

## Case 4-B:

### What would Socrates have done? The disappearance of Hilary Clinton

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<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1382859/Osama-bin-Laden-dead-Photo-Obama-watching-Al-Qaeda-leader-die-live-TV.html>

Photographs are sometimes labeled iconic too soon. But the photograph of President Barak Obama surrounded by his cabinet watching the real-time video of the attack on the compound where Osama Bin Laden had been in hiding was labeled iconic before it was even 24 hours old. As you look at the picture, notice that the papers in front of Secretary of State Hilary Clinton and others are “blurred”. The White House, before it released the photograph, distorted the image so that, it said, high security information would not be revealed through a detailed examination of the photograph itself.

The meaning of the photograph, generally arrived at through an analysis of the expressions on people’s faces, has been debated. For example, many who viewed the photograph said Clinton was the only person in the room showing shock at the images. Clinton herself has countered that interpretation, saying she was merely covering her nose and mouth to block a sneeze. The photograph itself, as well as the raid on the Bin Laden compound, also became of the subject of a political campaign commercial (you may view it at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1384847/Osama-Bin-Laden-dead-Newspaper-edits-Hillary-Clinton-Situation-Room-photo.html>) and the subtext for foreign policy discussions in the 2012 Presidential election.

Numerous print publications and broadcast outlets reproduced the photo. One of those was a Brooklyn-based Hasidic newspaper *Der Zeitung*, a paper that is written in Yiddish and serves a small segment of the ultra-orthodox Jewish community in that city. In the photograph of the Bin Laden raid printed in *Der Zeitung*, the image of Hilary Clinton and White House staffer Audrey Tomason, director for counterterrorism for the U.S. Security Council, were literally Photoshopped out of the picture.

Editors claimed that Secretary Clinton was deleted from the photograph because the paper serves a readership that places a high value on female modesty.

Critics countered that *Der Zeitung*, which translates as “The Time.” has edited out other images of women because the publication itself has an ideological objection to women holding positions of power.

#### Micro Issues

1. As you look at the two images, does how Hilary Clinton is dressed support the claim of editing for “female modesty”?
2. Would it have been appropriate for the paper to simply crop the picture on the right hand side, thus cutting out the images of Clinton and several others and resulting in a photography that focused more specifically in President Obama and Vice-President

- Joe Biden.
3. Since this newspaper reached only a small group, and since the undoctored photograph was available from many other sources, is any of this really significant?

### **Mid-range Issues**

1. The doctored photograph was brought to the attention of the wider public when it was reported—critically—in other newspapers. What is the role of these other newspapers with regard to *Der Zeitung* and readers/viewers and listeners?
2. One commentator, quoted in the *Daily Mail* in the UK, noted, “This is a bit silly. Secretary of State Clinton was not dressed immodestly. There was no intent of objectification in the photo. Haven’t the editors got something better to do?” How should the editor of *Der Zeitung* respond to this criticism? How might such a response emphasize the concept of loyalty?

### **Macro Issues**

1. This same event—the death of Osama Ben Laden—became controversial for another reason: The White House refused to provide photographs of Bin Laden’s corpse or his burial at sea? Some journalists—in many countries—supported this approach, others disputed it. How would you analyze the White House approach in your role as journalist? In your role as strategic communications professional?
2. What should be the role of ideology in journalism?
3. What should be the role of ideology in strategic communication?