henderson affirmed that 'it would be regarded as a sign of lack of conviction in his country's case if an Ambassador did not go out of his way to promote it publicly'.[18]

The Framework

The best way to understand how diplomats use propaganda is by viewing it as part of a larger, more complex, and more significant though unequal diplomatic contest, in this case between the ROC and the PRC. Most useful is Gadi Wolfsfeld's typology of 'authority' and 'challenger' powers.[19] Such competition for the 'hearts and minds' of an

international audience moves the contest to a new dimension. Here it is transformed into a different form of competition, one that parallels the competition taking place on the political and diplomatic level. It is characterised by inequality in several ways – the level of public and political interest each side can generate according to their perceived status; the ease of access that each can secure to the government machinery of third nation-states and multilateral forums, and the level at which this occurs; and similarly the volume of interest the players can generate within, and their access to, the media. The inequality of this competition is defined ultimately by the political will to establish or deny diplomatic relations with either of the contenders. Recent developments suggest a positive correlation between the level of media interest and diplomatic profile: Japan's ties with the ROC improved through 1997 and 1998, and among the factors which contributed to the upgrading of relations is the increase in Japanese media coverage of Taiwan.[20]

This uneven playing field makes propaganda an essential accessory of informal diplomacy. It involves a specific type of propaganda that is conditioned by, but at the same time reinforces, the informal nature of the diplomacy, and it works across a variety of time frames. Propaganda proceeds at a pace that is relative to the objectives of the diplomacy and the diplomatic environment. To understand this in practice, I shall proceed to discuss the *objectives* and the *organisation* of propaganda in the ROC, and then offer some thoughts on *effects*. After all, all propaganda must be directed towards altering the behaviour of the audience; without an effect, the propaganda is wasted.

Objectives

Propaganda should not be an activity that is separate from the objectives of government policy. Instead, practitioners should strive for consistency, indeed synchronisation. As Hans Morgenthau observed of what he called 'political warfare' such activity 'is but a reflection, in the realm of ideas, of the political and military policies it seeks to support. … From the qualities of these policies it draws its strengths.'[21] So the fundamental question is what does the ROC on Taiwan intend to achieve by engaging in propaganda? This will depend on the intended recipient. Clearly propaganda that was developed for the Republic of South Africa before the end of their formal diplomatic relationship in 1997, differed markedly from propaganda directed towards the mainland of China. Here it is useful to make a distinction between 'strategic' and 'tactical' propaganda.

Long-term diplomatic aims require a programme of strategic propaganda which is compatible with both the time-frame and context. It is a measured type of propaganda that builds upon personal relations in an effort to mobilise potential or existing sympathisers. This can be seen quite clearly with reference to the ROC whose long-term objectives include: the re-opening of formal diplomatic relations with as many other governments as possible; the re-definition of its status with a view to re-entering the international community on equal terms with the PRC; convincing other states and their public that the Republic of China is worthy of universal recognition; that it should be allowed to retake its seat in the United Nations; and that Taiwan is experiencing a serious and irreversible process of political and social transition which is transforming it into the modern constitutional democracy that was envisaged in 1947 before the Nationalist government retreated to the island.[22] Given such multiple objectives the propaganda of informal diplomacy is both creative and pro-active, and

those engaged in such activity must pursue every possible avenue of publicity available to them.[23] Explaining Taiwan's martial law was always very difficult for its representatives, especially given their accusations of its negative-style of reporting by the western media. Hence the end of martial law (a policy referent) provided more positive substance to the propaganda. The hope was that both would advance the ROC's image in the international arena and thus contribute to better diplomatic relations: 'A Government Information Agency spokesman noted that martial law is one of the few things foreigners know about Taiwan and that changing that image will make a big difference'.[24] This will create a new *context* or *framework* that will provide audiences with a means of understanding, interpreting and internalising the latest political developments.

In the short term, the government which is forced to engage in informal diplomacy has immediate interests and goals, and these are reflected in the content and structure of its propaganda. For example, it is much more involved in a political contest for access to the machinery of the host government and the media on a day-by-day basis. Its immediate objective is to maintain as high a profile as possible and advance its interests towards fulfilling its long-term aims. This has been the main success of the ROC's campaign to re-enter the United Nations.[25] At the same time the ROC is sensitive to the structural components of its informal relations, and if these are based on commercial ties, it does not want to disrupt the status quo. In this time-frame the propagandist has fewer opportunities to establish a platform for his government's opinions, reactions and self-promotion, but by way of compensation is afforded enormous latitude for creativity. Some are allowed to be more creative than others. Robin Renwick has described how the British Foreign Office would 'tell the Embassy the objective it aimed for, leaving it to decide how best to deploy the relevant

arguments'. The American State Department, on the other hand, would 'give their Ambassadors detailed speaking notes to be used verbatim ...'[26]

Organisation

I have already referred to the study by Gadi Wolfsfeld that models media coverage of the Israel-Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) confrontation on the basis of 'authority' and 'challenger' powers (with the Israel as the 'authority' and the PLO as the 'challenger'). Wolfsfeld's analysis suggests that in such competitions, there is usually an imbalance in the resources that each actor can devote to it. However, in the case-study that concerns this discussion, inequality of resources is not a factor. Indeed, even though it could be labelled a 'challenger' power the ROC enjoys a higher volume of resources than the PRC. Such an analysis may alert us to the symbolism attached to recognition – that is, the PRC is a recognised 'authority' only because the international community bestows upon it that status; resources, then, do not enter into the equation. Nevertheless, while the ROC languishes in the unfortunate position of being a 'challenger' power, it is sensible to suggest that it consider ways to deploy its resources in the most effective way and thus maximise their impact.

It stands to reason that a propaganda should work through a competent and efficient organisation that has been created for that purpose. It is equally important that such an organisation must have clear responsibilities from other government agencies, especially the government department that is responsible for foreign affairs, *but must never work in isolation from it.* In other words, foreign policy objectives must determine the propaganda, and the propaganda must follow foreign policy. If propaganda and policy are not synchronised, then both will lack consistency and credibility. At the same time, the propagandist must be able to advise the policy-

makers on presentation matters. By integrating propagandists into the foreign policy process, the government has access to the kind of insight that can make or break their political strategies. Provided the structure is sufficiently sophisticated to handle such work, propagandists should have the opportunity to inform the political elites of the likely repercussions of their intended actions, including whether or not they will be accepted as credible. The propagandist will know how a particular policy will impact upon public opinion in the target country, and perhaps pre-empt the reaction there to it. Integrating propaganda and policy requirements is a key feature of successful diplomacy.[27]

How has the ROC fared? In 1952, H. Maclear Bate wrote in his *Report from Formosa* that, 'if any Government ever lacked an adequate propaganda organisation, it is Chiang Kai-shek's. … a clever propagandist,' he said, 'would find an inexhaustible fund of material in Formosa which could be capitalised,' and he concluded with the pithy observation that 'Never has so little been done with so much.'[28] The historical record, however, presents an alternative representation. The ROC does have a propaganda organisation, one that predates the move to Taiwan. Although far from perfect, this organisation is nevertheless 'adequate' given that it must perform in difficult circumstances. Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement.

The fundamental problem is that the ROC's propaganda organisation is badly constructed with a confusing division of labour. It engages the services of far too many government ministries and organisations that all have overlapping responsibilities and lines of accountability. For propaganda to make a positive contribution to diplomacy – whether in relation to other governments, the overseas Chinese or the PRC – it must be centralised in one department. The Government Information Office would seem to be the natural and sensible choice. This

organisation can then call upon the expertise of other government departments (the Ministry of Economics, the Mainland Affairs Council) when required. Although this may be a reflection of the functional nature of Taiwan's diplomacy – informal or otherwise – this should not encourage the GIO officer to defer responsibility for propaganda to the specialist departments in areas where he lacks confidence and competence.

Each embassy and representative office includes GIO officers, all of whom state publicly that they perform their duties in the same way regardless of location. However the picture of responsibility and accountability is confused. For example, the former director of the GIO in London said that he is responsible in the first instance to the GIO in Taipei. The politically appointed head of the representative office – internally called 'Ambassador' as a reflection of his status and the fact that the office is 'a de facto embassy'[29] – is responsible for the day-to-day running of the office, and receives no guidance from the GIO on how he should promote the ROC. The former director of the GIO in London received a general outline of what he should promote from his office in Taipei, but received no instructions on how. The director remarked that this was typical of all GIO offices throughout the world. On the other hand, the Press Counsellor at the embassy of the ROC in South Africa prior to the severance of diplomatic relations between the two governments, admitted to receiving guidance from the ambassador and *then* from the GIO in Taipei. In a bid to add confusion, the Representative in London described a structure of 'parallel guidance', whereby each Division in the Representative Office, including the GIO receives instructions from their own Department in Taipei and is only supervised by the Representative. He is not in any position to instruct his GIO office on what image to promote of Taiwan, or

how, since this is determined by the GIO in Taipei, with the final say in the Premier's office where the work of the various departments is co-ordinated.[30]

The Taipei Representative Office in the UK is not alone in such chaos. Barbara Krug has identified the office in Germany as structured along equally confusing lines, thus inhibiting its promotional work: 'It is worth mentioning', she wrote

> that Taiwan has considerably increased its effort to influence the German public. It keeps more formal and informal offices [there] than in the United States. … That this diplomatic and political offensive has proved to be rather ineffective so far … also has to do with the uncoordinated and sometimes chaotic actions of these offices – or with the fact that they are controlled by different Taiwanese agencies like the Foreign Office, the Government Information Office, or the National Security Council.[31]

This is significant: divided responsibility often infers a divided message, opening up the possibility of a confused propaganda that lacks credibility. At least the ROC has recognised the need to allow the propagandist access to the decision-making process. The Director-General of the GIO is appointed by the President on the advice of the Premier. By virtue of his position within the government hierarchy, the Director-General has a seat in the Cabinet. He is therefore directly involved in policy deliberation at the highest level, and is therefore in a favourable position to highlight the propaganda implications of the decisions that are discussed.

The organisation of propaganda must adapt to the changes in the external environment, although exercising control over this process is rarely straightforward. The structure must allow for sufficient creativity and adaptability among professional propagandists working in the field. They should know which themes and methods of

delivery will work according to the particular environment and the audience they are targeting. If they are not adapting to local conditions, field propagandists should be encouraged to be creative and responsive to their environment *without deviating from the diplomatic and propaganda objectives as defined in Taipei*. Tailoring the *presentation* of a particular policy for an individual audience is essential for success:

> The propagandist must first of all know precisely as possible the terrain on which he is operating. He must know the sentiments and opinions, the current tendencies and the stereotypes among the public he is trying to reach. … One cannot make just any propaganda any place for anybody. … The technique of propaganda consists in precisely calculating the desired action in terms of the individual who is to be made to act.[32]

Diplomats and propagandists living in a particular environment and exploring its cultural, political and national value systems, have a better 'feel' than anyone else for which themes and styles will work in that location. To be credible, and therefore effective, the propaganda must be consistent with reality, or at least with the audience's interpretation of reality.

My research identified a common, yet fundamental problem that inhibits the promotional work of the ROC abroad. Diplomats and propagandists exhibit a far too defeatist attitude when it comes to using propaganda to reinforce their informal diplomacy. They too easily explain away their limitations with reference to their international predicament. The logic runs something like this: the ROC enjoys few formal diplomatic relations, so they are trapped within an international system that refuses to recognise their legitimacy. This means they have little room for flexibility and manoeuvre. Their promotional work therefore suffers. In other words, the *international community* is responsible for the work of the diplomats and GIO field

officers, not their own lack of creativity. Of course it would be unrealistic to assume that the international situation did not impose serious limitations on diplomatic activity. For Hans Morgenthau

> The diplomat is first of all the symbolic representative of his country. As such, he must continuously perform symbolic functions and expose himself to symbolic functions on the part of other diplomats and of the foreign government to which he is accredited. These functions serve to test, on the one hand, the prestige in which his nation is held abroad and, on the other, the prestige with which he is accredited.[33]

The representatives of those governments and states which are not recognised find it incredibly difficult to perform even the most cursory of symbolic functions given that they operate outside the diplomatic circle.[34] Yet, I suggest that the ROC's predicament should be viewed as an opportunity to explore different and innovative methods of promotion, and thus accepting the parameters that bound their work. Changing the prevailing political climate is difficult, if not impossible. Even the best propaganda will be unable to persuade governments to switch diplomatic relations – a confluence of considerations and interests work against it. By accepting the situation and the difficulties, propagandists are in a position to explore other, more creative ways of selling themselves. Propaganda and public relations can only be effective once specific conditions are in place. The interests of the receiving government must, at best, coincide with the interests of the government engaged in propaganda, or at worst, not be antagonistic to them. If the propaganda is working against the climate of opinion in the receiving country, then it is liable to flounder. One only needs to refer to (using the title of Edwin Martin's 1986 engaging study) the *Anglo-American Response to Communist Victory in China* to see how this works: 'Only after the PRC's

intervention in Korea and Peking's rejection of the UN cease-fire offers did the United States in effect become committed to preserving the status quo on Formosa, more because it was at war with the People's Republic than out of pro-Nationalist sentiments'.[35]

Reporting Taiwan

> Interest in Formosa arises from the consequences of events on the Chinese mainland. It is only as the headquarters of a contender for power on the mainland and of a government recognised by the United States as a legal claimant to that power that Taiwan attracted global attention. … But once the problems of Korea and China have been resolved, Formosa will subside once more into the relative obscurity from which it has so recently emerged.[36]

The above passage was first written in 1952 when the international climate was more favourable to the ROC. Its implications, however, continue to have relevance today with the ROC enjoying few diplomatic relations of major importance. At the heart of the statement is a fundamental problem: the information officer or publicist stationed overseas in a largely hostile environment faces a seemingly insurmountable challenge that derives from his government's delicate and largely indeterminate international status - how to gain access to, and use the media of the host country, and how to ensure that sufficient interest in the ROC is generated. As a foreign representative, the diplomat is at the mercy of the alien news environment that denies him any responsibility over the news agenda. In fact, the media themselves define the news based on their assessment of an actor's status, credibility, influence, and audience interest. They decide whether a particular story or event is worth devoting the time

and resources needed to cover it, and then determine the importance of that story through their choice of its location in the news running order. This inevitably shapes audience perception of how meaningful the story actually is, which can then *reinforce* the impression of triviality.

The absence of control over the news agenda and the difficulty for unrecognised states like Taiwan to enjoy access to the media, even at times when they are prominent in the headlines, is a serious hindrance to effective promotion. We might even propose the possibility that Taiwan is actually in a worse situation than other 'isolated' states in history that have been subject to international censure, such as Israel and South Africa. They tended to be very prominent in the news across the world because of the very reasons for their isolation, and because of the international pressure to which they have been subject. The ROC cannot even secure this position because it has not been 'censured' in any meaningful way; unlike the others, it is a 'non-existent' rather than a 'pariah' state.

To date the ROC has not felt compelled to stage 'exceptionally strange or violent acts as a substitute for their lack of status or resources. ... Leaders of smaller countries,' writes Gadi Wolfsfeld, 'may choose to give an especially provocative speech or make threatening moves to gain an international platform ...'.[37] Rather, the ROC has opted for the opposite method of avoiding hardline, emotional propaganda rhetoric, and concentrating instead on promoting the many achievements made during the past decade of political and social reform. In this way less powerful actors - 'challengers' - can learn how to control events they consider newsworthy, and thus circumvent the direction of information flows that is dominated by their more powerful rivals, while making an impact on the news agenda.[38] The 'challenger' is no longer continually on the defensive, and no longer depending on the behaviour of the

'authority' for publicity. That, at least, is the theory. In reality, the situation is more complicated.

Describing the momentous changes that have taken place in Taiwan, Jason C. Hu, a former Director-General of the GIO has expressed sadness that 'perhaps because these reforms were not achieved at the cost of bloodshed or social turmoil they have ... not gotten sufficient press or attention.'[39] The roots of this lie in the communications process itself. In 1987, the communications theorist, Denis McQuail identified a predictable 'pattern of one general kind of news bias. News,' he said, 'will not tend to deal with: distant and politically unimportant nations; non-elites; ... long-term undramatic processes (eg. social change itself); many kinds of "good news"'.[40] McQuail could well have been describing Taiwan and its political evolution. Taiwan was considered sufficiently 'news-worthy' only when a further, more dramatic ingredient - the military threat from the PRC in 1996 - was added. More than 600 reporters from around the world descended on Taiwan during the period of the election. Bill Bridges, a former copy editor on the *Free China Journal* has quipped that 'When Taiwan, with a picture, made the front page of our little Indiana daily paper, we knew this was serious stuff'.[41] The difficulty with such coverage is that the larger picture was ignored, and audiences were left with the distorted impression of a Taiwan that faced an unpredictable future and was at the mercy of its stronger neighbour. In other words, the media, and therefore their audiences, had difficulty in disassociating Taiwan from Chinese politics.

We are thus faced with the *problem* - the media are only interested in Taiwan when there is an exciting story to tell[42] - and the kernel of a *solution*: generate one's own publicity.[43] Manufacturing interest in the ROC will raise its profile in the media, and encourage awareness of the issues it faces. As Jacques Ellul noted in his seminal

study of propaganda, timeliness is important. 'Propaganda', he observed, 'can have solid *reality* and *power* over man only because of its rapport with fundamental currents, but it has seductive excitement and a capacity to move him only by its ties to the most volatile immediacy.'[44] Thus President Lee's visit to the US in 1995 certainly captured the attention of the world's media, and the press in the US, Japan and Hong Kong all came out in support of closer relations with the ROC.[45] As the *Free China Journal* reported, such coverage helped raise awareness of Taiwan.[46] 'If you now ask Canadians on the streets who President Lee is, they know,' reported the *Free China Journal* following his controversial visit to Cornell. 'Before that, their knowledge about Taiwan was limited'.[47] Most recently, President Lee's assertion on German radio that relations with China should proceed on a state-to-state basis have achieved notoriety, and propelled Taiwan into the headlines. Of course, we should perhaps conclude this section with a nod of acknowledgement to Taiwan's most generous source of publicity – the People's Republic of China itself. The PRC's actions against its smaller neighbour ensures that Taiwan will continue to be prominent in the headlines without the ROC having to expend too much energy itself.

I wish now to draw attention to the fact that diplomats must be capable of working in this environment and that as yet, no diplomatic representative of the ROC or GIO officer receives any formal instruction in how to use, or interact with, the media of countries where they are stationed. *Diplomats and GIO officers working in the field must receive training in how to use the media.* That they do not already receive such instruction was for this author the most surprising discovery of his research. The ROC understands the importance of cultivating good links with the media; they regularly organise visits to the ROC by foreign journalists, and even offer them training workshops. Yet they provide nothing of comparable value to their own

employees. In the modern media environment it is inexcusable for diplomats not to know how to work with the media. For the ROC, it may be a matter of life and death. Sometimes the media are their only channel of expression, of raising the profile of, and generating public interest in, the ROC. It has been suggested that the debate on the ROC's bid to rejoin the United Nations which took place in that organisation in September 1998 was hampered by a lack of media interest.[48] The media had gotten hold of the idea that the outcome was a 'foregone conclusion', and the ROC's diplomats at the UN saw this as a sign that the debate was unimportant. This is a serious admission, and one that does little to advance the ROC's cause.

Conclusions

The power and therefore the success of propaganda are difficult to quantify. Psychologists have demonstrated the value and effect of such propaganda methods as conformism, appeals to authority, and 'card stacking',[49] but how is even the most diligent propagandist to know that a given change in an audience's attitude or behaviour is the result of his work or is in fact due to another independent variable? Did propaganda win the Cold War, was it a contributory factor, or was it altogether negligible?

The problem of measurement derives principally from the involvement of two actors with different and often competing motivations. Any changes in the attitude or decisions of a foreign government will suggest to the propagandist that his work has been successful. On the other hand the audience, whether government or public opinion, will deny that it is so vulnerable to such techniques of persuasion. That is what is so irksome. As free thinking, independent individuals we challenge vigorously the idea that, in Philip Taylor's terms, 'we are all victims of propaganda',[50] and instead

we concentrate all our energies on exposing and resisting propaganda in all its many guises. Propaganda stands (falsely) accused of manipulation, and we are naturally suspicious of any form of manipulation since it implies the secret exercise of power that is beyond our immediate control. It heightens the sense of our own gullibility. In Taylor's colourful prose propaganda is considered to be 'a disease which somehow afflicts our individual and collective capacity to make up our own minds about what is happening in the world around us.'[51]

One way of bringing the threads of this discussion together and evaluating the performance of the ROC's official propaganda is to compare it to the *unofficial* organisations working on behalf of ROC/Taiwanese interests. Most of these 'lobbies', such as the Washington-based Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA) have enjoyed much more success than the government-sponsored propagandists. Members enjoy close relations with the staff of Congressmen, and point to recent successes, such as changes to the State Department Authorization Bill,[52] the reaffirmation of the Taiwan Relations Act, and membership of the World Health Organisation as signs that their work is making a positive impact on the political process. The bill was passed. The reaffirmation of the Taiwan Relations Act, and membership of the World Health Organisation are both further examples of FAPA's lobbying.[53]

We can identify several advantages that such unofficial organisations possess over their official counterparts. This will allow detailed comparison with the structure and organisation of the ROC's diplomacy/propaganda effort described earlier in this paper. First, unofficial organisations are not tied to the rigid political objectives and limitations of government and the often competing interests of its component parts. This lends them greater flexibility. Neither do they suffer from the problems associated with division of labour and responsibility that bedevil government

agencies. Second, their goals are much more limited and clearly defined than those pursued by government agencies. Third, they tend to be staffed by individuals with an abiding passion for, and therefore commitment to, their work; they are not merely civil servants on rotation and awaiting their next posting. Finally, unofficial organisations are more assimilated into the culture in which they operate. They tend to have a greater awareness of their audience, which themes and images will and will not work. They know how the political system and the media operate, have established strong networks of journalists and politicos, and thus know who they can depend upon to get their views across. In short, they are better salesmen.[54]

Several political scientists and historians have used relatively sophisticated quantitative methods to document the way public and press opinion, in America and Britain, have responded to changes in policy towards China and Taiwan.[55] Most propaganda is of a long-term nature, for it must identify and appeal to pre-existing, perhaps dormant attitudes and opinions. We must therefore be careful not to exaggerate its immediate power. No amount of propaganda will persuade the powerful governments of Britain, the United States, even China itself, that the ROC should be fully integrated into the international community with all the power and trappings of status that this would confer. This would involve a dramatic change of political attitudes and policy, especially within the ROC and PRC themselves, and neither government is yet prepared for such a departure. The ROC's propaganda should therefore understand that it must work within the existing framework, accepting the reality of the situation, and identifying opportunities that lay within it.

We must also be mindful that the more limited the goal, the better the chance the propagandist will succeed. Political and diplomatic objectives will only be fully realised when the international environment itself changes. While controlling the pace

and extent of this change is far beyond the capability of any propaganda organisation, making the best of an unfortunate situation is not.

Notes

[1] G.R. Berridge has observed that non-recognition can make even *informal* diplomacy difficult, especially if the nation, state or government is not a member of the United Nations. It is then unable to take full advantage of the informal meetings that take place, for example, in the corridors of the UN or at working funerals. See *Talking to the Enemy: How states without 'diplomatic relations' communicate* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 4. The only heads of state or government to attend Chiang Kai-shek's memorial service in 1975 were Premier Kim Jogn Pil of South Korea, and the Prime Minister of the Central African Republic, Elizabeth Domitien. The American delegation was led by Vice-President Rockefeller (though the first choice was Earl Butz, the US Secretary of State for agriculture – a slight for the ROC and a reflection of the deteriorating relations between the two governments). Similarly the only foreign leaders to attend Chiang Ching-kuo's funeral in 1988 were Premier Kim Chung Yul of South Korea, and President Clarence Segnoret of the Dominican Republic. See Deon Geldenhuys, *Isolated States: A Comparative Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 217.

[2] Geldenhuys, *Isolated States*, 113-115, details the construction of a most unfavourable image of white South Africa throughout the world when it was an isolated state because of its commitment to apartheid. This propaganda was comparable in language and intensity to that used to demonise communists during the Cold War.

[3] The characteristics of this informal diplomacy are strikingly similar to the official and more conventional kind, aided by the presence of 'Representative Offices' in those countries that do not diplomatically recognise the ROC. This allows the ROC to influence the policy choices of other governments, co-operating and resolving its differences with them. It has sometimes been referred to as the 'Japanese formula', involving acknowledgement of Beijing as the sole government of China, while allowing unofficial organisations to function in each other's capital to maintain commercial and cultural relations. See Byron S. J. Weng, 'Taiwan's International Status Today', *China Quarterly* 99 (1984), 463; Linjin Wu, 'Limitations and Prospects of Taiwan's Informal Diplomacy', in Jean-Marie Henckaerts (ed.), *The International Status of Taiwan in the New World Order: Legal and Political Considerations* (London: Kluwer Law International, 1996); Berridge, *Talking to the Enemy*; and Thomas J. Bellows, 'Taiwan's Foreign Policy in the 1970s', Asian Survey, 6 (1976).

[4] See Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996) for a fascinating history of propaganda from ancient history to the Gulf war.

[5] Harold D. Lasswell, 'Propaganda', reprinted in Robert Jackall (ed.), *Propaganda* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 21.

[6] Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilisation, 1917-1929* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 309.

[7] Gregg Wolper, 'Wilsonian Public Diplomacy: The Committee on Public Information in Spain', *Diplomatic History* 17(1), 1993: 17-33 (17).

[8] Quoted in Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media: Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 19.

[9] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* 5th edn. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 519; 525.

[10] See G.D. Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996). Also Philip M. Taylor, *Global Communications, International Affairs, and the Media Since 1945* (London: Routledge, 1997)

[11] Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*, 7

[12] G. Mattingley, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (1965), quoted in David Tothill, *South African–Australian Diplomatic Relations: The First Two Decades*, Discussion Papers in Diplomacy # 32 (University of Leicester, August 1997), 15.

[13] Memorandum from Joseph Ku to Wellington Koo, 3 February 1949, Wellington Koo Papers, Columbia University (New York), Box 180.

[14] I borrow this term from Bob Franklin's, *Packaging of Politics* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994).

[15] Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 333.

[16] Peter Marshall, *Positive Diplomacy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 132

[17] I have explored the problems of 'media diplomacy' elsewhere, namely in *Radio and Diplomacy and Propaganda*; and in 'The Importance of Monitored Broadcasts', in Jan Melissen (ed.), *Innovations in Diplomacy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

[18] Nicholas Henderson, *Mandarin: The Diaries of an Ambassador, 1969-1982* (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 1994), 288.

[19] Gadi Wolfsfeld, *Media and Political Conflict: News from the Middle East* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997).

[20] 'Japanese find new links with partners in Taiwan', *Free China Journal*, 1 May 1998, 7.

[21] Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 338.

[22] Steve Hoadley, *New Zealand and Taiwan: The Policy and Practice of Quasi-Diplomacy* (Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, Occasional Paper 7, 1993), 25.

[23] Ibid.

[24] John F. Copper, *The Taiwan Political Miracle* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1997), 84.

[25] Michael Yahuda, 'The International Standing of the Republic of China on Taiwan', *China Quarterly* 148 (1996), 1337.

[26] Robin Renwick, *Unconventional Diplomacy in Southern Africa* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 5

[27] See Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda*.

[28] H. Maclear , *Report from Formosa* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode 1952), 151

[29] Interview with Dr Eugene Chien, former Representative in the UK, 27 May 1997. Alain Tien, former director of the Information Service at the Bureau de Représentation de Taipei en France concurred with this description (interviewed 7 July 1997).

[30] Interview with Dr Eugene Chien, former Representative in the UK, 27 May 1997.

[31] Barbara Krug, 'German-Taiwanese Relations: A Reappraisal', in Maysing H. Yang (ed.), T*aiwan's Expanding Role in the International Arena* (New York: ME Sharpe, 1997), 70.

[32] Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (New York: Vintage, 1965) 33-4

[33] *Politics Among Nations*, p.522

[34] See M.J. Peterson, *Recognition of Governments: Legal Doctrine and State Practice, 1815-1995* (Basingstoke: Macmillan & New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, 104, for

details of how informal relations without symbolic attachments proceeded in the 19th century.

[35] Edwin W. Martin, *Divided Counsel: The Anglo-American Response to Communist Victory in China* (Lexington, Kentucky: Kentucky University Press, 1986), 236.

[36] Fred W. Riggs, *Formosa Under Nationalist Rule* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 3

[37] Wolfsfeld, *Media and Political Conflict*, 21

[38] Ibid., 30

[39] Jason C. Hu, *Quiet Revolutions on Taiwan, Republic of China* (Kwang Hwa Publishing, 1995), iv

[40] Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1987), 207-8.

[41] *Free China Journal*, 28 March 1998, 6

[42] 'The Japanese press is covering events ... more thoroughly now than at any time in history ...'. *Free China Journal*, 9 May 1997, 7. James Shen's 1983 account of his final days as Ambassador to the US describes how he was regularly called upon to give interviews to the local media after each important announcement concerning Sino-American relations during the Carter Presidency. A local TV station even joined him at a dinner party on the night of Nixon's return from Beijing in 1972 to film his reaction and comments as he watched the events on television. *The US and Free China: How the US Sold Out its Ally* (Washington D.C.: Acropolis Books, 1983), 92 & 235-237.

[43] The embassy hired Norman Paige, a former ABC correspondent with vast experience of the Far East and responsible for the 'best' radio station in the Philippines. Paige recognised that media attention to the China situation had waned: 'We will have to get your story back on page 1,' he told Joseph Ku, 'and that is

difficult to do without the benefit of spectacular news stories'. Memorandum from Joseph Ku to Wellington Koo, 3 February 1949, Wellington Koo Papers, Columbia University (New York), Box 180.

[44] Ellul, Propaganda, 43. I do, however, take issue with Ellul's apparent idea that propaganda should jettison the themes and myths of previous campaigns and concentrate on fixing the propaganda around the need for timeliness. Ellul underestimates audiences who, he assumes, is unable to concentrate on any time other than the here and now. News is therefore fleeting and not remembered. In contrast, I would suggest that news can provide the *opportunity* to ensure the continuity of propaganda that will now have a greater audiences share and interest. Context is as important as immediacy.

[45] For details of the some 2,000 news reports and commentaries, see *Free China Journal*, 9 June 1995, 1, and 16 June 1995, 2.

[46] *Free China Journal* , 16 June 1995, 2

[47] 'ROC ties with Canada on an upswing', *Free China Journal*, 19 January 1996, 7

[48] Chris Van Minh, 'ROC bid for voice in UN undeterred by slow going', *Free China Journal*, 25 September 1998, 6

[49] These methods are explored in J.A.C Brown, *Techniques of Persuasion: From Propaganda to Brainwashing* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963).

[50] Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*, 2

[51] Ibid., 1

[52] Until October 1995, Taiwanese Americans had to list 'China' as their place of birth on their American passports. The FAPA's Miami chapter-president approached his Congressman who in turn inserted a piece of legislation in the State Department

Authorization Bill. This declared that Taiwanese Americans should be able to list Taiwan (Not the ROC) as their place of birth.

[53] I am grateful to FAPA spokesman, Coen Blaauw for this information.

[54] Eytan Gilboa, 'Media Diplomacy: Conceptual Divergences and Applications', *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 3(3), 1998, 61

[55] In particular, see Leonard A. Kusnitz, *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: America's China Policy, 1949-1979* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984); T. Christopher Jesperson, *American Images of China, 1931-1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Brian Porter, *Britain and the Rise of Communist China: A Study of British Attitudes, 1945-1954* (London: OUP, 1967); Zhong-ping Feng, *The British Government's China Policy, 1945-1950* (Keele: Ryburn, 1994).