

COMPREHENSIVE U.S. GOVERNMENT STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION  
POLICY: THE WAY FORWARD

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
General Studies

by

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2009

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| REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                    |                                   |                            | Form Approved<br>OMB No. 0704-0188                  |                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. <b>PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.</b>                                                                     |                    |                                   |                            |                                                     |                                       |
| 1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)<br>12-06-2009                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                    | 2. REPORT TYPE<br>Master's Thesis |                            | 3. DATES COVERED (From - To)<br>AUG 2008 – JUN 2009 |                                       |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE<br><br>Comprehensive U.S. Government Strategic Communication Policy: The Way Forward                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                    |                                   |                            | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER                                 |                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                    |                                   |                            | 5b. GRANT NUMBER                                    |                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                    |                                   |                            | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER                          |                                       |
| 6. AUTHOR(S)<br><br>Carla Mudgett                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                    |                                   |                            | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER                                  |                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                    |                                   |                            | 5e. TASK NUMBER                                     |                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                    |                                   |                            | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER                                |                                       |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)<br>U.S. Army Command and General Staff College<br>ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD<br>Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                    |                                   |                            | 8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER                     |                                       |
| 9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                    |                                   |                            | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)                    |                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                    |                                   |                            | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)              |                                       |
| 12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT<br>Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                    |                                   |                            |                                                     |                                       |
| 13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                    |                                   |                            |                                                     |                                       |
| 14. ABSTRACT<br>Strategic communication policy directly affects U.S. national interests. The United States is doing a poor job of promoting its messages around the world. Global opinion polls have shown a sharp drop in support for the United States over the past eight years, and many attribute that drop to the government's lack of ability to communicate strategically. The United States' strategic communication failure has cost the country friends and allies, and it also hurts the country's ability to carry out its Overseas Contingency Operations missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.<br><br>This paper examines strategic communication in past and current U.S. foreign policy. It applies lessons learned from the case study of U.S. strategic communication efforts during World War II to the current operating environment. The paper concludes with a list of recommendations for the future of U.S. government strategic communication policy, along with several proposals for future research. |                    |                                   |                            |                                                     |                                       |
| 15. SUBJECT TERMS<br>Strategic Communication, Directive Authority, Public Affairs, Public Diplomacy, Information Operations, Psychological Operations, Interagency, Department of State, Department of Defense, White House, NSC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                    |                                   |                            |                                                     |                                       |
| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                    |                                   | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES                                 | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON       |
| a. REPORT<br>(U)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | b. ABSTRACT<br>(U) | c. THIS PAGE<br>(U)               |                            |                                                     | 19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code) |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                    |                                   | (U)                        | 73                                                  |                                       |

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)  
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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Way Forward

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

COMPREHENSIVE U.S. GOVERNMENT STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION  
POLICY: THE WAY FORWARD, by Carla Mudgett, 73 pages.

Strategic communication policy directly affects U.S. national interests. The United States is doing a poor job of promoting its messages around the world. Global opinion polls have shown a sharp drop in support for the United States over the past eight years, and many attribute that drop to the government's lack of ability to communicate strategically. The United States' strategic communication failure has cost the country friends and allies, and it also hurts the country's ability to carry out its Overseas Contingency Operations missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

This paper examines strategic communication in past and current U.S. foreign policy. It applies lessons learned from the case study of U.S. strategic communication efforts during World War II to the current operating environment. The paper concludes with a list of recommendations for the future of U.S. government strategic communication policy, along with several proposals for future research.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my MMAS Thesis Committee for their dedication, assistance, and guidance over the course of this year. I also extend my sincere appreciation to the faculty, staff, and administration of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. I truly enjoyed this unique opportunity to represent the State Department and to become an honorary member of the Army community. I am eternally grateful to Karen P. Hughes, who contributed invaluable subject matter expertise to this thesis. Finally, I could not have made it through this year or completed this thesis without the love and encouragement of my family and friends. I am humbled by, and deeply thankful for, the unwavering support of those nearest and dearest to me.

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## ACRONYMS

|      |                                  |
|------|----------------------------------|
| COIN | Counterinsurgency                |
| DoD  | Department of Defense            |
| DoS  | Department of State              |
| IO   | Information Operations           |
| OWI  | Office of War Information        |
| PA   | Public Affairs                   |
| PD   | Public Diplomacy                 |
| SC   | Strategic Communication          |
| SCP  | Strategic Communication Policy   |
| U.S. | United States                    |
| USG  | United States Government         |
| USIA | United States Information Agency |

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

At a critical time in our nation's history, the apparatus of public diplomacy has proven inadequate . . . the unilateral disarmament in the weapons of advocacy has contributed to widespread hostility toward Americans and left us vulnerable to lethal threats to our interests and our safety.

— Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World,  
*Djerejian Report*

There is today a broad, bipartisan consensus that soft power, smart power, public diplomacy--that is, the arsenal of persuasion--are absolutely critical to counter and defeat the violent extremists who threaten America and the freedom of people around the world.

— James K. Glassman, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing

There is widespread agreement in the press and among the Washington DC community that the United States is doing a poor job of promoting its messages around the world. Global opinion polls around the world have shown a sharp drop in support for the United States over the past seven years, and many attribute that fact to the government's lack of ability to communicate strategically. The fact that the United States is doing a poor job of communicating strategically is costing the country friends and allies, and it also hurts the country's ability to successfully carry out its missions in U.S. Overseas Contingency Operations, including the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates famously stated in his Landon lecture:

Public relations was invented in the United States, yet we are miserable at communicating to the rest of the world what we are about as a society and a culture, about freedom and democracy, about our policies and our goals. It is just plain embarrassing that al-Qaeda is better at communicating its message on the internet than America. As one foreign diplomat asked a couple of years ago, 'How has one man in a cave managed to out-communicate the world's greatest communication society?' Speed, agility, and cultural relevance are not terms that

come readily to mind when discussing U.S. strategic communication. (Gates 2007)

On a similar note, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman wrote: “No kidding. We are losing a public relations war in the Muslim world to people sawing the heads off other Muslims” (Friedman 2004). Why is this so? Why does the United States--home of CNN, McDonalds, Hollywood, and thousands of internationally popular brands--do such a poor job of communicating on such important matters? How can the U.S. government do a better job of spreading its messages around the world?

There is currently no directive authority charged with comprehensive USG strategic communication policy, and this thesis will attempt to find out whether such an authority should be created. A directive authority for USG comprehensive strategic communication policy would directly impact strategic communication activities by all USG departments and agencies. If created, a directive authority for USG comprehensive strategic communication policy would have to balance the importance of having the USG communicate with one voice with the American Constitutional right of free speech.

### Research Questions

Given this problem, the logical research question is: Should there be a directive authority in charge of USG comprehensive strategic communication policy? The logical secondary research questions are: Within which agency should Strategic Communication directive authority reside? If a directive authority existed or was created, what should it look like and what would it do?

## Hypothesis

This thesis presents the hypothesis that the United States could do a better job of communicating strategically if all USG agencies and departments implemented a comprehensive USG strategic communication policy. Second, a directive authority for a comprehensive USG strategic communication policy does not exist. Finally, the United States might do a better job of communicating strategically if a directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication existed or was created. This thesis will answer the research questions and provide a recommendation as to the way forward for comprehensive USG strategic communication policy.

## Overview of Key Terms

Although chapter 3 contains expanded definitions of important strategic communication vocabulary, in order to make it easier to understand the research problem, we must first define key terms. Strategic Communication is defined as “Focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power” (U.S. Department of Defense 26 December 2006).

According to Joint Doctrine, Public Diplomacy is defined as: 1. those overt international public information activities of the United States Government designed to promote United States foreign policy objectives by seeking to understand, inform, and influence foreign audiences and opinion makers, and by broadening the dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad. 2. In peace building,

civilian agency efforts to promote an understanding of the reconstruction efforts, rule of law, and civic responsibility through public affairs and international public diplomacy operations. Its objective is to promote and sustain consent for peace building both within the host nation and externally in the region and in the larger international community (U.S. Department of Defense 17 October 2007). The term Public Affairs is defined as: those public information, command information, and community relations activities directed toward both the external and internal publics with interest in the Department of Defense. Also called PA (U.S. Department of Defense 22 January 2007).

For the purposes of this thesis, strategic communication includes public diplomacy, public affairs, information operations, and the elements that Joseph Nye referred to as “soft power” (Joseph S. Nye 2004). It does not, however, include covert information campaigns or activities.

This thesis addresses problems resulting from the absence of an official definition of a comprehensive USG-wide strategic communication policy. For the purposes of this thesis, a comprehensive US government strategic communication policy is a whole-of-government approach to strategic communication in which all officials and agencies speak with one voice. This approach may best be implemented by a directive authority for strategic communication. Unfortunately, there is no official definition of a directive authority for strategic communication either.

Based on the definition of directive authority for logistics, one can infer the following definition for a directive authority: “Combatant commander authority to issue directives to subordinate commanders, including peacetime measures, necessary to ensure the effective execution of approved operation plans. Essential measures include

the optimized use or reallocation of available resources and prevention or elimination of redundant facilities and/or overlapping functions among the Service component commands” (U.S. Department of Defense 14 May 2007). A directive is “(\*) 1. A military communication in which policy is established or a specific action is ordered. 2. A plan issued with a view to putting it into effect when so directed, or in the event that a stated contingency arises. 3. Broadly speaking, any communication which initiates or governs action, conduct, or procedure” (JP 1-02).

This thesis focuses on strategic communication as a comprehensive USG strategic planning function. It will answer the question of why the USG currently ineffectively communicates strategically and whether a directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication would improve the current situation. It will also recommend what a directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication would look like and where in the U.S. government it would reside. This thesis will not attempt to address the tactics or methods the USG should use in strategic communication. It will not address the related and subordinate fields of public diplomacy, public affairs or information operations. This thesis will not discuss covert information campaigns or activities.

Chapter 2 will review strategic communication literature. Chapter 3 addresses research design--the model and methodology used in this thesis--and will establish the context of the problem and the credibility of the researcher and the sources. Chapter 4 contains an analysis of the evidence; and chapter 5 presents the conclusion and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter begins with an overview of the research question and thesis, followed by an overview of the major schools of thought in the literature. This chapter outlines majority and minority opinions related to who should lead USG strategic communication efforts and the difference between the military and civilian opinions on the research questions. It also touches on a historical perspective: literature related to U.S. strategic communication during WWII. Finally, the chapter concludes by identifying gaps in the existing literature.

#### Major Schools of Thought

The literature related to the topic of who should be in charge of USG strategic communication falls roughly into four major schools of thought. In approximate order of most popular to least popular, these schools of thought include the following suggestions: (1) a Cabinet-level USIA-esque agency should be recreated to handle comprehensive USG strategic communication issues; (2) the NSC should handle comprehensive USG strategic communication policy and/or should designate a National Security Advisor for comprehensive SC policy; (3) the Department of State should set comprehensive USG strategic communication policy--rather than the current arrangement, in which State serves as the lead in the interagency process--and the Department should be resourced accordingly; and (4) DoD or another heavily-funded agency should take over as the lead agency for comprehensive USG strategic communication policy.

Illustrative of the first school of thought is an article from *Military Review* by James R. Locher, III titled "The Most Important Thing: Legislative Reform of the National Security System." USNR Commander Hiram Henderson wrote a detailed overview of this subject called "US Public Diplomacy: Waiting for the War of Ideas." It was published in *IO Sphere*.

The majority of the authors think that comprehensive USG strategic communication policy will work best if a separate agency was created to exclusively handle comprehensive USG strategic communication policy. A substantial minority believes that departments like State and Defense, which are already active in the strategic communication field and have existing bureaucracies, should be given the authority to handle comprehensive strategic communication policy for the entire USG.

Among the authors with useful recommendations is Jay L. Bruns, III. He wrote "Unleashing a More Potent Public Diplomacy" for the National War College Course 5601 Seminar. COL Jeryl C. Ludowese provided several recommendations in "Strategic Communication: Who Should Lead the Long War of Ideas?" a US Air War College Strategy Research Project. Kenneth Payne wrote about the current USG strategic communication efforts in an article called *Waging Communication War*.

MAJ Dale M. Russell discussed how to better integrate existing State and Defense efforts in "Crossing the Last Three Feet: Organizational Integration of State Department Public Diplomacy and Psychological Operations Overseas" in his monograph for the School of Advanced Military Studies at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. LTC Michael J. Sanders discussed how the USG could get better results in "Using Strategic Communication More Effectively in the Global War on Terror," another

US Air War College Strategy Research Project. Sherifa Zuhur addressed the same topic from a slightly different angle in “Precision in the Global War on Terror: Inciting Muslims through the War of Ideas.”

There is a difference of opinion between civilian and military sources in the strategic communication literature. There are many more military sources, principally articles, papers and theses from military journals and military training institutions, on the specific topic of who should lead comprehensive USG strategic communication policy and how the USG could improve its strategic communication efforts than there are civilian sources, with the exception of general opinion pieces in the press (e.g. Thomas Friedman’s column). The military sources also address how DoD currently conducts strategic communication and how it should adapt for the future.

### Civilian Sources

On the civilian side, the books and articles seem focused on information about how al Qaida conducts its SC and the effects of our USG SC on the Middle East. From the civilian side, some examples include *The Information Revolution and the Arab World: Its Impact on State and Society*, by Markaz al-Imarat, and *Jihadist Strategic Communication: As Practiced by Usama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri* by William J. Parker Bridges and Heidi J. Bloomington. Tom Blankley and Oliver Horn discuss how our strategic communication efforts impact audiences in the Middle East and make several recommendations for improvement in *Strategizing Strategic Communication, a Heritage Foundation Web Memo*.

### Military Sources

The military literature tends to focus on how DoD conducts strategic communication and how the military should adapt to the changing information environment. Although the author reviewed many military sources, six of the most prominent pieces are the following:

1. Eder, Brigadier General Mari K. "Toward Strategic Communication." *Military Review*, July-August 2007: 61-70.
2. IV, Rear Admiral Frank Thorp. "Strategic Communication in the Department of Defense; a JFQ Dialogue." *Joint Force Quarterly*, 2nd Quarter, Issue 45 2007: 2-3.
3. Grunow, LTC Carl D. "Winning the Information War." *ARMY*, April 2007: 12-15.
4. Johns, Brigadier General John H. "Path to Peace: Charting a Different Course - A Book Review." *ARMY*, November 2008: 82-83.
5. Lord, Carnes. "On The Nature Of Strategic Communications." *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 46, Third Quarter 2007: 87-89.
6. Stavridis, James G. "Strategic Communication and National Security." *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 46, Third Quarter 2007: 4-7.

The literature from military sources included several recommendations for future DoD strategic communication efforts. For example, one common theme is that DoD should increase the number and amount of language training opportunities available to the members of the military. Modern-day DoD strategic communication policy must include a new focus on the importance of language proficiency and cultural awareness. The research indicates that DoD has already begun to realize the importance of culture

and language, and the use of Human Terrain Teams in Afghanistan and Iraq is a good example of how this knowledge is currently being utilized. The average soldier on the ground in Afghanistan or Iraq, however, is not proficient in Dari or Arabic, and this deficiency undercuts the military's ability to accomplish its missions.

Another common theme through the literature is the fact that effective strategic communication is an essential tool for the warfighter. Experience working with the media is essential to the success of modern military commanders. Commanders who shun the media cannot effectively carry out their missions. Several sources recommended that DoD incorporate media training for all its officers into a broader DoD strategic communication policy.

Another common theme was the importance of close and effective relationships between the military and members of the media. DoD made great strides toward this goal by deciding to embed reporters with the troops in Iraq, for example. This close access to information obviously benefits journalists, but the relationships formed between members of the military and members of the media during high-intensity combat operations often serve DoD's long-term interests as well.

Finally, and most relevant to this thesis, military sources overwhelmingly agree that DoD strategic communication policy must also encompass working with other government agencies. Although these military sources often rely on military doctrinal terms to convey the importance of synchronizing multiple strategic communication efforts by the various USG departments and agencies by massing effects to achieve a common mission, their overall message is clear. All USG strategic communication

efforts must be tied into a broad, overarching comprehensive policy or plan. (Mudgett 2009)

### The Historical Model

For a historical perspective, the author reviewed literature on how the USG communicated strategically during WWII and what changed in the interim. This historical model provides an example of successful comprehensive USG strategic communication policy that the author can compare and contrast with current USG strategic communication policy to see what lessons from the past may be applied to current circumstances. The historical models support the author's prescribed solution to the current inadequate SCP. The author reviewed the following literature for a historical perspective on USG strategic communication from WWII to today:

1. Cantril, Gerard B. Lambert and Hadley. "Informing the Public: A Test Case." *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Volume 7, Number 3, Autumn 1943: 457-460 and 462-465.
2. Mead, MAJ Jason A. *Using the United States Information Agency Methods in the Twenty-First Century*. A Monograph, Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, AY 2008.
3. Corman, Steven R., Angela Trethewey, Bud Goodall. *A 21st Century Model for Communication in the Global War of Ideas*. Report #0701, Arizona State University: Consortium for Strategic Communication, April 3, 2007.
4. Corman, Steven R., Kevin J. Dooley. *Strategic Communication on a Rugged Landscape*. Report #0801, Arizona State University: Consortium for Strategic Communication, January 7, 2008.

5. Weinberg, Sydney. "What to Tell America: The Writer's Quarrel in the Office of War Information." *The Journal of American History*, Volume 55, Number 1, June 1968: 73-89.

6. White, Dennis M. Murphy and James F. "Propaganda: Can a Word Decide a War?" *Parameters*, Autumn 2007: 15-27.

The major gap in current strategic communication literature exists around this thesis' primary research questions: whether there should be a directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication policy and what such a directive authority should look like and do. This thesis will attempt to fill these gaps by drawing on existing literature and interviews with a subject matter expert to formulate recommendations for future comprehensive USG strategic communication policy.

Chapter 3 covers research design--the model and methodology used in this thesis--and will establish the context of the problem and the credibility of the researcher and the sources. Chapter 4 analyzes the evidence and chapter 5 functions as the conclusion and the author's recommendations as to the way forward for future comprehensive USG strategic communication policy.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter covers research design--the model and methodology used in this thesis--and establishes the context of the problem and the credibility of the researcher and the sources. The first part of this chapter discusses the research design of this thesis. The second part defines essential strategic communication terms and vocabulary related to the research problem. The chapter concludes with an overview of chapters 4 and 5.

#### Research Design

The author answered the secondary research questions--whether effective implementation of a comprehensive USG strategic communication policy is possible with our current form of government, and if so, how the existing USG strategic communication policy is currently being applied--by researching existing USG strategic communication efforts and strategic communication plans via published documents, interviews, and Internet sources.

There is currently no directive authority charged with comprehensive USG strategic communication policy, and this thesis analyzes whether such an authority should be created. The author reviewed this part of the research question from a historical perspective by examining how the USG communicated strategically during WWII and what has changed in the USG strategic communication arena during the intervening years. The historical model provided an example of successful comprehensive USG strategic communication policy that the author compared and contrasted with current

USG strategic communication policy in order to apply previous lessons learned to the current operating environment.

The author answered the primary research questions--should there be a directive authority in charge of comprehensive USG strategic communication policy; within which agency should a strategic communication directive authority reside; and if a directive authority existed or was created, what should it look like and what would it do--by reviewing and analyzing the existing literature and by interviewing a prominent subject-matter expert. The thesis concluded with a list of recommendations for USG strategic communication policy, along with suggestions for future study.

The author interviewed Karen Hughes as a subject matter expert because, as the former Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs during the George W. Bush administration, she headed USG strategic communication efforts. The DoS is the agency charged via Presidential Directive with coordinating the current interagency strategic communication process. Karen Hughes is the most recent incumbent of that position and was the chair of the first National Security Council Policy Coordinating Committee on USG strategic communication efforts.

Prior to taking that position, Karen Hughes served as Counselor to President George W. Bush from 2001 to 2002. In that role, she served as a strategic advisor to the President on policy and communications and managed the White House Offices of Communications, Media Affairs, Speechwriting and Press Secretary. Karen Hughes was the communications director for then-Governor Bush from 1995 to 2000. She also served as Executive Director of the Republican Party of Texas and is a former television news reporter. Karen Hughes holds a Bachelor of Arts in English and a Bachelor of Fine Arts

in journalism from Southern Methodist University. She also wrote an autobiography titled *Ten Minutes from Normal*. She is currently the Global Vice Chair of Burson-Marsteller, a global public relations firm based in Texas (Burson-Marsteller 2009).

### Expanded Definition of Key Terms

Strategic Communication was defined according to DoD joint military doctrine in chapter 1. There is also a broader definition of strategic communication than it has previously been described in preceding chapters. Although the Departments of Defense and State do not agree on a common definition, the best definition incorporates the efforts of both Departments. Former National Security Council Director for Strategic Communications and Information Jeffery Jones called strategic communication “the synchronized coordination of statecraft, public affairs, public diplomacy, military information operations, and other activities, reinforced by political, economic, military, and other actions, to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives” (Jones 2005). This definition emphasizes the importance of synchronizing the various strategic communication efforts by multiple USG departments and agencies and massing their effects to achieve a common mission.

According to Joint Doctrine, Public Diplomacy is defined as: 1. those overt international public information activities of the United States Government designed to promote United States foreign policy objectives by seeking to understand, inform, and influence foreign audiences and opinion makers, and by broadening the dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad. 2. In peace building, civilian agency efforts to promote an understanding of the reconstruction efforts, rule of law, and civic responsibility through public affairs and international public diplomacy

operations. Its objective is to promote and sustain consent for peace building both within the host nation and externally in the region and in the larger international community (U.S. Department of Defense 17 October 2007). The term Public Affairs is defined as: those public information, command information, and community relations activities directed toward both the external and internal publics with interest in the Department of Defense. Also called PA (U.S. Department of Defense 22 January 2007).

For the purposes of this thesis, strategic communication includes public diplomacy, public affairs, information operations, and the elements that Joseph Nye referred to as “soft power” (Joseph S. Nye 2004). It does not, however, include covert information campaigns or activities.

Currently there is no official definition of a comprehensive USG-wide strategic communication policy. For the purposes of this thesis, a comprehensive US government strategic communication policy is a whole-of-government approach to strategic communication in which all officials and agencies speak with one voice. This approach may best be implemented by a directive authority for strategic communication. Unfortunately, there is no official definition of a directive authority for strategic communication either.

Based on the definition of directive authority for logistics, one can infer the following definition for a directive authority: “Combatant commander authority to issue directives to subordinate commanders, including peacetime measures, necessary to ensure the effective execution of approved operation plans. Essential measures include the optimized use or reallocation of available resources and prevention or elimination of redundant facilities and/or overlapping functions among the Service component

commands” (U.S. Department of Defense 14 May 2007). A directive is “(\*) 1. A military communication in which policy is established or a specific action is ordered. 2. A plan issued with a view to putting it into effect when so directed, or in the event that a stated contingency arises. 3. Broadly speaking, any communication which initiates or governs action, conduct, or procedure” (JP 1-02 2004).

This chapter outlined the model and methodology used in this thesis, including the author’s research design. This chapter also defined key terms related to the research problem. Chapter 4 will analyze the evidence and chapter 5 will present the conclusions and recommendations as to the way forward for comprehensive USG SCP.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

This chapter presents, explains, analyzes and interprets the evidence related to the historical model of comprehensive USG strategic communication during WWII. It discusses how the evidence relates to the research question: whether or not a directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication should be created. This chapter also addresses some unexpected discoveries and correlations uncovered during the research process. Finally, it previews chapter 5: the author's conclusions and recommendations.

The historical model indicates that although strategic communication is an under-examined aspect of warfighting, it played a crucial role during WWII. Implementing the lessons learned from this historical approach could improve current USG strategic communication efforts, contribute to winning the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and, ultimately, improve the U.S. image around the world.

Even if, as Secretary Gates stated, speed, agility and cultural relevance are lacking in today's strategic communication efforts, they contributed to the success of USG strategic communication in WWII. There is one more element that led to Allied victory: the use of a single directive authority for the entire war effort--the Office of War Information (OWI). These four elements were central to the overall USG strategic communication effort during WWII, and they should again become the central goal of USG strategic communication policy today. This paper will examine whether a directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication would improve the country's

ability to communicate more quickly, more flexibly and with increased cultural relevance.

### The Historical Model: Four Pillars of Success

The first important element of strategic communication is speed. The Allies' ability to respond quickly to developments on the battlefield during WWII was central to their credibility.

During the day, if there is a heavy and important news flow in Washington, there is less chance for enemy material to get on the wires. But if there is less news from our side, there is, therefore, more chance for any enemy story. This type of news competition goes on endlessly because the press associations have a continuous operation to consider, an all-day and all-night service to afternoon and morning papers and radio stations. Thus timing and the time element become matters of some importance in the battle for the news wires, for newsprint and radio time. (Gordon 1942)

As is the case today, the USG's response to wartime events in WWII had to correspond to the media's news cycle.

The second key to Allied success in strategic communication was agility. The flexibility of the Allied strategic communication response, which included using multiple media and targeting both domestic and international audiences, also contributed to its effectiveness. One of the most important methods the OWI used to transmit information was the radio.

OWI began organizing a broadcasting network for short wave transmission overseas and within a year had twenty-six radio transmitters sending out information to the world in twenty-five different languages and dialects. It was called 'The Voice of America,' and soon the world, including the enemy on both sides of the world, knew that 'The Voice of America' was the voice of truth. (Margolin 1946)

The Voice of America (VOA) proved to be so successful in WWII that its operations were extended into the Cold War and beyond--indeed, VOA broadcasts continue to this day.

The OWI's flexibility and reach extended well beyond radio. "The American propaganda offensive against Nazi Germany began in earnest relatively late in the war. Yet within months of its launching, propagandists were inundating the airwaves with radio programs and covering Europe with billions of leaflets and other materials" (Laurie 1996). According to another source, "Combat teams, manned by OWI personnel, went into the field with the armies. They carried with them mobile printing equipment and radio receiving sets and they went about the business of throwing 'paper bullets' at the enemy" (Margolin 1946).

The third essential element of Allied strategic communication during WWII was cultural relevance. If they had not carefully constructed their strategic communication messaging to match their domestic and international audiences, USG strategic communicators may have failed in their efforts to delegitimize and demoralize the enemy. For example, the OWI created a division called the Foreign Morale Analysis Division (FMAD) to study Japanese morale. "FMAD studied the demoralizing effect of battlefield reverses on combat troops in several campaigns" (Gilmore 1998) in the Southwest Pacific. Offices like FMAD helped the OWI craft messaging to exploit enemy weaknesses and promote Allied victory.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the final crucial element of Allied strategic communication during WWII was the use of a single, directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication policy. The fact that a single office was in

charge of the effort held the office accountable for the success of that mission and ultimately contributed to a unified, comprehensive USG message. There was a historical precedent: the USG had previously established a single strategic communication office during WWI. It was eventually tainted by propaganda allegations and subsequently disbanded after the war ended. Three different agencies were charged with executing USG strategic communication efforts at the start of WWII, but President Roosevelt soon recognized that in order to maximize their effectiveness these offices must be consolidated into one. That office, OWI, was responsible for both foreign and domestic information programs related to the war effort. “The Executive Order setting up the Office of War Information charged it, among other things, with the task of formulating and carrying out ‘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’” (Cantril 1943). The office had a single mission with a narrow focus--to keep the world informed about the USG’s wartime activities. Even that mission was eventually found to be too vague, and arguments over its purpose led to the demise of the OWI.

The historical model also raises the question of whether the wars the USG is fighting today--Afghanistan, Iraq, and the broader U.S. Overseas Contingency Operations--are similar enough to WWII for the lessons learned during that time to apply to the contemporary operating environment. Do the tactics, techniques and procedures that helped the USG succeed against a conventional enemy in WWII still apply in fighting today’s asymmetrical wars? Would a directive authority for strategic

communication improve the USG's ability to fight counterinsurgency (COIN) operations?

Today's Overseas Contingency Operations involve a different type of warfare that cannot be easily compared with WWII. Although both conflicts are global in scope, during WWII the Allies confronted conventional, state-based enemies. Today the U.S. and its multinational partners face non-conventional, non-state actors who often rely on terrorism as a tactic in conducting insurgent operations. Both the nature of the enemy and the nature of the conflict are fundamentally different today than they were in WWII, which could limit comparisons between the past and the present.

The OWI also contained the Committee on War Information Policy, which set war-related strategic communication policy for the OWI and the entire USG. According to the Executive Order which established the OWI, the Committee on War Information Policy consisted of "the Director as Chairman, representatives of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Navy, the Joint Psychological Warfare Committee, and the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, and other such members as the Director, with the approval of the President, may determine. The Committee on War Information Policy shall formulate basic policies and plans on war information, and shall advise with respect to the development of coordinated war information programs" (Roosevelt 1942).

The OWI did not, however, conduct covert operations, and it soon came into conflict with military commanders who sought control of all strategic communication activities performed in theater. As always in government, politics played a large part in historical events--the military and intelligence sectors each wanted a piece of the strategic

communication pie. This dilemma was resolved when the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) began to conduct covert psychological operations. In short, “OWI was to conduct ‘white’ propaganda operations, while OSS continued its activities in covert (‘black’) propaganda and other ‘special services,’ such as unconventional warfare, guerrilla activities behind enemy lines, interaction with resistance groups, sabotage, and subversion” (Gilmore 1998). When the strategic communication pie was divided up this way, the OWI was free to focus on overt, truth-based operations--even when the truth being told was somewhat selective and intended to influence its audience.

### Downsides to the OWI

The OWI was not without its problems. The executive order which established the office was vague about its purpose, and President Roosevelt failed to specify whether he wanted the office to focus on the war effort as an ideological struggle or as basic self-defense. “Roosevelt was, however, not entirely comfortable with a formal propaganda apparatus and . . . provided little political cover for OWI in its skirmishes with the Congress, and often preferred to be ambiguous regarding policy guidance. Operating in the absence of such policy guidance, the OWI staff, particularly in the Foreign Branch, sometimes got ahead of state government pronouncements, or it responded with what its members thought American policy should be” (White 2007).

Another source states “the President’s ‘wait-and-see’ policy placed a great burden on the OWI, which drew criticism for failing to guide public opinion on policy questions when no policy existed” (Weinberg 1968). In addition to getting out in front of official policies on occasion, the OWI “frequently had conflicting duties, such as publicizing the administration’s domestic program and giving the public an accurate account of the

government's mobilization efforts. The combination of these functions was enough to make many congressmen suspicious of the OWI as an administration propaganda organization" (Weinberg 1968).

This lack of mission clarity and Congress' suspicions eventually led to the end of the OWI. In 1942, a conservative majority in Congress raised questions about the OWI's role in influencing the domestic public by promoting President Roosevelt and his administration. "The Foreign Branch inaugurated publication of an attractive magazine, Victory, aimed at overseas audiences. Its first issue featured an article titled 'Roosevelt of America, President--Champion of Liberty,' with a prominent picture of FDR over an American flag background. This incensed congressmen who viewed OWI as a Roosevelt publicity organ" (White 2007).

In 1943, a group of writers from the domestic branch publically resigned, saying that they could not provide an accurate and honest assessment of the war because of political pressure from their management. "The resignation of the writers marked the real end of the OWI as an information agency, and congressional budgetary action confirmed the destruction of the domestic branch. . . . Congress drastically reduced the OWI's appropriation" (Weinberg 1968). In 1945, President Truman officially disbanded the OWI.

### Lessons Learned

In spite of its troubles, the OWI did promote Allied victory in WWII.

Although the cumulative effects of conventional weapons provided the most obvious reason for the Allied victory, evidence does support the assertion that American psychological attacks also played a role in the final Axis defeat. Propaganda helped weaken Axis morale, convincing less dedicated enemy soldiers, civilians and allies to quit the fight or to lessen their support of the Nazi

regime and its war effort. American psychological warfare placed doubts in the minds of many Germans about the justice of their cause and the Nazi philosophy. (Laurie 1996)

The short history of the OWI provides several lessons that apply to the current operating environment. The OWI was disbanded at the end of WWII for several reasons: (1) Congress was enraged by what it viewed as partisan, pro-Administration domestic propaganda; (2) military commanders wanted to control strategic communication activities in theater; (3) intelligence leaders wanted a piece of the strategic communication pie; (4) the OWI lacked a clear mandate; (5) the OWI was unable to accurately assess the effectiveness of its messaging; (6) the different departments within the OWI fell victim to bureaucratic infighting; and (7) the Director lacked political savvy, which cost him and the OWI the necessary authority to be effective. It is not at all difficult to imagine a similar scenario taking place today. This chapter examines these lessons in detail and attempts to assess whether a modern-day directive authority for strategic communication would be able to avoid these obstacles.

### The Current Operating Environment

The world has changed a great deal since the OWI was disbanded after WWII. It has become even more interconnected on a global scale. Modern technology has increased the speed of the modern news cycle and made the media more accessible to the ‘Average Joe.’ It is no longer necessary to be a professional journalist with a press pass to cover newsworthy events--anyone with a camera and a cell phone or a laptop can record events and post them online to reach an international audience almost instantly. This increased level of speed and accuracy makes the media a cheap and easy tool for Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, and it also means that the USG must be ever faster and

more proactive if it is to win the information war. Any assessment must therefore include the challenges of the modern world and evaluate whether a directive authority for strategic communication would make the USG more or less able to meet these challenges.

The speed and accessibility of the global media poses a real challenge to USG strategic communication efforts in a counterinsurgency.

The historical use of information as power was primarily limited to nation-states. Today a blogger can impact an election, an Internet posting can recruit a terrorist, and an audiotape can incite fear in the strongest of nation-states, all with little capital investment and certainly without the baggage of bureaucratic rules, national values (truthful messaging), or oversight. Propaganda is the weapon of the insurgent franchised cell. It costs little, is easy to distribute, and has near-immediate worldwide impact. (White 2007)

#### The Smith-Mundt Act

The historical record shows that the USG recognized the importance of strategic communication after the end of WWII. Even after President Truman dismantled the OWI, some USG-sponsored information programs directed at foreign audiences continued. In 1948, Congress passed the Information and Education Exchange Act, which is frequently referred to as the Smith-Mundt Act because it was sponsored by Senators H. Alexander Smith and Karl E. Mundt. The purpose of the Smith-Mundt Act was to restrict domestic propaganda. “The Smith-Mundt Act was an uneasy compromise between the necessity of countering Soviet anti-American propaganda and promoting American values overseas, yet prevented the USG from having a propaganda machine that could be used against Americans” (Mead 2008).

The Smith-Mundt Act is one of the most formidable barriers to recreating the success of the WWII-era OWI today. The OWI had authority to direct USG strategic

communication efforts both domestically and overseas, and it contained departments devoted to each mission. A modern-day directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication would not be able to replicate this structure without Congressional action to repeal or replace the Smith-Mundt Act. Structuring USG strategic communication messages to reach domestic audiences is not the same thing as propaganda, and the Smith-Mundt Act should be updated, amended or repealed to reflect that fact.

This is necessary because the modern media environment is so interconnected that the lines between domestic and foreign media have become blurred. Almost any report from anywhere can be picked up and broadcast or published internationally. Foreign media organizations, such as the BBC and the Economist, have large followings within the United States. It is increasingly difficult to separate the two audiences, and therefore USG strategic communication efforts targeted at international audiences may unintentionally end up reaching domestic audiences. The increasingly blurred lines between domestic and foreign audiences pose a huge challenge to USG strategic communicators, and the author believes it also contributes to reluctance of lower- and mid-level civilian and military employees to speak with the press. No one wants to be ahead of U.S. policy and unwittingly become an international media star at the expense of a career. Fears about accidentally reaching the ‘wrong’ audience, even when telling the truth, complicate USG strategic communication efforts.

### Keys to Success

As Karen Hughes stated “in some ways, technology has really leapfrogged over Smith-Mundt.” Although “Congress is legitimately concerned about trying to put out

propaganda to the American people . . . today's communications environment makes it very difficult to really engage in propaganda. The press is going to immediately question the information that is put out. There is such a high degree of skepticism as compared to Word War II . . . it's a much different environment” (Hughes 2009). Congress must address the provisions of the Smith-Mundt Act to account for the interconnected nature of the contemporary media environment if a modern-day directive authority for strategic communication is to succeed.

One of the keys to success in strategic communication is funding. If the USG is to win the information war, Congress must adequately fund USG strategic communication efforts--no matter whether they are located under a single directive authority or spread across multiple government agencies and departments.

The United States is losing the war of ideas partly because U.S. public-diplomacy efforts have been poorly funded... The State Department Office of Public Diplomacy, which should lead in waging the war of ideas, received only \$1.36 billion in funding for FY 2006. Only a fraction of the funds were devoted to efforts directed at the Muslim world. This effort is far too small for the task at hand. (Evera 2007)

Another key to winning the information war is overcoming the justifiable fears of the American public. It is politically unwise to publicly admit that propaganda is an effective tool of warfare, yet this ambivalence hamstring government strategic communication efforts. Concerns about propaganda are not unique to the present day. During WWII, “some OWI techniques came under very pointed criticism. The use of pseudonyms by OWI authors in their articles was denounced by prominent newspapermen.” (White 2007) Telling the truth is the best way to mitigate fears of spreading propaganda.

As the lessons learned from the historical model of the OWI and the OSS indicate, a directive authority for USG strategic communication policy must stay away from psychological operations. “In the modern world of pervasive communication, however, it is all but impossible to deceive an adversary without also deceiving allies, friends, neutrals, and most important, the citizens of one’s own nation...psyops should be kept in the Special Operations Command or spun off to the Central Intelligence Agency or wherever else it might be appropriate. Everything in the realm of strategic communication should be as truthful as human endeavor can make it” (Halloran 2007). The burning question for a new directive authority for strategic communication is how to balance American values, such as truth-telling in media, with the need to persuade and influence foreign publics to support U.S. national security priorities.

Recent strategic communication efforts failed due to their lack of ability to balance these two often competing needs. The Pentagon’s Office of Strategic Influence (OSI) was established shortly after the attacks on September 11, 2001 in order to influence certain targeted populations. But popular concern about the possibility of disinformation leaking into the domestic media led to the offices’ demise. “These claims of propaganda were all it took to doom OSI, which was shut down soon after, even though subsequent investigations proved that information it provided was, in all cases, truthful” (White 2007).

In 2003, the White House established the Office of Global Communications, “but it never really took hold and soon faded into the background as a minor office within the national security staff” (Halloran 2007). Karen Hughes explained what happened as follows:

I actually was instrumental in trying to set up that White House Office of Global Communications. It never became what I had envisioned, because when I left the White House there was no other advocate for it, and so it got pushed down and pushed down at lower level. It became kind of daily talking points at the office. That's not what I had envisioned it to be. I had envisioned it to be the communications coordinating function, thinking about global audiences at the White House. Every word the President says is not just directed toward the American people, it sends messages across the world. The cabinet secretaries are spokesmen and are communicators and are strategic communicators, but the indisputable number one key strategic communicator, with the biggest microphone, is the President. . . . the natural focus in the White House is the domestic audience. . . . But I think there has to be somebody at the White House, at a high level who talks to the President, who is concerned about the international communications, and the communications with the international audience. Maybe that's from the National Security Council or maybe that's in the communications function, but I think it has to be a high level assistant to the President. (Hughes 2009)

### Political Considerations

The historical model indicates that the OWI became the victim of partisan politics. Political games are a serious threat to the new directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication policy. “The Office of Strategic Communication needs to be kept out of partisan politics . . . Everyone from the President on down must be instructed to keep hands off the office and its work. Otherwise, it will no longer be an Office of Strategic Communication serving the nation but a propaganda ministry beholden to a political party--and therefore probably useless” (Halloran 2007). This is easier said than done, especially in the current operating environment. Yet it is essential for the success of any directive authority.

The historical model of the OWI during WWII emphasizes the importance of good leadership. The OWI's director, Elmer Davis, was “an enormously popular and well-known CBS radio commentator with a nationwide following who admired him for his common-man attributes, his strong character, and his personal integrity.” He was

perceived as politically neutral and arrived at his post without partisan baggage. Yet he lacked the managerial and supervisory experience to manage a vast government bureaucracy. Even more importantly for the OWI, he did not know how to defend his office in bloody interagency battles.

Repeatedly the OWI emerged as the bloody loser from conflicts with the military services, Congress, and other federal departments because Davis failed to press his views forcefully and to exercise his authority over subordinates or other agencies that were not fulfilling mandates or who were overstepping their bounds and interfering with OWI functions. Repeatedly he missed opportunities to resolve small problems tactfully before they became larger and much more serious and damaging crises. An indication of his failing was his indifference to a July 1942 offer to have a daily, scheduled, fifteen-minute conference with the president to discuss government information problems and OWI's work. 'By this one naïve action,' one historian has written, 'Davis threw away his best source of bureaucratic power.' Other propaganda chiefs, most notably in Nazi Germany and Great Britain, had easy and regular access to chiefs of state. Davis refused such access and the support it could have provided. (Laurie 1996)

The historical model provides ample evidence that the director of a modern-day directive authority for strategic communication would have to have authority from, and access to, the President. The director would also have to meet regularly with high-ranking members of Congress, the intelligence community, and the military. In addition, the director must bring the resources and good offices of the private sector to bear. Every one of these major players has a stake in improving USG strategic communication efforts. Their authority and influence will be necessary to support the director and the office of the directive authority for USG strategic communication.

In conclusion, this chapter analyzed the historical model of comprehensive USG strategic communication policy during WWII and applied the lessons learned from the historical model to assess the viability of a modern-day directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication policy. The chapter also compared and

contrasted the enemy and type of warfare that the Allies faced in WWII to the current operating environment. The next chapter makes recommendations for the future of USG strategic communication policy based on the literature reviewed in chapter 2 and the analysis presented in this chapter. Chapter 5 also outlines the major schools of thought about the best way to improve USG strategic communication efforts and presents the author's conclusions.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter makes recommendations for the future of strategic communication based on the literature reviewed in chapter 2 and the analysis presented in chapter 4. It outlines the major schools of thought about the best way to improve USG strategic communication efforts and presents the author's conclusions and recommendations. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research on USG strategic communication policy.

As previously stated in chapter 2, the literature related to the topic of who should lead comprehensive USG strategic communication policy falls roughly into four major schools of thought. In approximate order of most popular to least popular, these schools of thought include the following suggestions: (1) a Cabinet-level USIA-esque agency should be recreated to handle comprehensive USG strategic communication issues; (2) the NSC should handle comprehensive USG strategic communication policy and/or should designate a National Security Advisor for comprehensive SC policy; (3) the Department of State should set comprehensive USG strategic communication policy -- rather than the current arrangement, in which State serves as the lead in the interagency process -- and the Department should be resourced accordingly; and (4) DoD or another heavily-funded agency should take over as the lead agency for comprehensive USG strategic communication policy.

### A New USIA?

The first recommendation has several advantages. An agency created to focus on broad USG strategic communication policy would be new, and therefore would start with a fresh slate in the minds of domestic and foreign audiences. Having a unique name, new leadership and brand-new personnel starting from scratch would immediately distinguish the agency from previous efforts and give it a fresh start. The fact that the agency would be independent is crucial to its success. It must, however, have the ability to serve as a directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication policy over other USG agencies. If the directive authority lacks the necessary authority or resources, no amount of independence will save it.

Tying interagency strategic communication policy to the White House, NSC, or other existing government agency would inextricably link the success or failure of strategic communication policy to that agency, and vice versa. The sponsoring agency's political fortunes--either for good or for ill--would inevitably taint impressions of the USG's strategic communication policy. In addition, linking comprehensive USG strategic communication policy to a sponsoring agency has been tried without success several times in the past, including recent failures such as the now-defunct DoD Office of Strategic Influence and the Office of Global Communication at the White House.

Creating an independent, stand-alone agency charged with strategic communication policy offers the best chance for long-term success. The downside of this approach, however, is that it has also already been tried--with the old USIA. That agency had both supporters and detractors, but it was arguably most successful during the Cold War. After the fall of the Soviet Union, USIA struggled to find relevance. The world--

and the media--had changed dramatically, and USIA failed to quickly adapt to new circumstances. It is possible that the agency would have found a way to successfully communicate the USG's messages after the Cold War if Congress had not intervened in the form of budget and staffing cuts, and the eventual closure of the agency. Any new agency created to handle strategic communication, however, must immediately distinguish itself from the political baggage associated with its predecessor, USIA.

### The NSC Takes Charge?

The second recommendation offers several advantages, but poses several potential problems as well. If the NSC designated a National Security Advisor for Strategic Communication, that person would have to fit into the NSC's organizational structure. The most likely scenario is that any National Security Advisor for Strategic Communication would be subordinate to the President's National Security Advisor, who heads the NSC as a whole. This ensures unity of effort but limits the authority of the National Security Advisor for Strategic Communication, and therefore limits his or her ability to implement strategic communication policy for the entire USG.

The NSC also lacks directive authority over the interagency--its role is limited to coordinating interagency efforts and to advising the President. The lack of directive authority is the single major drawback to this proposal. Any directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication policy must be exactly that--an agency or body that is responsible and accountable for all USG strategic communication efforts, that can set strategic communication policy for the entire USG, can direct other USG agencies on strategic communication activities, and can monitor the success of strategic communication efforts throughout the USG. The new directive authority must be in

command of all USG strategic communication efforts. Without this power, there can be no coherent, coordinated and well-executed policy. Designating a central point of contact for strategic communication at the NSC would be a good start to getting all USG agencies to sing from the same sheet of music. It would encourage all agencies to work together; however, this coordination would be largely voluntary. That does not offer much of an improvement over the existing system.

The NSC remains a very lean organization, even with the expansion that is currently underway, and its lack of staffing and resources could also hinder its efforts. There have been numerous articles and studies about comprehensive USG strategic communication policy, and nearly all of them agree that current USG efforts in this regard are ridiculously underfunded given the importance of the mission. Placing the responsibility for comprehensive USG strategic communication policy within the NSC would not improve that situation. Congress is unlikely to provide extra funding to the NSC for such an effort, and the Executive Branch simply lacks the budgetary authority to properly fund it. So this proposal could be a step in the right direction, but it would not solve the problems that already exist with current USG strategic communication efforts.

#### Empower and Resource DoD or DoS as a Directive Authority?

The problem with the last two options is that both the DoD and the DoS lack the necessary authority to direct other agencies on strategic communication. There is also the problem of organizational culture. Both the DoD and DoS have their own unique organizational cultures, priorities, and areas of specific expertise. Both agencies excel in different arenas. Placing the responsibility and authority for strategic communication under either agency risks the possibility of allowing the host agency's priorities and

prejudices to influence the broader strategic communication policy for the entire USG. It would be hard for the fledgling directive authority for strategic communication to avoid taking on the personality of its host agency. That could hamper the effectiveness of the fledgling agency. More importantly, it could lead both domestic and foreign audiences to perceive a certain slant or bias in USG strategic communication policy. Any perceived lack of credibility and independence would be the death knell to USG strategic communication efforts.

The current arrangement places the DoS as the lead agency charged with heading the interagency process on strategic communication. Many experts have suggested that DoS lacks the resources and staffing to adequately lead this effort. As Karen Hughes said “I think the resources are seriously misallocated. . . the defense budget is just so big because of the personnel and the weapon systems, so automatically it just has that much bigger starting point” (Hughes 2009). Although DoD has incredible amounts of resources and manpower, its track record on strategic communication efforts has been no better than those of the DoS or other, less well-funded, agencies. This may be due in part to the fact that the DoD’s efforts to communicate with foreign audiences especially are often culturally unappealing to the target audiences. This is partly because DoD has relatively few experts on foreign cultures and partly because DoD’s internal organizational culture values other things over cultural expertise.

But even if one of the Departments was given the necessary resources and staffing to focus extensively on strategic communication, no agency within the executive branch has the authority to directly task any other agency. As Karen Hughes said of her time as Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs:

I learned, even though I had direct access to the President, it's very hard to do something when you're not at the White House. It's hard to do something from an agency, even if you can pick up the phone and call the President, which I could, because you don't want to bother him, you know how busy he is, yet so many things that happen at the White House set the communications tone for the entire government.

There has to be somebody at the White House, at a high level who talks to the President, who is concerned about the international communications, and the communications with the international audience. ..Someone who has interaction with the President. I found it even when I was at State and could call him, it didn't happen on a real time enough basis or on a daily enough basis for me to really impact things like, what we went through with the [controversial term] Islamofascist, which he used before I knew it.

I was actually in a meeting the following week at the Defense Department and the President was there, and the subject came up, and one of the experts who had been . . . brought in by the interagency said that it was fine to use that word. I actually spoke [up] about it and said that I didn't think it was fine. I thought it was really offensive, and that many Muslim populations would take it as criticizing their faith, because it started with the [the word] Islam, which is basically making [terrorism] a religious matter. The President didn't use it anymore after that, I noticed. But again, once you say something, it's very difficult [to retract].

I know people who disagree with that. I had a long conversation with Senator Lieberman about my concern about using religious language, because I thought it tended to reinforce Osama bin Laden's world view, and we wanted to distance ourselves from his world view. Senator Lieberman didn't agree. He thought it was important that we labeled the threat and know that it's coming from within Islam.

I feel like the vast majority of Muslim populations around the world are peaceful and we don't want to offend them or push them toward the world view that this is a religious clash. We want to embrace them and say that the people who are Al-Qaeda and these kinds of people are a death cult; they aren't legitimate followers of any religion. But it's very hard to get those kinds of things done when you're at another agency. (Hughes, 2009)

Giving the DoD or the DoS the directive authority necessary to take control of comprehensive USG strategic communication efforts would require a constitutional amendment. This is unlikely, as Congress and the American people are reluctant to amend the constitution and placing one agency in a directive role over others sets an

unwelcome precedent. Undeniably, it is certain to be unpopular with the interagency community.

### The Role of the White House

Another recommendation to help the U.S. win the information war makes the White House the central source of authority and suggests that the USG should “establish in the White House an Office of Strategic Communication with a Director of Cabinet rank . . . The strategic communication director would sit in meetings of the Cabinet and National Security Council . . . The office would devise and issue guidelines to all departments of government on every aspect of their strategic communication and would seek...to get them to sing from the same sheet of music. A priority mission would be to devise ways to counter the infiltration of the Internet by Islamic terrorists” (Halloran 2007). This is a similar idea to the first one presented above, however, the distinction is that the White House would be the single source of power and authority for the office and its director, rather than making the directive authority an independent, stand-alone agency. This proposal would create a new office similar to the former White House Office of Global Communication.

Karen Hughes describes the potential of such an office as follows:

I would say that the best model that I saw . . . was [when] we assembled in the White House kind of a war room, right after we went into Afghanistan, and it had representatives from different agencies there, and from DoD. . . we coordinated it all and we had people that could get back into the agencies. It was a temporary thing. It was set up in the Indian Treaty Room. It lasted for several months. But I think it was pretty effective.

We probably need something like that on an ongoing basis, where you have communicators from different agencies together. But again, the key there is that they have to have access back to their agencies. If they're not high-level enough

to have access back into the agency, it's almost just a reporting function. It's got to have an impact function as well as a reporting function.

Somehow we've got to create more team functions in the interagency. Maybe [agency representatives] work half a day at [their] agency and half a day at the White House, where you have a . . . communications command center. You have obviously [got to have] a leader of that team who probably does have that directive authority. (Hughes 2009)

The directive authority in this case need not be a huge bureaucracy. It could be a single, high-powered individual; a sort of 'strategic communications czar.' This individual, if he or she had the right personality, authority, and access to the President, could revolutionize USG strategic communication. He or she, in consultation with the President and Congress, would set comprehensive USG strategic communication policy for existing USG agencies to implement. He or she should have control of existing strategic communication budgets within the implementing agencies, but a large staff would be unnecessary. The individual directive authority would, of course, have a small staff and budget of his or her own, but would also have the authority to set strategic communication policy for all USG agencies.

The historical model of the OWI, which coordinated USG communication efforts targeting both domestic and foreign audiences during WWII, indicates the potential for conflict between the White House and Congress in this scenario. The fact that Congress cut OWI funding during WWII in response to concerns that the office favored the Executive Branch demonstrates the power of Congress. The fact that Congress closed the OWI after WWII demonstrates that Congressional support is essential to the effectiveness of any directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication. President Roosevelt established the OWI with an Executive Order, and the same action would be possible today. The current administration could establish a directive authority for

strategic communication, thus creating a single point of contact for information about U.S. Overseas Contingency Operations, with a simple Executive Order. But such an office would be vulnerable to accusations of partiality to the President and the Executive Branch, especially if the Executive Order was issued without Congressional approval.

### The Role of Congress

As the historical model demonstrates, Congress also holds the power of the purse, and would easily be able to control the office's appropriations and budget. Any directive authority for strategic communication that is to succeed must therefore be created with Congressional approval and must justify its budget and mission before Congress. The directive authority must also overcome or work around the provisions of the Smith-Mundt Act, which also requires Congressional action. These are significant vulnerabilities to this approach.

If the White House established a cabinet-level Director of Strategic Communication for the entire USG, that office would have authority for all strategic communication efforts targeting international audiences. It should also include a public affairs arm for sharing information with domestic audiences, but that proposal runs the risk of violating the Smith-Mundt Act's provisions against domestic propaganda. It is possible that a new directive authority for strategic communication would fall outside the Smith-Mundt provisions, as the restrictions apply to the distribution of State Department information products to audiences outside the U.S., its territories and possessions. If the Smith-Mundt Act did apply to the new directive authority, however, there are several possible solutions.

One possible way to avoid conflict with the Smith-Mundt Act would be to have the public affairs arm, which would coordinate USG outreach to domestic audiences, report to the NSC but coordinate closely on messaging with the Director of Strategic Communication. This approach would respect the Smith-Mundt provisions but hopefully would also allow the USG to coordinate outreach efforts to domestic audiences. Of course, the ideal solution would be for Congress to reexamine the Smith-Mundt Act and revise or rescind it in light of the current interconnected media environment which hampers USG efforts to communicate effectively with both foreign and domestic audiences, but Congressional action on Smith-Mundt is frankly unlikely in the current political climate.

No matter which recommendations are put in place, it is obvious that Congress must play a key role in the process. The author believes that Congressional blessing is the key to success in the current operating environment. In an ideal universe, Congress would see the need for a single point of contact for USG strategic communication policy and, acting as a unified body, would draft legislation to create such a body. Several attempts have been made in recent decades, however, and the evidence suggests that Congressional unity on such a politically sensitive, controversial, and divisive issue is unlikely in the near future.

There is a distinct difference between what is ideal and what is politically viable in Washington. The best way to proceed in the near future, therefore, may be for the executive branch to take the lead, either by lobbying Congress to create such a body or by using an executive order to create a directive authority for strategic communication and

seeking Congressional buy-in after the fact. Both options carry significant political risk for the President and the Executive Branch.

The President and his administration would have to exert considerable public and private pressure on Congress in order to successfully lobby for the creation of a directive authority for strategic communication. This would cost the President and his administration some political capital, and might draw negative feedback if the idea proved unpopular with the American public. The bigger political risk, however, is what would happen if the President failed to convince Congress to act. The President and his administration would appear weak and ineffectual.

Intense public lobbying might also irritate influential members of Congress whose support would be needed on future issues. Annoying Congress too much could hamstring the President for the rest of his administration. This risk is greatly mitigated when the Presidential administration and the majority of members of Congress come from the same political party, as is currently the case. It is, therefore, likely that the current administration has a better chance of successfully convincing Congress to take action on this important issue than previous administrations. It is difficult to predict whether such an effort would be successful. The decision of whether or not to pursue this option could be a question of political priorities.

#### Strategic Communication By Executive Order?

A second possibility is that the President could seek Congressional buy-in after creating a directive authority by executive order. This approach is the most likely to succeed in the current political environment, but it also carries significant political risks. This option has the advantage of speed. It is exponentially simpler for the President to

issue an executive order than for members of Congress to unite around the issue and pass legislation, and therefore this approach would be much faster than lobbying Congress to act, getting the leadership of both the House and Senate to make the issue a priority, drafting legislation, gaining the support of the majority, and eventually getting that legislation passed by both the House and the Senate.

The President does not have to face the political risks associated with trying to convince Congress and the American public to unite around a potentially controversial issue. He could simply create the office and let it speak for itself. If the president chose to create a directive authority for strategic communication by Executive Order, any initial Congressional or public outcry would likely be short-lived. When former-President Bush created the Department of Homeland Security, the new department was controversial at first, but dissent quickly died down. This example demonstrates that once an office has been created to handle an issue, it is easier for Congress, the rest of government and the American public to stand behind the new office than it is to dismantle it. Creating a directive authority for strategic communication is likely to be a similar proposition. If the administration was able to convince other government agencies that the new directive authority would be in their best interest, bureaucratic resistance would be low.

#### Directive Authority Requirements

Obviously the new office would have to quickly gain the support of Congress and the American people. One important way the Presidential administration could ensure the success of the new directive authority is to choose dynamic and charismatic leadership. The head of the USG's strategic communication efforts must be an excellent communicator who is skilled at convincing both domestic and international audiences of

the importance of his or her mission. The leader must be able to speak easily before Congress and the media. He or she must have the complete confidence of the President and also unparalleled direct personal access to him. One possibility is to appoint an experienced, recently-retired Senator or Congress member to the post. Such an appointee would facilitate relations with Congress and would also bring a wealth of Washington experience to the new directive authority.

The leader of the directive authority must have exceptional supervisory and management skills. Ideally, this leader would have experience at the helm of a large, complicated organization and would also be able to understand the unique complexities of government bureaucracy. He or she must be familiar with the possibilities and limits inherent to government organizations (Mudgett 2009).

As discussed in chapter 4, the new directive authority for strategic communication must stay away from psychological operations. This is one way to mitigate fears of spreading propaganda. Some USG agencies must be able to successfully conduct psychological operations if the government is to communicate successfully and win the ‘war of ideas,’ however the agency which is charged with psychological operations cannot also be in charge of other strategic communication initiatives, in order to prevent a perceived conflict of interest. This restriction effectively eliminates DoD as the potential directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication. Later in the chapter, the author recommends that future research on related topics should focus on the role of psychological operations in the overall comprehensive USG strategic communication policy.

Any directive authority for USG strategic communication should also have broad authorities over all U.S. government messages and images. This includes the iconic photographs of food aid and other humanitarian assistance being delivered by USAID under the famous logo: ‘A gift from the American people.’ It would also include the potentially controversial videos and photos taken of the coffins of deceased soldiers arriving back on U.S. soil.

Whatever approach the new administration decides to take, it must continue to build up the USG’s capacity and ability to inform broad audiences in support of USG interests. The USG’s communication efforts must, above all else, work in harmony with broader USG foreign policy in order to support the country’s diplomatic, military, and economic efforts (Mudgett 2009).

The research indicates that creating a directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication would, indeed, help all government agencies speak with one voice, or at least ‘sing from the same sheet of music.’ A single point of contact would facilitate the accountability of that office and centralize authority for USG strategic communication policy. Expert strategic communicators would be in charge of this policy, and other government agencies could turn to a single point of contact for help and advice on strategic communication. Having a single office in charge of comprehensive strategic communication policy would also free up the personnel and resources of other USG agencies that currently devote a great deal of money and time to these efforts, which free them to focus on their primary missions.

The benefits of such an approach are obvious. Nearly everyone agrees on the importance of crafting a single, comprehensive USG-wide strategic communication

policy that would enable all government agencies to speak with one voice; however the practicalities of establishing such an arrangement have proven difficult. As Karen Hughes said of the idea of creating a directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication:

I think it's necessary, but next to impossible. In fact, it is very necessary. One of the conclusions I drew after my total of four years; two-and-a-half at State, and year-and-a-half at the White House; one of the conclusions I came away with is [that] our government is so big that it's almost detrimental to some of our efforts. . . it's too big--to try to coordinate all the different people who are speaking on an issue like counter-terrorism--because there are so many different stakeholders in that discussion. I found the interagency process to be very, very difficult and not very productive. (Hughes 2009)

The role of Congress versus the Executive Branch will prove decisive in the success or failure of any directive authority for strategic communication. In order to succeed in any modern conflict in the current operating environment, the USG must be able to successfully communicate its mission to both domestic and foreign audiences. Any directive authority for strategic communication should be designed to address both audiences, in order to maximize the office's effectiveness and efficiently distribute resources. The interconnected nature of modern media, in which any domestic story may become international and vice-versa, also means that Smith-Mundt is outdated in the current operating environment. The best way to overcome this obstacle is to seek Congressional action to repeal or update Smith-Mundt.

### Improving Speed, Agility and Cultural Relevance

The historical model demonstrates that speed, agility and cultural relevance were essential to the success of USG strategic communication efforts in WWII. The other element that led to the Allied victory was the use of a single directive authority for

strategic communication related to the war effort - the OWI. Although the research indicates that creating a single directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication would help the interagency better cooperate and coordinate on this vitally important issue, the question of whether or not this directive authority would improve the USG's overall effectiveness at strategic communication remains to be answered.

As referenced in chapter 1, Secretary Gates stated the USG's current strategic communications efforts lack speed, agility and cultural relevance. The research is unclear as to whether creating a directive authority would improve the USG's performance in all of these major areas. Would a directive authority for strategic communication be able to improve comprehensive USG strategic communication products? Would such an authority improve the speed with which the USG responds to breaking events, the agility or flexibility of its methods, and/or the cultural relevance of its messaging?

First, the speed of the USG's response to crisis events must improve. Al Qaeda and other contemporary insurgent groups are better at seizing the initiative in strategic communication than the USG has been. Part of this is because of the nature of the conflict--the USG is on the defensive against insurgents in the current operating environment, which automatically gives the insurgents the advantage of the offense and the element of the surprise. The ability of the USG to respond quickly is dependent in some ways upon its ability to quickly gather facts to refute whatever the enemy is saying. Initiatives such as the State Department's 'Infocentral' website and the 'Rapid Response Center' have improved the USG's performance in this regard; however, there is always room for improvement. As Karen Hughes describes it, the Rapid Response product is:

the practical information that every US Government official needs to know every day. It quotes the President, it quotes the Secretary of State, [and] the Secretary of State reflects the President's policy. [The] Rapid Response team now has survived the change in administrations, and still puts out very useful information that goes to our ambassadors and all our military leaders and all our cabinet officials. If you put that to an interagency process, it would never get done. It would never get out. It would not be timely. (Hughes 2009)

Al Qaeda and other insurgents are also not bound by the same rules of engagement that the USG must follow, including the need to adhere to the truth. Insurgents can lie if they like. Usually, once a rumor gets into the public imagination it becomes an urban legend or is perceived as 'fact,' even if it is later proven to be false. Once something is out on the Internet, on the airwaves or in print, it is very, very difficult to correct or retract. As Karen Hughes stated:

In today's world, you can't take anything back once it is said. . . . we learned that with the President when he misused the word 'crusade,' in the days after September 11. He certainly did not intend to convey the historical use of the word, which is so off-putting to the ears of many Muslim populations. But yet, you can't take that back.

Every recruiting Internet video that the terrorists put together had the echo of that word; 'crusade, crusade, crusade.' I became convinced that you have to have somebody at the White House who cares about this [strategic communication] and who has authority to pull it all together.

The reason I think the President asked me to go to State in the first place was because when I was at the White House, September 11 was the total communications wakeup call. I had to transition from communicating with the American people, which is after all what you do when you run for President. Those are people who elect you, so that's your audience. But when you're a President, you have to communicate with the entire world and your audience is much different." (Hughes, 2009)

Although terrorists can lie freely, the USG must disseminate only truthful information. The government has a responsibility to its citizens to tell the truth, and the USG has the unique responsibility of being a global hegemon, which obligates the country to follow rules and set an example for other nations to follow. If the USG fails to

follow the rules of engagement and live up to its international agreements, it also faces greater scrutiny and negative press than other nations do because of the dominant role the USG holds on the world stage and in the global imagination.

Modern technology also directly impacts the USG's ability to communicate quickly. The USG has been slower than Al Qaeda and other insurgent groups to adopt modern technologies such as cell phone text messaging and YouTube, blogs, Twitter, social networking, and other Internet tools. These inexpensive and fast technologies greatly enhance the ability of insurgent groups to get out their messages quickly and to broad audiences. While some new initiatives are currently being tried, the USG's failure to embrace these technologies has cost us the information edge. Karen Hughes said that the USG must become "more engaged in social media to maximize the impact of our communications, so that we're not just an exchange program where we're dealing one-on-one. We've got to start dealing one-to-thousands in some ways through social media" (Hughes 2009).

Second, the agility of USG messaging may or may not improve with the creation of a directive authority for strategic communication. The historical record provides examples of both success and failure in this regard. On one hand, centralizing government authority creates additional layers of bureaucracy, which impedes the ability of the USG to respond quickly. Current USG strategic communication efforts are subordinate to the bureaucracies that employ them. Communicators must respond to the needs of their bosses and the politics of not just their agency, but also the broader interagency community, the general public, and the broader strategic environment. Communicators must clear their messages up several layers of command before they can

speak to the media, and this delay can be costly. Centralizing authority for strategic communication in a new directive authority would not necessary fix this problem, and might in fact make it worse.

On the other hand, placing strategic communication experts together in one place should facilitate the exchange of ideas and increase information sharing. This brainstorming could result in more creative, dynamic, culturally relevant and effective communication products and processes. The historical model offers several examples of excellent communication products that were effective during WWII, many of which still have an aesthetic, emotional or intellectual appeal today. Creating a directive authority for strategic communication would bring together the best and brightest minds in the communication business and would create an artistic community with to serve the needs and goals of the entire USG. If that community was not overcome by the weight of its own bureaucracy, it might be very effective indeed.

Third, the research indicates that creating a directive authority for comprehensive USG strategic communication will probably improve the cultural relevance of USG messaging. The ability of U.S. government agencies to create culturally relevant messages currently depends on the individual agency. Each agencies' resources, funding, and personnel directly impact the agency's ability to effectively spread its messages. Each agency's organizational culture also influences its success. For example, each USG agency tends to focus on a specific target audience. The Department of Defense, for example, is more likely to focus its strategic communication efforts on domestic audiences than is the Department of State, which largely targets its outreach towards foreign audiences.

As Karen Hughes commented:

[Being] culturally relevant, I think, is better at some agencies than others. [The Department of] State, I think, is better at it than DoD, for example. Agility and flexibility play into the [USG's use of] social media and new technology. We're going to have to decentralize [strategic communication delivery mechanisms] . . . the strategic [planning and policy-making] part can be centralized, but the delivery mechanisms have to be decentralized [in order] . . . to be culturally relevant. [The communicator must] be somebody who is living in the culture and who understands it. (Hughes 2009)

During WWII, the OWI created carefully targeted messages and effective products in part because the OWI created regional divisions focused around various geographic locations, fostered interoffice communication on large special projects, and did extensive research on potential target audiences. The OWI's example indicates that centralizing authority for strategic communication in one place could improve the cultural relevance of USG strategic communication efforts, if similar processes and procedures were put in place today.

The research indicates that creating a directive authority for USG strategic communication would allow multiple USG agencies to speak with one voice and might improve the USG's ability to communicate with foreign audiences in a more culturally relevant manner. If all USG entities shared the same talking points and messages, both domestic and foreign audiences might perceive the USG as more credible and transparent. Those variables suggest that creating a single directive authority for strategic communication would improve the USG's overall success at this important task.

The research is inconclusive, however, as to whether or not creating a directive authority would improve the USG's agility at strategic communication. Bureaucracies and other large organizations are not usually known for their creativity or speed, but having a group of strategic communication experts working together towards the same

goal should result in more agile and flexibility strategic communication plans and products. The personalities of the leadership and personnel involved would be a decisive factor in whether or not a directive authority was successful at improving the USG's agility in strategic communication.

Unfortunately, the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that centralizing authority for strategic communication in one place would slow down the speed which with the USG is able to communicate. The pace of modern life and modern media has exponentially increased in recent years, and that pace is likely to either continue or increase in the future. The USG therefore cannot afford to slow down the speed of its communication efforts. The potential loss of speed is a huge drawback and therefore offers an important argument against the creation of a directive authority for strategic communication.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

This thesis did not examine covert USG strategic communication efforts, including psychological operations. The USG must also successfully communicate in this area. Future research should focus attention in this direction. Future research should also address the question of how best to measure the performance and effectiveness of comprehensive USG strategic communication efforts. Measures of performance indicate how successful the USG is in using various methods and media. They include concrete measurements, including, for example: how many leaflets did military civil affairs teams drop? On how many TV channels and in how many newspapers did interviews with USG officials appear? How many blogs featured entries by USG officials?

Measures of effectiveness are harder to quantify. They include indicators such as: how many members of the target audiences or population were influenced by USG messaging? How many members of the foreign (or domestic) population who started out with negative views of the USG changed those views in response to USG strategic communication efforts? Questions such as these are classic conundrums in social science. So many variables play into the answers to these questions that it is almost impossible to measure the success or failure of the USG. It is very difficult to demonstrate elegant proof of the success of USG strategic communication efforts when so many variables play into the outcome. Future research should attempt to answer how the USG can more accurately measure its success or failure at communicating strategically. What measures of performance best indicate the USG's success or failure? What measures of effectiveness should the USG use in assessing a comprehensive USG strategic communication policy?

Long-term versus short-term gains are also important factors in strategic communication. The success or failure of USG strategic communication efforts is difficult to measure in the short term. Exchange programs bringing foreign visitors to the U.S., for example, can take ten, twenty, or even more years to bear fruit. For example, several current European leaders--including Gordon Brown, Nicolas Sarkozy, and Tony Blair--visited the U.S. years ago under the auspices of USIA and State Department-sponsored foreign exchange programs. The relatively pro-American views of these leaders may be attributed to these visits. Their views may also be completely unrelated to the visits. The fact that these leaders benefited from USG foreign exchange programs relatively early in their careers, however, is significant. These cases illustrate the

difficulty of measuring the long-term success or failure of programs like foreign exchange. Most policy makers can understand the strategic foreign policy implications of such programs, but measuring their effectiveness in concrete terms can be difficult. Future research should focus on time as a measure of both performance and effectiveness.

The difficulty of measuring the success or failure of USG strategic communication is more than a rhetorical foreign policy question. It also directly impacts the budgets of USG agencies investing in strategic communication. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), for example, has issued several reports in recent years that are critical of the current state of USG strategic communication efforts. Many of these criticisms are tied to the fact that it is difficult to measure the success or failure of strategic communication programs, especially those that show results only over the long term. Congress and the OMB have used these reports as reasons to limit the size of the budgets devoted to strategic communication efforts.

Tying agency budgets to measures of performance and measures of effectiveness, however, can backfire by encouraging government agencies, Congress and other budgetary decision-makers to fund programs with short-term benefits over those with long-term strategic importance. This short-sightedness diminishes the effectiveness of USG strategic communication over the long term. Future research should address new ways to bolster both the short and long-term value of comprehensive USG strategic communication efforts by finding more accurate measures of performance and effectiveness.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, the USG must do more than reexamine the lessons learned during the WWII. It must modify these lessons to the circumstances of the current operating environment and implement the necessary changes if it is to succeed in Overseas Contingency Operations and win the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In discussing then-Colonel Ralph O. Baker's successful strategic communication efforts in Baghdad as a U.S. Army Brigade Combat Team Commander in 2003-2004, Robert Perry concludes: "Baker's example--and those of Gen. Petraeus during the surge, the experience of successful COIN operations, and the history of successful diplomacy--clearly demonstrate this critical point: Following the principles of strategic communication will make a significant contribution to success, but NOT practicing them can almost guarantee failure. In sum, the DOD may wish to consider how these principles can contribute to a re-examination of its current strategies in the war of ideas" (Perry 2008). This advice applies to the entire USG as well.

A directive authority charged with creating and implementing a comprehensive USG approach to strategic communication is essential if the United States is to be successful in countering extremist ideologies in today's Overseas Contingency Operations. The research indicates that creating a directive authority for USG strategic communication would allow multiple USG agencies to speak with the one voice and would improve the USG's ability to communicate with foreign audiences in a more culturally relevant manner (Mudgett 2009).

A new directive authority for strategic communication would bring together the best and brightest minds in the communication business to serve the needs and goals of

the entire USG. This directive authority, if created by Executive Order, adequately funded by Congress and led by an expert communicator with close ties to the President and to Congress, would help the USG succeed in Overseas Contingency Operations, including the missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

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