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14. ABSTRACT Since September 11, 2001, the United States has struggled to counter the ideology of groups like Da'esh and al-Qa'ida. This is largely because the United States started its efforts from scratch following the abolishment of the United States Information Agency in 1998. This follows a similar trend during World War II and the Cold War. The United States has never had a cabinet-level information agency with a guaranteed seat on the National Security Council. This has led to the United States having no enduring information strategy to counter ideological threats. The United States must change its national information structure, policy, and strategy to bring all of its national power to bear against its adversaries if it ever hopes to defeat current and future ideological threats. The President, his staff, and Congress must act to ensure that there is a dedicated agency for U.S. information strategy. The National Security Act of 1947 must be amended to give the director of this agency a guaranteed seat on the National Security Council. This will allow for the employment, growth, and professional development of information specialists to the policy level of government. This will allow the United States to develop an integrated and long-term national information strategy.					
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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES


TITLE: Establishing a Long-Term U.S. Information Strategy

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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Executive Summary

Title: Establishing a Long-Term U.S. Information Strategy

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Thesis: The United States must change its national information structure, policy, and strategy to bring all of its national power to bear against its adversaries if it ever hopes to defeat current and future ideological threats.

Discussion: Since September 11, 2001, the United States has struggled to counter the ideology of groups like Da'esh and al-Qa'ida. This is largely because the United States started its efforts from scratch following the abolishment of the United States Information Agency in 1998. This follows a similar trend during World War II and the Cold War. The United States has never had a cabinet-level information agency with a guaranteed seat on the National Security Council. This has led to the United States having no enduring information strategy to counter ideological threats.

Conclusion: To fix this problem, the President, his staff, and Congress must act to ensure that there is a dedicated agency for U.S. information strategy. The National Security Act of 1947 must be amended to give the director of this agency a guaranteed seat on the National Security Council. This will allow for the employment, growth, and professional development of information specialists to the policy level of government. This will allow the United States to develop an integrated and long-term national information strategy.

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After the Cold War, the United States faced one of the most difficult struggles in its history. Unfortunately, it did not realize it was even in the struggle until after the events of September 11, 2001. Even worse, it has been almost a decade and a half since it realized that it was in that ideological struggle, and it still has not put up a solid fight in this struggle. From the President to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, many national leaders admit that there is no military solution to its fight against the ideology of violent Islamic extremism. These are the same arguments made during the Global War on Terror, whether in Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation Enduring Freedom. If there is no military solution, then what is the solution? Why does the U.S. government admit that the military is not the answer yet ultimately look to the military on every national security issue? The acronym DIME is widely used to represent the elements or instruments of national power, which are Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economic. Each of these instruments has a role in national security. Since the end of the Cold War, each of these instruments has been brought to bear except for one. The United States has failed to leverage the power of the information instrument in its fight against violent Islamic extremists. This is essentially a war against an ideology. Despite much room for improvement, the diplomatic, military, and economic instruments have done their best to counter this ideology within the existing strategy. Unfortunately, too much emphasis has been placed on the military instrument of national power and it has become the default answer. In many cases, this reliance on military power undermines the entire national strategy. The military instrument cannot and should not be the main effort in a battle of ideas. It was not the main effort during the ideological battle that was the Cold War and it should not be now against groups like al-Qa'ida or Da'esh. In the Information Age, the information element should not only be the main effort, but should be the foundation of our entire strategy as a nation. This includes non-state and state

actors. Russia and China both have robust information warfare capabilities and do not intend to drop them in the future. This highlights the importance of a long-term solution to this problem. This essay will examine the history of U.S. information policy during World War II and the Cold War, the reasons why the United States currently has no long-term information strategy, recent efforts to solve this problem, and a potential solution to future information policy. It will demonstrate that the United States must change its national information structure, policy, and strategy to bring all of its national power to bear against its adversaries if it ever hopes to defeat current and future ideological threats.

The Struggle for Terminology

One of the problems facing U.S. information policy is that there are no universally accepted terms or definitions for what the U.S. information instrument of national power is or does. Much of the debate surrounding this springs from the government's desire to distance itself from politically sensitive terms such as propaganda, political warfare, and psychological warfare. In a 2001 report, the Defense Science Board coined the term *strategic communication* to describe this field.¹ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., one of the leading experts in this field believes that strategic communication is merely one aspect of public diplomacy.² The last two White House administrations have also used terms such as global engagement and global communications. To end the debate, the Obama administration defined strategic communication as “the synchronization of words and deeds and how they will be perceived by selected audiences, as well as programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences, including those implemented by public affairs, public diplomacy, and information

¹ Defense Science Board, “Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Managed Information Dissemination,” (Washington, DC: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, 2001), 1.

² Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 108-109.

operations professionals.”³ This essay will use this definition for strategic communication. The Defense Science Board (DSB) outlined the following “four core instruments” of strategic communication in a 2004 report:

-Public diplomacy seeks through the exchange of people and ideas to build lasting relationships and receptivity to a nation’s culture, values, and policies. It seeks also to influence attitudes and mobilize publics in ways that support policies and interests.

-Public affairs is used by the Departments of State and Defense to depict communication activities intended primarily to inform and influence U.S. media and the American people. The White House, the NSC, departments and agencies, and military commands all have public affairs staffs. They focus on domestic media, but their advocacy activities reach allies and adversaries around the world.

-International broadcasting services are funded by governments to transmit news, information, public affairs programs, and entertainment to global audiences via AM/FM and shortwave radio, satellite television, and web-based systems.

-Information operations (IO) is a term used by the Department of Defense (DoD) to include Computer Network Operations (Computer Network Attack and Defense), Electronic Warfare, Operational Security, Military Deception, and Psychological Operations.⁴

Framework for Analysis

Though intended to be a model for leading corporate change, Dr. John Kotter’s *8-Step Change Model* provides an excellent framework to analyze where U.S. information policy has been and where it needs to go. When looking at the history of U.S. information policy through this lens, a clear pattern emerges and it becomes easy to see why the United States is in its current situation. The eight steps of Kotter’s Model are as follows:

Step 1 – Establish a Sense of Urgency. Articulate a powerful rationale for change.

Step 2 – Forming a Powerful Guiding Coalition. Assemble a team with enough power and influence in the organization to lead the change effort.

Step 3 – Creating a Vision. Create a compelling vision of the future to guide the direction of the change.

Step 4 – Communicating the Vision. Use every possible vehicle to communicate the vision and role model new behaviors.

³ Defense Science Board, “Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication,” (Washington DC: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, 2004), 11.

⁴ Defense Science Board, “Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication,” (Washington DC: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, 2004), 12-13.

Step 5 – Empowering Others to Act on the Vision. Remove obstacles to change. Change systems or structures that undermine the vision.

Step 6 – Planning for and Creating Short-Term Wins. Plan visible quick-wins. Implement, recognize, and reward employees involved.

Step 7 – Consolidating Improvements and Producing Still More Change. Use credibility to change policies and procedures that do not fit the vision. Recruit and promote employees who can implement the vision.

Step 8 – Institutionalizing Change. Continually, articulate connections between the new way of working and success. Weave new corporate style and culture into leadership development and successive planning.⁵

Historical U.S. Information Strategy

America has always struggled with a balance between its need to counter enemy propaganda and the belief that propaganda is incompatible with democracy. Historically, the United States has refused to use propaganda and an aggressive information strategy until it was faced with a conflict. Eventually, the United States government realizes that the enemy propaganda is undermining America's will to fight and creates a propaganda organization to counter enemy propaganda. Upon completion of the conflict, the United States disbands the organization and disavows propaganda. This was the case in World War I, World War II, and the Cold War. The history of information warfare in the United States clearly illustrates the challenges to a comprehensive information strategy.

U.S. policy and lawmakers have always had a “break glass in case of emergency” approach to information warfare. Since before World War II, the United States has been hesitant to engage in information warfare until the threat becomes so overwhelming that there is no other choice. Adversaries of the United States are always engaged in information warfare to shape the operating environment in their favor. The United States is always the last one to take the field when it comes to information warfare. Each period of advancement in U.S. information policy follows some global ideological threat followed by a painful period of catching up to the threat

⁵ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change*, (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996).

capabilities. The problem comes when the United States realizes the importance of information warfare and ramps up this capability; it normally has to do so almost from scratch.

The United States does not build an enduring information capability complete with adequate budgeting, infrastructure and policy level leadership or influence. These efforts always narrowly focus on the immediate threat with no regard for future threats. When the threat subsides, Congress or the Executive Branch defunds these information organizations and hides them within other agencies where they are not a priority. In relation to Kotter's Model, the United States may make it through the majority of the steps to some degree, but always fails to institutionalize the change for long-term success. The stories of two previous U.S. information warfare organizations, the Office of Warfare Information (OWI) and the United States Information Agency (USIA) illustrate this unfortunate trend. These stories provide insight into why interagency parochialism and partisan politics usually prevent the United States from ever having an effective and enduring information warfare strategy.

Prior to World War II, other major world powers had the bureaucratic infrastructure and strategy to conduct information warfare beyond their borders. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor served as a wakeup call to the United States that it needed to get in the game not only with military might, but with information and cultural might as well.⁶ President Roosevelt authorized the Office of War Information through Executive Order 9182 on June 13, 1942 to do the following:

- Formulate and carry out, through the use of press, radio, motion picture, and other facilities, information programs designed to facilitate the development of an informed and intelligent understanding, at home and abroad, of the status and progress of the war effort and of the war policies, activities, and aims of the Government.

⁶ Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 1-15.

- Coordinate the war informational activities of all Federal departments and agencies for the purpose of assuring an accurate and consistent flow of war information to the public and the world at large.
- Obtain, study, and analyze information concerning the war effort and advise the agencies concerned with the dissemination of such information as to the most appropriate and effective means of keeping the public adequately and accurately informed.
- Review, clear, and approve all proposed radio and motion picture programs sponsored by Federal departments and agencies; and serve as the central point of clearance and contact for the radio broadcasting and motion-picture industries, respectively, in their relationships with Federal departments and agencies concerning such Government programs.
- Maintain liaison with the information agencies of the United Nations for the purpose of relating the Government's informational programs and facilities to those of such Nations.
- Perform such other functions and duties relating to war information as the President may from time to time determine.⁷

President Roosevelt created the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) on the same day as the OWI. The OSS conducted not only intelligence collection and paramilitary operations, but also covert propaganda operations. Pearl Harbor provided the sense of urgency necessary. President Roosevelt formed a guiding coalition, created a vision, and communicated that vision.

The OWI was responsible for external and internal information operations. With a Republican Congress determined to defund OWI based on the view that it was another New Deal agency dedicated to boosting President Roosevelt's domestic approval, the OWI focused its efforts on overseas information. President Roosevelt appointed Elmer Davis, a chief news analyst for CBS radio, to head the OWI. The OWI was also immediately at odds with other agencies that were not in the habit of publicizing their work, particularly the Department of State (DoS). Pacific commanders were also skeptical of OWI based on the organization's loose cannon reputation. President Roosevelt personally held a conference with the commanders and OWI leadership to ensure full cooperation. The U.S. government also lacked a pool of professional civil servants with the resident experience and background to mount an overseas

⁷ U.S. President, *Executive Order 9182*, (Washington, DC: White House, June 13, 1942).

influence campaign. The OWI recruited heavily from the mass media and advertising sectors, but quickly found that the task exceeded their experience and capabilities. Most only had experience within domestic markets and were largely ignorant of the cultural intricacies of foreign audiences. The OWI embraced the new field of public opinion studies with partners like Gallup and CBS. Though the government overseas radiobroadcasting network, Voice of America (VOA), preceded it by a few months, OWI took control of VOA operations. The OWI also produced film documentaries and leveraged Hollywood's access to foreign audiences. This was a relationship based more on suggestions than censorship.⁸ President Roosevelt was clearly empowering others to act on the vision, removing obstacles to change, and consolidating improvements.

Following the surrender of Japan, Congress and President Truman saw no mission for the OWI and disbanded it within a month. The OWI let the majority of their employees go and returned production of most of VOA's broadcasts to the private networks from which they were originally contracted. President Truman transferred the remaining OWI employees to the third tier of the DoS in the Bureau Public Affairs as an interim international information service. Author and former USIA employee Wilson Dizard described it as "an orphan operation, underfunded, understaffed, and unwanted by State Department officers who remembered the rocky relationship between OWI and the department during the war years."⁹ After the war, Congress and President Truman no longer had a sense of urgency and had a different vision than President Roosevelt. This led them to roll back the gains of the OWI and elect not to

⁸ Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 39.

⁹ Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 39.

institutionalize all they had learned during that period. Unfortunately, many of the trends set during the time of OWI continue to hamper strategic communication to this day.

In 1946, William Benton, the director of the Bureau of Public Affairs warned DoS leadership that the Soviets saw propaganda as a full-time operation that was not limited to periods of war. This warning went unheard. This event highlights the fact that strategic communication professionals had no influence within the DoS, much less the strategic planning circle of the executive branch. Many in Congress also saw the DoS and particularly members of the Bureau of Public Affairs as communist sympathizers. However, continued Soviet aggression in Eastern Europe and the Balkans led to a larger sense of urgency in countering Soviet communist ideology and boosted the bureau's position. In November 1947 at its second meeting, the newly established National Security Council recommended the coordination of all information and psychological operations, both covert and overt, through Bureau of Public Affairs. Eventually Congress passed The United States Information and Educational Exchange Act, also called the Smith-Mundt Act after the two Republican senators that pushed for its passage. President Truman signed it in January 1948. This legislation authorized the DoS to engage in what is now known as public diplomacy, specifically broadcasting overseas to foreign audiences, foreign exchange programs, and overseas publishing. More importantly, the Smith-Mundt Act prohibited conducting these activities domestically against U.S. audiences. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the DoS butted heads on the earlier guidance on coordination of covert and overt information operations. In June 1948, NSC-10/2 established the Office of Policy Coordination within the CIA with a State Department officer as director to solve this coordination problem. This solution was only temporary. In 1950, President Truman signed NSC-68, which called for bringing all elements of national power to bear against the Soviets.

NSC-68 included a recommendation to create a Psychological Strategy Board to coordinate information operations at the White House level. This board concluded after eight months that long-term information operations was the only sensible approach. This was not the expected solution and reopened the debate about the role of psychological operations in strategy.¹⁰ President Truman's administration had no sense of urgency following World War II and struggled to develop a clear vision of U.S. information policy. Once it did have a sense of urgency and developed a vision, the administration tried to empower people and remove obstacles to progress. It failed to realize how difficult it would be to get interagency organizations to work together and missed a crucial opportunity to institutionalize change as the term ended.

In 1952, newly elected President Eisenhower appointed the Committee on International Information Activities headed by former Deputy Director of the CIA, William H. Jackson. This committee recommended the disbanding the Psychology Strategy Board based on the realization that aggressive short-term operations risked bringing a direct military confrontation with the Soviets. The newly appointed Secretary of State, John F. Dulles took the reins fully intent on removing the International Information Administration from the DoS. Secretary Dulles felt that international public opinion had no bearing on U.S. foreign policy. At that time, there were four separate investigations into U.S. information operations by the White House and different congressional entities. The majority of the recommendations of these investigations led to the push to create an information agency independent of a State Department known for lacking aggression and innovative solutions. Even the American Legion lobbied for the creation of a cabinet-level organization to oversee U.S. information strategy and operations. Unfortunately,

¹⁰ Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 52-55.

due to Senator Joseph McCarthy's anti-Communist investigations, the information practitioner's morale was at an all time low by early 1953. Most information programs trickled to a halt and foreign support waned.¹¹ President Eisenhower entered office with a sense of urgency and a vision of what change he wanted following the investigations. He empowered people to make change, but failed to recognize Dulles as an obstacle to implementing his vision. He eventually saw the need for a separate institution to carry out U.S. information policy.

In August 1953, President Eisenhower created the United States Information Agency (USIA). According to a USIA brochure, the agency's mission was as follows:

- To understand, inform, and influence foreign publics in promotion of the U.S. national interest, and to broaden the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions, and their counterparts abroad. Specifically, USIA works:
- To explain and advocate U.S. policies in terms that are credible and meaningful in foreign cultures;
- To provide information about the official policies of the United States, and about the people, values, and institutions which influence those policies;
- To bring the benefits of international engagement to American citizens and institutions by helping them build strong long-term relationships with their counterparts overseas;
- To advise the President and U.S. government policy-makers on the ways in which foreign attitudes will have a direct bearing on the effectiveness of U.S. policies.¹²

President Eisenhower wanted USIA to receive policy guidance from the DoS and have a voice at the National Security Council. Unfortunately, USIA never fully realized the latter. President Eisenhower appointed a New York broadcasting executive named Theodore Streibert as the first USIA Director. He immediately sought to raise the morale following the McCarthy hearings and provide a clear mission and direction for the organization. Streibert believed in pushing as many decisions down to USIA officers at embassy level to ensure flexibility in programs. President Eisenhower and Republicans in Congress saw the need for greater interagency cooperation to

¹¹ Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 56-58.

¹² Information Agency, Brochure, *United States Information Agency*, (Washington, DC: Office of Public Liaison), <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/usia/usiahome/overview.pdf>.

achieve national strategic objectives. President Eisenhower wanted to create greater USIA influence within the National Security Council. He frequently presided over weekly NSC meetings, but DoD, DoS, and CIA did everything they could to maintain dominance. The Operations Coordination Board (OCB) formed NSC working groups. Though Striebert did not have a seat on the NSC, he did have a seat on the OCB. Secretary Dulles stood firm in opposition to USIA influence on the board.¹³ President Eisenhower continued his efforts to empower people to act on his vision. He also consolidated his improvements to produce more change. The creation of USIA was a big step toward institutionalizing his change. It created the career fields necessary to train and employ experts in the field of public diplomacy and a pathway to potential policy-level positions.

In 1955, President Eisenhower tried again to establish proper information coordination when he created a Planning Coordination Group (PCG) within the NSC headed by Nelson Rockefeller, an influential figure in previous information programs. The PCG's mandate was to counter communist ideology across the globe with full interagency support. This effort failed within a year due to DoS and DoD resistance. USIA remained marginalized and continued to have a limited influence over NSC decisions. In 1957, Striebert resigned and there were a few quick turnovers of directors due to partisan politics. During this period, then Senator Lyndon Johnson was quoted as saying, "Nobody but nobody loves the USIA."¹⁴ Democratic Senator Mike Mansfield even hatched a plan to move USIA functions back into DoS. Near the end of the Eisenhower administration in 1959, the Sprague Commission recommended the strengthening of USIA's role within the NSC, but nothing was done since it was at the end of the

¹³ Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 58-62.

¹⁴ Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 68-76.

president's term.¹⁵ President Eisenhower came very close to getting USIA some influence within the NSC, but failed in the final hours of his presidency due to insurmountable obstacles within his own administration. This was another step backward for U.S. information policy.

In 1960, President Kennedy appointed Edward R. Murrow as the director of USIA. Murrow accepted the position under the condition that USIA would be a part of all NSC and cabinet-level meetings.¹⁶ Murrow believed that USIA should not only inform but also persuade foreign audiences and that it should have more input on foreign policy decisions. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm) formed to advise President Kennedy. Initially, the ExComm did not include a USIA representative. The ExComm eventually realized how important the role of international opinion would be during the crisis and the role that overseas radio programs could play in shaping those opinions. Murrow was dying of cancer and sent Donald Wilson in his place. Despite resistance from the usual suspects, Wilson convinced the administration to release the classified satellite photos of the missiles in Cuba to make a stronger case against the Soviets. This participation in the ExComm represents the high-water mark of USIA involvement and influence within national security policy.¹⁷ In appointing Murrow, President Kennedy definitely saw the need to empower people. However, he did not communicate a clear vision for USIA that led to their marginalization in the initial stages of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

During the Vietnam era, USIA still encountered tension with other agencies. The CIA was conducting covert operations that often duplicated USIA efforts and even had some

¹⁵ Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 79

¹⁶ Tufts University, Murrow Collection, "The Life and Work of Edward R. Murrow: An Archives Exhibit," accessed January 25, 2015 <http://dca.lib.tufts.edu/features/murrow/exhibit/usia.html>.

¹⁷ Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 87-96.

disinformation operations that reached back to U.S. audiences. DoD was in a quest to expand its capabilities especially in the disinformation operations. DoS continued to clash with USIA over what information should be released. Coordination was so bad that it led to the creation of the Joint United States Public Affairs Office led by a USIA officer to coordinate information activities in Vietnam. This effort was another in a long line of short-term solutions to the interagency information problem.¹⁸ One of the greatest obstacles for USIA to overcome during the 1960s was reconciling America's message of freedom and democracy in light of the civil rights problems that were occurring in the United States. This is one of several instances where U.S. policy and actions did not match its message to the detriment of the mission. President Johnson's previously mentioned disdain for USIA prevented real change and adaptation of U.S. information policy. The organization stagnated under his leadership.

During President Reagan's administration, USIA enjoyed resurgence in importance. President Reagan appointed Charles Wick as the director of USIA. Wick brought an energy to USIA that was absent since the days of Edward Murrow. Wick was also close to President Reagan. As USIA gained momentum, it found itself increasingly in conflict with Congress. In 1983, President Reagan created the Special Planning Group to coordinate interagency information activities against communist ideology. In 1984, President Reagan issued National Security Decision Directive 130, entitled U.S. International Information Policy, which not only acknowledged information activities as an integral part of national security, but also addressed an information strategy to defeat communism. Unfortunately, USIA was overly aggressive in some areas during the Reagan administration such as potentially illegal activities during the Iran-Contra Affair and Radio Marti, a radio service similar to Voice of America, being used to shore

¹⁸ Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 138.

up Republican voters in the Cuban community. USIA also struggled to highlight racial advances in the United States while the administration refused to oppose apartheid in South Africa.¹⁹

During the Reagan administration, the U.S. government almost institutionalized U.S. information strategy. President Reagan had a clear vision and advanced his own policy. He failed to make the final step due to congressional opposition and blowback from the Iran-Contra affair. This was the last time the United States would be so close to real change.

The fall of the Soviet Union signaled a long downward spiral for USIA. Many debated the necessity for an information organization that was only designed to counter communism. The threat was gone and many in Congress no longer saw the need for a USIA. Congress saw its first bill to abolish USIA in 1995. During these years, Senator Jesse Helms wanted to rid the government of any wasteful spending, especially spending that was artsy or could not give concrete proof of its necessity. President Clinton already wanted to return all public diplomacy efforts to DoS. In the end, the Clinton Administration, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and Senator Jesse Helms struck a deal regarding legislation on abortion rights, a chemical war treaty, and payment of back dues to the United Nations. In return, USIA would be abolished with the remnants returning to DoS. The Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 passed and USIA closed its doors on October 1, 1999. What was left of the public diplomacy apparatus was buried in the third tier of DoS in the newly created Bureau of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. All international broadcasting assets were moved to a new independent institution called the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG). President Clinton had a clear vision of what he thought was the future of U.S. information policy and structure.

Unfortunately, his vision was to return it to the same ineffective place it was after World War II.

¹⁹ Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 200-206.

Who could have known that a little less than two years later, the United States would enter the ideological fight of its life and have no effective means to counter that ideology?

Many polls indicate a steady decline in favorable global perceptions of the United States following the abolishment of USIA. Nowhere has this decline been more damaging than in the Middle East and Muslim countries. Favorable opinion of the United States is in single digits in many Muslim countries.²⁰ There is a lot of debate over what caused this decline. Many experts argue that the decline is a result of Hollywood's arrogant, violent, and sex obsessed portrayal of America in foreign markets. Others argue that it is the result of failed U.S. foreign policy and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.²¹ The real answer probably lies in both and USIA had a huge role in balancing the effects of all of these things.

Recent Information Policy and Strategy

Following the events of September 11, 2001, the United States not only struggled to understand the ideological threat it was facing, but more importantly what must be done to counter it. The DoS was waiting for guidance from higher on how to proceed and had a gap of almost six weeks where it had no people experienced in conducting strategic communication.²² Even after many, including President George W. Bush, came to the realization that the United States must counter al-Qa'ida's extremist ideology, the United States made a great deal of effort but very little progress in countering this ideology. The United States entered a multiple front war without heeding Clausewitz' maxim about the importance of knowing what kind of war you are in before entering conflict. Despite numerous studies, institutional restructures, and

²⁰ House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *The Decline in America's Reputation: Why?*, 110th Cong., 2008, <http://democrats.foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/42566.pdf>.

²¹ Jonathan Wellemeier, "Hollywood and the Spread of Anti-Americanism," *National Public Radio*, December 20, 2006, <http://www.npr.org/2006/12/20/6625002/hollywood-and-the-spread-of-anti-americanism>.

²² Dan Kuehl and Leigh Armistead, "Information Operations: The Policy and Organizational Evaluation," in *Information Warfare: Separating Hype from Reality*, ed. E. Leigh Armistead (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2007).

strategies, there were very few long-term changes. There were several attempts to reconfigure the U.S. government to meet the challenge of defeating this ideology.

The Bush administration tried multiple approaches to develop and implement a comprehensive and integrated information strategy. President Bush had a sense of urgency and a powerful guiding coalition following 9/11, but he and his administration initially lacked a clear vision of what needed to be done to counter al-Qa'ida propaganda. That led to some initial missteps. Once he had a clear vision, President Bush tried to empower agents of change, but had little success. His administration attempted several information strategy initiatives, but most floundered until the end of his term. In September 2002, the National Security Council established the Strategic Communications Policy Coordinating Committee aimed at facilitating interagency coordination. This committee went as far as drafting a national communication strategy, but was disbanded in March 2003 and never published the strategy.²³ In January 2003, Executive Order 13283 established the White House Office of Global Communications (OGC). President Bush intended for the OGC to advise the him and executive departments on “the most effective means for the United States Government to ensure consistency in messages that will promote the interests of the United States abroad, prevent misunderstanding, build support for and among coalition partners of the United States, and inform international audiences.” This document made it clear that this office was not to hamper any functions already assigned to the NSC.²⁴ The OGC was disbanded sometime in 2005. In February 2003, President Bush published his first *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*. This document focused mostly on military power while briefly referring to winning the war of ideas with no substantive strategy

²³ Government Accountability Office, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Interagency Coordination Efforts Hampered by the Lack of a National Communication Strategy*, (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 2005), <http://www.gao.gov/assets/250/245941.pdf>.

²⁴ U.S. President, Executive Order 13283, (Washington, DC: White House, 2003).

on how to do that.²⁵ In July 2004, the NSC created the Muslim World Outreach Policy Coordinating Committee to replace the Strategic Communications Policy Coordinating Committee. The committee wrote a draft interagency Muslim outreach strategy that was never published.²⁶

In 2005, President Bush appointed Karen Hughes as the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs and challenged her to change foreign perceptions of America. President Bush believed that Ms. Hughes could change the culture of the Bureau for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. In April 2006, President Bush created the Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) led by then Under Secretary Hughes to enhance interagency cooperation on strategic communication efforts.²⁷ In 2007, the Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy PCC released the *U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication*. This document established three mechanisms for interagency coordination. First, it created a Counterterrorism Communications Center within the State Department. This center's mission was to develop messages and strategies to discredit counter terrorists and their ideology. Second, it created an Interagency Crisis Communication Team. This team outlined a process of multiple complex conference calls between key executive leaders and strategic communication stakeholders to "refine and coordinate unified messaging." The Counterterrorism Communications Center would send the resulting message to all relevant parties via the Rapid Response Unit at the State Department.²⁸

²⁵U.S. President, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, (Washington, DC: White House, 2003).

²⁶ Government Accountability Office, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Efforts to Engage Muslim Audiences Lack Certain Communication Elements and Face Significant Challenges*, (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 2006), <http://www.gao.gov/assets/260/250037.pdf>.

²⁷ Government Accountability Office, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Efforts to Engage Muslim Audiences Lack Certain Communication Elements and Face Significant Challenges*, (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 2006), <http://www.gao.gov/assets/260/250037.pdf>.

²⁸ Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Policy Coordinating Committee, *U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication*, (Washington, DC: National Security Council, 2007), 8.

This process can hardly produce a rapid or even timely response with so many steps. Third, the strategy mandated regular meetings of the PCC to review the strategy, but did not define how often regular meant. A 2009 Government Accountability Office report criticized the PCC strategy for failing “to include a clear definition of the problem, desired results, and a delineation of agency roles and responsibilities.”²⁹ In September 2006, the Bush administration published its second *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*. This document displayed a clear vision for how to counter extremist ideology and how the interagency must work together to make this happen. It even had a section for institutionalizing the strategy. Unfortunately, this document was narrowly focused on a counterterrorism strategy and did little to institutionalize U.S. information policy.³⁰

In 2010, President Obama released the *National Framework for Strategic Communication*. This document emphasized the need for coordination and synchronization, but did very little to outline how that process would work. This document also rejected the Defense Science Board’s 2007 recommendation for the creation of an independent organization for assessment and guidance on strategic communication.³¹ The *National Framework for Strategic Communication* discussed the roles for each department involved in strategic communication including the roles of the Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications (DNSA/SC) as the National Security Advisor's principal advisor for strategic communications and the Senior Director for Global Engagement (SDGE) deputy to the DNSA/SC. Despite clearly outlining strategic communication functions as they were in 2010, this document was merely a report to Congress required by the Duncan-Hunter National Defense Authorization Act

²⁹ Government Accountability Office, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Key Issues for Congressional Oversight*, (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 2009), <http://www.gao.gov/assets/300/290178.pdf>, 20.

³⁰ U.S. President, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, (Washington, DC: White House, 2006).

³¹ U.S. President, *National Framework for Strategic Communication*, (Washington, DC: White House, 2010), 14.

for Fiscal Year 2009 and not a strategy or even guidance to the interagency practitioners of strategic communication.³² A 2012 publication entitled *Update to Congress on the National Framework for Strategic Communication* mentioned the 2010 release of a DoS *Strategic Framework for Public Diplomacy*, but this document is not publicly available.³³ No related guidance appeared in the *National Military Strategy* of 2011 or the *National Defense Strategic Guidance* of 2012. Additionally, the White House Speechwriter is dual-hatted as the DNSA/SC. President Obama created the Directorate for Global Engagement in 2009, but very little information is available about its work or status.³⁴

In June 2011, President Obama released the *National Strategy for Countering Terrorism*. This document addressed the need to counter al-Qa'ida's narrative, but did little to outline how that would be done.³⁵ In 2011, Executive Order 13584 established the "temporary" Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications inside the State Department. The center's mission was to coordinate all government-wide strategic communication efforts relating to counterterrorism between the DoS, the DoD, the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of the Treasury, the National Counterterrorism Center, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Counterterrorism Center of the Central Intelligence Agency, the BBG, and the Agency for International Development.³⁶ Both of these initiatives were steps in the right

³² U.S. President, *National Framework for Strategic Communication*, (Washington, DC: White House, 2010), 1.

³³ U.S. President, *Update to Congress on National Framework for Strategic Communication*, (Washington, DC: White House, 2012), <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=704809>.

³⁴ U.S. President, "Statement by the President on the White House Organization for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism," (Washington, DC: White House, May 26, 2009), https://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Statement-by-the-President-on-the-White-House-Organization-for-Homeland-Security-and-Counterterrorism.

³⁵ U.S. President, *National Strategy for Countering Terrorism*, (Washington, DC: White House, 2011).

³⁶ U.S. President, *Executive Order 13584: Developing an Integrated Strategic Counterterrorism Communications Initiative*, (Washington, DC: White House, September 09, 2011), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/09/09/executive-order-13584-developing-integrated-strategic-counterterrorism-c>.

direction but do not go far enough to ensure that the United States has a long-term information strategy with fully integrated strategic communication stakeholders.

In April 2014, Representative Ed Royce (R-CA) and Representative Eliot Engel (D-NY) introduced H.R. 4490, the United States International Communications Reform Act. This bill calls for the establishment of the U.S. International Communications Agency (USICA). This bill would consolidate the Voice of America (VOA) and the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) into the USICA. The members of the BBG would become the Board of the USICA and serve the remainder of their BBG term. This bipartisan board would also appoint the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of USICA. Future board members would be selected by the President from distinguished citizens in the fields of public diplomacy, mass communications, print, broadcast media, or foreign affairs. This bill also calls for the establishment of an independent news organization called Freedom News Network (FNN) with a congressionally approved board and CEO. All existing grantee programs would be consolidated under FNN. USICA and FNN would share information and content to be more efficient by prevent duplicate efforts. USICA would have an information sharing relationship with DoS and have integrating relationships with other agencies. The Secretary of State would provide U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy guidance to USICA. The DoS Inspector General would have administrative oversight of USICA but not be allowed to evaluate content of USICA programs.³⁷

The U.S. House of Representatives approved the United States International Communications Reform Act and forwarded it to the Senate in July 2014. The Senate referred the bill to the Committee on Foreign Relations where it remains.³⁸ According to Helle C. Dale,

³⁷ U.S. Congress, House, *United States International Communications Reform Act of 2014*, HR 4490, 113th Cong., <https://www.congress.gov/113/bills/hr4490/BILLS-113hr4490eh.pdf>.

³⁸ U.S. Congress, House, *United States International Communications Reform Act of 2014*, HR 4490, 113th Cong., <https://www.congress.gov/113/bills/hr4490/BILLS-113hr4490rfs.pdf>.

the Heritage Foundation's Senior Fellow in Public Diplomacy, Senator Bob Corker (R-TN) was drafting a companion bill to H.R. 4490, but no information on this bill is available on the congressional website.³⁹ If it becomes a law, this bill would represent one of the greatest leaps forward in the last decade toward a better information strategy. However, the bill is too narrowly focused on international broadcasting and does nothing to address the need for an integrated U.S. information strategy with interagency cooperation. The bill really just recreates something similar to USIA in hopes that it will be enough to turn the tide of rising anti-Americanism across the globe. There are some key components missing for this bill to meet all of the requirements for a real U.S. information strategy.

Without change, this is the current state of the U.S. information element of national power. Strategic communication resides in a variety of agencies from the other three instruments. Each of the other instruments of national power has a corresponding agency with the infrastructure, policy, and guidance necessary to carry out their mission. They also have a cabinet-level secretary with a seat on the National Security Council to ensure they influence U.S. policy through access to the president and other executive-level decision makers. The Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications and Speechwriting currently represents the information instrument on the National Security Council. While it meets the requirement for access to the President, it falls short in the infrastructure and expertise necessary to develop and implement an effective national information strategy. Speechwriting and developing an integrated strategy for the multitude of strategic communication elements within the U.S. government are supporting efforts, but require two completely different skill sets. The Secretaries of State and Defense are strategic communication stakeholders, but cannot

³⁹ Helle C. Dale, "Broadcasting Reform: Time to Rearm, and Fight Enemy Propaganda," *The Daily Signal*, September 11, 2014, <http://dailysignal.com/2014/09/11/broadcasting-reform-time-rearm-fight-enemy-propaganda/>.

adequately inform U.S. information strategy since it is not their personal specialty and they are many echelons removed from those parts of their respective organizations. So essentially, no one is adequately representing the United States' strategic communication needs on the NSC. There is no overarching document outlining a long-term approach U.S. national information strategy. The current U.S. national information strategy is derived from the 2015 *National Security Strategy*, the 2011 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism Communication*, the 2010 *National Framework for Strategic Communication*, and the 2012 *Update to Congress on National Framework for Strategic Communication*. These do not meet the need for a long-term comprehensive national information strategy.

What Must Be Done

Changing will not be an easy task. It will require a concerted effort on the part of the President, his staff, Congress, and all agencies with a strategic communication role. Unfortunately, this level of cooperation may not be possible in the current political environment. However, this must be done if the United States is serious about countering ideological threats.

First, the H.R. 4490 should be expanded to make the USICA a cabinet-level agency with a director at the head of the institution. This will allow that agency the appropriate level of access to the president to advise him on informational aspects of policy and ensure the information element of national power stays within his guidance. This also ensures that the institution is enduring through changes of administration instead of being an initiative that dies with a new administration. The President with congressional approval should appoint the USICA Director. Congress must also amend the National Security Act of 1947 to give the USICA Director a mandatory seat on the NSC. This has been the downfall of all previous U.S. information initiatives. This seat on the NSC will give the institution direct access and near

equal footing with the heads of other national agencies, which is vital to ensuring that information is integrated into strategic level U.S. policy decisions. The amendment to the National Security act will ensure that USICA influence endures through changes of administration. This NSC seat puts a strategic communication subject matter expert on the council as opposed to someone with limited strategic communication experience as is the case now. The USICA should lead an effort to write a National Strategic Narrative, which would explain who Americans are, what they believe in, and for what they are willing to fight. It should be clear and concise and should be the basic framework for all U.S. policy. This will ensure that the efforts of the entire U.S. government are nested within the intent of the President and his vision for the nation. The USICA should also ensure that the *National Security Strategy* properly acknowledges and addresses the information element of national power. The USICA should develop and publish a *National Information Strategy* that gives intent and guidance to all government agencies that engage in strategic communication. This strategy should identify ends, ways, and means for leveraging the information element of national power. The USICA must be given the authority to cut across all levels of bureaucracy to coordinate with all other agencies that have roles in public diplomacy, public affairs, international broadcasting, and information operations. The USICA Director should have senior-level deputy directors detailed from each organization with a leading role in one of the four disciplines to enhance coordination and integration. Each organization with a leading role in the four disciplines of strategic communication should also have a deputy or senior advisor from USICA. This structure will emphasize the importance of strategic communication. It will also facilitate the hiring, professional development, and promotion of highly competent leaders and skilled practitioners of the four disciplines. Having an information agency staffed with information professionals at

every level would allow for innovation in the field. One of the biggest obstacles to achieving lasting change in U.S. information policy has been the lack of presidential and congressional emphasis on the issue. Oftentimes, it takes a president until the end of his administration to discover what needs to be done to secure the future of strategic communication. Unfortunately, there is no longer a sense of urgency or the political will to make changes at the end of an administration. It is probably too late for President Obama to achieve this lasting change. It will be up to the members of Congress and the next administration to ensure that the United States makes these changes. Following the passage of H.R. 4490, Congress should institute the appropriate subcommittees to the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to ensure proper oversight of all information activities of the USICA and champion the cause during appropriations efforts. These changes would institutionalize the change and make sure the United States is ready to counter current and future information threats.

Conclusion

Whether the current fight against violent Islamic extremists represents an existential threat to the United States is certainly debatable. What is not debatable is that there is a better, smarter way to fight it. This proposed solution offers one vision on how to reach the goal of a smarter fight. U.S. policymakers and lawmakers should ensure that future strategy involves a true “whole of government” approach. This will move the United States beyond the current environment where the military is the default answer to every issue the U.S. government faces. The military does a great job of executing the missions it receives. However, the military is not the only tool available to achieve a political objective. It is only one element of U.S. national power. All of the elements of national power should be used against adversaries to achieve

policy objectives. This should have always been the case, but somewhere along the way, the U.S. government forgot the importance of information. The information element of national power is the element with the most promise to avoid future conflict by reducing the number of adversaries. This will also ease some of the burden on the other elements. The United States will have to take unprecedented measures to overcome the obstacles that have plagued U.S. information policy and strategy in the past. This will require a unified effort between the legislative and executive branch of government, something that is rare in the current political environment. Despite its rarity, it is something that must be done to fight the ideologies that threaten America. One can only hope that policymakers and lawmakers can see the need for these changes and put their politics aside to guarantee long-term change to U.S. information policy and structure for the good of the nation.

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