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How to Reinvigorate U.S. Public Diplomacy

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The United States government is losing its voice before foreign audiences and needs to get it back. The U.S. Information Agency (USIA) and international broadcasting efforts such as the Voice of America (VOA)—influential in articulating U.S. positions and providing a basis for cross-cultural understanding for the past 50 years—have been neglected since the end of the Cold War. While most Americans may not know the term *public diplomacy*, the events of September 11 have made them aware that Uncle Sam's global image is in serious trouble.

To reverse America's declining image abroad, both public diplomacy and related international broadcasting agencies need a clear chain of command as well as adequate personnel and financial resources. In addition, public diplomacy programs that once helped nurture positive long-term relations with foreign publics and opinion leaders must be restored.

The 1999 reorganization that placed the previously independent USIA within the U.S. Department of State and cut loose international broadcasting efforts has not been effective in addressing this challenge. Sensing the problem, the White House established its own Office of Global Communications in 2001 to formulate and coordinate messages to foreign audiences. The Department of Defense (DOD) unsuccessfully tried to merge public affairs and information warfare capabilities to rapidly shape international public opinion. Last year, House International Relations Committee Chairman Henry J. Hyde (R–IL) introduced the Freedom Promotion Act of 2002 to revitalize USIA within the State Department and reform foreign broadcasting, but his bill died in the Senate.

While Chairman Hyde's intentions of strengthening public diplomacy and reorganizing foreign broadcasting are a good start, reforms should go farther, both to strengthen the White House role in coordinating messages for international audiences and to provide a context for DOD wartime communications. These measures will not add much to the $1 billion annual budget spent on public diplomacy, and savings can be achieved by eliminating duplicate and ineffective services.

To reform the disjointed system, use tax dollars effectively, and draw on the talents of gifted communicators, the Bush Administration and Congress should:

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- **Recognize that public diplomacy is a long-term effort** that requires consistent application;
- **Restore public diplomacy's independent reporting and budget channels** that were lost in the USIA–State Department merger, allowing public diplomacy officers to accomplish their unique overseas mission more easily;
- **Return public diplomacy units** currently dispersed among other State Department bureaus to the public diplomacy hierarchy;
- **Strengthen exchange programs** and revive worthwhile programs such as U.S. government–supported libraries that serve important audiences;
- **Reorganize foreign broadcasting to streamline management,** eliminate duplicate and ineffective services, and improve programming;
- **Enhance public diplomacy career training** and increase the number of experienced foreign service personnel in State Department public affairs;
- **Strengthen inter-agency coordination** through the White House and define DOD communications efforts for use on the battlefield; and
- **Modify outdated legislation,** such as provisions in the 1948 Smith–Mundt Act that place irrelevant restrictions on public diplomacy activities.

COLD WAR SUCCESS, THEN NEGLECT

Since World War II, public diplomacy and foreign broadcasting have helped contain and defeat Soviet communism, promote democracy in many countries around the world, and expose foreign publics to American values. Both functions have roots in World War II efforts to counter Axis radio broadcasts, such as those by Axis Sally and Tokyo Rose, that were meant to demoralize occupied populations and allied troops. They flourished during the Cold War when information moved at a slower pace and little was known about America in closed societies behind the Iron Curtain or in developing countries where newspapers and radio were just beginning to reach important segments of the population. During this time, their purpose gelled into countering negative propaganda and presenting a favorable image of the United States.

Overseas press briefings made official Washington more accessible to journalists in foreign lands. Simultaneously, long-range aspects of U.S. public diplomacy programs like cultural and academic exchanges (about 700,000 to date) helped educate world leaders like Anwar Sadat, Helmut Schmidt, and Margaret Thatcher at early points in their careers about the United States and its values. Meanwhile, broadcasters like Willis Conover brought jazz and its musical message of freedom to listeners in the Soviet Union, and VOA and WORLDNET TV informed Chinese audiences about the pro-democracy movement that filled Tiananmen Square in 1989. These public diplomacy operations are now regarded as important foreign policy tools.

But that does not mean they are well-supported. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, public diplomacy and international broadcasting suffered from declining interest in the White House and among Members of Congress and U.S. opinion leaders. Key programs were eliminated, and the public diplomacy and foreign broadcasting budgets were slashed. In 1998, Congress passed the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act[1] to cut costs. It ended a half-century of public diplomacy independence and spun off foreign broadcasting as an independent entity. Both institutions were still struggling to regroup on September 11.

United States Information Agency. For 46 years, the centerpiece of U.S. public diplomacy was the United States Information Agency (USIA), established in 1953 at the height of the Cold War to counter anti-American propaganda from the Soviet Union and coordinate foreign information dissemination programs.[2] Its early directors included

1. Public Law 105–277.
2. Public diplomacy had its genesis in the Office of War Information, which existed from 1942–1945. Thereafter, foreign information dissemination was administered by various offices of international information in the U.S. Department of State. It was spun off as an independent agency in the Eisenhower Administration and abolished by President Jimmy Carter, with its functions assigned to the newly created International Communication Agency (ICA) in 1978. The ICA was redesignated USIA in 1982 during the Reagan Administration.

WHAT IS PUBLIC DIPLOMACY?

The now-defunct U.S. Information Agency defined *public diplomacy* as "promoting the national interest and the national security of the United States through understanding, informing, and influencing foreign publics and broadening dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad."[1]

Compared to traditional diplomacy that seeks government-to-government cooperation, public diplomacy encourages mutual understanding and cooperation between a nation and foreign publics by identifying its institutions and activities with those publics' interests. It relies on communication—the sharing of *common* language or meanings—to foster a *common understanding* of ideas. Common understanding promotes a sense of *community.*[2]

The meat and potatoes of public diplomacy is giving timely news to the foreign journalists, providing information on America directly to foreign publics through pamphlets and books, sponsoring scholarships and exchanges to the United States, exhibiting American art, broadcasting about U.S. values and policies in various languages, and simply transmitting balanced, independent news to captive people who have no information source independent of a repressive government.

Public diplomacy contrasts with *public affairs*, which seeks to encourage domestic public understanding and support of government policies, activities, and institutions as well as to give an accounting of its stewardship of public resources. It differs from *public relations*, which seeks the informed consent of a target audience for the activities of a particular organization. A related term, *advertising*, refers to the use of persuasive communication to encourage consumers to buy a product or service.

The Department of Defense claims to conduct public diplomacy through combined training activities with foreign armies, official visits, officer exchanges, and military contacts with foreign officials.[3] But it also has a combat requirement, called *information operations* or *information warfare*, to protect friendly information and command and control systems while attacking those of an adversary.

Psychological operations (or *psyops*) is a subset of information operations that sends selected information to a foreign audience to influence behavior in support of battlefield objectives. One example would be a U.S. Air Force C–130 "Commando Solo" aircraft broadcasting radio messages to war zone residents to warn them against collaborating with enemy soldiers. Because its messages are not intended to be balanced or complete, its mission and bureaucracy traditionally have been kept separate from public affairs and public diplomacy.

Propaganda is information deliberately propagated to help or harm a person, group, or institution, regardless of whether the information is true or false. To many not aware of its exact meaning, *propaganda* suggests disinformation. Public diplomacy and public affairs officers have always maintained that any information they convey must be truthful. Propaganda or not, it must deal with known facts.

1. "What is Public Diplomacy?" U.S. Information Agency Alumni Association, September 1, 2002, at *www.publicdiplomacy.org/1.htm* (April 2, 2003).
2. Authors' definition.
3. U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Under Secretary for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Managed Information Dissemination*, October 2001, p. 17.

media pioneers like journalists Edward R. Murrow, Frank Shakespeare, and Carl Rowan. Charles Wick, the dynamic director during the Reagan Administration, prodded it into creating the first global satellite television network, WORLDNET.

But after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, lawmakers began to cut budgets without critically rethinking the mission. For instance, resources for the USIA mission in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country, were slashed in half, according to Fred Coffey, Jr., a former public diplomacy director there. From 1995 to 2001, academic and cultural exchanges dropped from 45,000 to 29,000 annually,[3] while many binational cultural centers with accessible downtown store-front libraries either were abandoned or became "information resource centers" stuck in spare rooms of fortress-like embassies.[4]

On October 1, 1999, USIA disappeared as an independent agency—as a result of congressional efforts to reduce foreign operations expenditures and merge the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) into the Department of State. With its multibillion-dollar budgets, USAID was the main target, but skillful advocacy by its administrator helped it to avoid the wrecking ball. USIA, barred by law from using any of its products intended for foreign audiences in the United States, never enjoyed USAID's level of domestic advocacy and easily succumbed to consolidation into the State Department—despite efforts by a coalition of liberals and conservatives to maintain USIA as a separate entity.[5]

International Broadcasting. In 1942, the Roosevelt Administration started the Foreign Information Service to counter anti-U.S. propaganda beaming out of Nazi Germany. By January 1943, it had 23 transmitters delivering news in 27 languages. Later known as the Voice of America (VOA), it grew into a network of 22 proprietary stations and 900 affiliates broadcasting in 53 languages. In 1978, it was folded into USIA, then known as the U.S. International Communication Agency.

Over the years, other services were added to support the political objectives of promoting democracy and human rights, avoid civil service personnel regulations that prevented flexible responses to new mission requirements, and adapt to the changing media environment. Critics argued that this resulted in a confusing structure like a house with "a wing here, a porch there, a shaky cupola on top, and some dormers jutting from the roof."[6]

As an example, the private networks Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty were established in the 1950s and funded primarily by U.S. government grants. These "surrogate" services were not obliged either to influence audiences in favor of U.S. policies (unlike VOA) or to promote an appreciation of

3. U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, *Building America's Public Diplomacy Through a Reformed Structure and Additional Resources*, U.S. Department of State, 2002, p. 10. Cited hereafter as *Building America's Public Diplomacy.*
4. In the mid-1990s, Congress cut funding for U.S. government-supported libraries in major cities around the world based on three suppositions: They served no useful purpose in friendly European countries with well-stocked libraries of their own, emerging Internet technologies promised to connect people everywhere, and scaled-down information resource centers could be placed in more secure embassy compounds. While libraries may have been superfluous in Europe, they were invaluable in developing countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, where computers and Internet connections had little penetration and researchers and academics needed an informal place to gather to learn more about politics, economics, and the United States. Meanwhile, embassies like those in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania—bombed on August 7, 1998—became terrorist targets as more obvious symbols of the United States. A decade before this debate, the Chairman of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, Edwin J. Feulner, Jr., argued that "wholesale retreat to safe, but inaccessible, enclaves is not the answer. Personal contact with global opinion leaders is essential to the conduct of American foreign policy." See Edwin J. Feulner, Jr., "Don't Let Security Hide Our Light," *The Washington Post*, October 7, 1985, p. A13.
5. The 1948 U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act (Public Law 402), also known as Smith–Mundt after its sponsors, Senator H. Alexander Smith (R–NJ) and Representative Karl E. Mundt (R–SD), established the legislative basis for America's foreign informational and cultural exchange programs and also prohibited the domestic distribution of materials produced for overseas audiences.
6. Mark Hopkins, "A Babel of Broadcasts," *Columbia Journalism Review*, July–August 1999, p. 44.

SUCCESS OF BROADCASTING DIFFICULT TO MEASURE

There is little doubt that the Voice of America neutralized German propaganda during World War II and, along with Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, helped bring down the Berlin Wall. U.S. foreign broadcasting continues to tell America's story and provide a relatively balanced source of outside news to the peoples of captive nations. According to Freedom House, only 40 percent of some 187 nations around the world have free media.[1]

Still, the effectiveness of foreign broadcasting is hard to quantify. Audiences inside closed societies—the kind U.S. foreign broadcasting is likely to target—are not easy to poll. Opinion research is often banned, and data must come from émigrés and refugees who may have personal reasons for giving an encouraging answer.

Nonetheless, fresh efforts in 1997 enabled VOA to collect data on 75 percent of its language services, up from a third in previous years. Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and Radio Free Asia have all launched research programs as well. During the Balkan crisis, audience surveys among Kosovar refugees in Albanian camps revealed an 83 percent listenership.

A 1999 study of Cuban asylum seekers in the United States showed that 58 percent of the respondents listened to Radio Martí, outstripping preferences for state radio and nearby Miami stations. But few watched TV Martí, and among those who did, most say they saw it at the U.S. Interests Section while waiting in line for a visa.[2]

Two factors should be borne in mind when assessing the usefulness of such research. First, much of it is obtained by purchasing limited space on commercial surveys, which saves money but can affect the context of the questions and accuracy of the results. Second, the true effectiveness of broadcasting may hinge on reaching just one or two influential persons who may make a key decision based on informed attitudes toward the United States.

1. See Leonard R. Sussman and Karin Deutsch Karlekar, eds., *The Annual Survey of Press Freedom 2002*, Freedom House, 2002, p. 1.
2. Churchill Roberts, Ernesto Betancourt, Guillermo Grenier, and Richard Schaeffer, *Measuring Cuban Public Opinion: Project Report*, University of Florida, September 1999, pp. 28–29.

American culture, but were intended to foster democracy by providing access to balanced international news and independent internal reports from within countries held captive by authoritarian regimes—in this case the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. With contract and part-time linguists and writers as opposed to union-protected U.S. civil servants, such surrogates could more easily redirect efforts and respond to momentary needs to serve some countries and languages more than others. But as private entities, they are less controllable.

WORLDNET, VOA's satellite television service, began within USIA in 1983 with a single press conference and expanded to include daily programming and interactive teleconferences between Washington policy experts and local colleagues or journalists. Initially, WORLDNET experimented with soft news programs like "America Today" beamed to Europe. But Congress cut funding, skeptical that an audience existed. Thereafter, it slowly built programming around more modest public affairs programs beamed to embassies and then placed on local television, particularly in developing nations. Teleconferencing made news at first but eventually settled into low-level exchanges that declined in impact after the novelty wore off.

Radio Martí began broadcasting to Cuba in May of 1985 and was joined by its sister outlet, TV Martí, in 1990. Funded and managed by the U.S. government, they were supposed to disseminate international news and reports from independent journalists inside Cuba as well as present American culture and explain the policies of the United States according to the VOA charter.[7] Radio Martí did so at first, until the Clinton Administration transferred Cuban Broadcasting offices to Miami, Florida, where programming strayed from the charter and began to imitate the formats of commercial stations

belonging to members of Miami's Cuban exile community.[8] Because of Cuban jamming, TV Martí has had little penetration on the island.

With the end of the Cold War, static budgets resulted in more programming cuts for such regions as the Middle East and Latin America, while international broadcasting continued its topsy-turvy evolution. The International Broadcasting Act of 1994 consolidated foreign transmission efforts within USIA under a new bipartisan Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) that included eight members from the fields of mass communications and foreign affairs, plus the Secretary of State as a non-voting member. Congress funded Radio Free Asia, a surrogate service that opened in 1996 with broadcasts to China, Vietnam, Tibet, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and North Korea despite overlapping efforts by VOA. In 1998, the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act made foreign broadcasting, once again, an independent U.S. government entity.

HOSTILE TAKEOVER AND RESHUFFLING

The consolidation of public diplomacy functions into the U.S. Department of State was both a curse and a blessing. USIA was a small, generally well-managed independent U.S. government organization with an efficient finance and personnel system. It was folded into a "troubled cabinet agency" where travel vouchers sometimes take six weeks to process, budgets of small offices are often raided by larger bureaus, and hard assets and personnel are gobbled up more through internal political designs than by senior management decisions or congressional intent. While the Clinton Administration's foreign affairs reinvention plan merged public diplomacy assets into the State Department, it left the department itself largely untouched.[9]

State Department negotiators were not familiar with the USIA mission and regarded some of the Agency's assets as scrap to strengthen State's own bureaus. USIA's area offices were consolidated into State's geographic bureaus and lost their independent budgets and reporting channels. The Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) swallowed USIA's media reaction and opinion analysis division. The Public Affairs Bureau (PA) absorbed USIA's television production facilities and the Foreign Press Centers in Washington, New York, and Los Angeles, while the Office of Strategic Communication—an important message-coordinating entity—was abolished.[10]

Silver Lining. On the bright side, folding USIA into the State Department made it clear that modern diplomacy was not only a matter of discrete negotiation, but also a task of communicating with foreign publics. Because public diplomacy directorates were placed in the State Department's geographic bureaus, their inputs were finally able to influence the "takeoff of policies, not just the occasional crash landing"—addressing a hope USIA Director Edward R. Murrow had expressed 40 years ago. Pairing State's ailing Public Affairs Bureau with Public Diplomacy elevated its status and suggested the need for State's personnel to develop core competencies similar to those of public diplomacy officers.

Independent international broadcasting brought more creativity and strategic planning based on research into the BBG. Despite management upheavals, just six months after the September 11 tragedy, it established the Middle Eastern Radio

7. Drafted in 1960, the VOA Charter was signed into law in 1976 (Public Law 94–350). It requires VOA to serve as a reliable source of objective news, broadly represent the whole of American society, and present "the policies of the United States clearly and effectively" along with discussions and opinions of these policies.
8. Mark Hopkins points out that the transfer was approved just before the 1996 U.S. presidential election when south Florida votes were in contention. See Hopkins, "A Babel of Broadcasts," p. 44. See also Phil Peters, "Radio Marti's Shrinking Audience and What to Do About It," testimony before the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights, Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, June 6, 2002.
9. See William P. Kiehl, "Unfinished Business: Foreign Affairs Consolidation Was Only the Beginning," *National Security Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 7, Issue 1 (Winter 2001), p. 117. According to Kiehl, the State Department's failings include poor management, little serious training, three incompatible e-mail systems, a culture obsessed with process instead of product, and serious recruitment and retention problems.
10. Kenton Keith, "Troubled Takeover: The Demise of USIA," *Foreign Service Journal*, September 1999, at *www.afsa.org/fsj/Sep99/TroubledKeith.htm* (September 27, 1999).

Network (MERN) and Radio Sawa broadcasting 24 hours a day in Arabic on AM, FM, shortwave, digital satellite, and the Internet. Although criticized for content heavy on pop music and light on news (only 10 to 20 minutes out of 60), it began to appeal to youthful audiences in eight Arabic countries including Iraq.[11] Radio Farda ("Radio Tomorrow" in Persian) began transmitting into Iran with a similar mix of music and news in December 2002 on AM, shortwave, digital satellite, and Internet from studios in Washington, D.C., and Prague, Czech Republic.[12] Hoping to capitalize on the success of these efforts, President Bush proposed spending $30 million to create an Arabic-language satellite television network in his FY 2004 budget.

Problems Remain. While public diplomacy (PD) area directorates became features in State's geographic bureaus, the merger substantially weakened field operations. PD/PA directors in State's regional bureaus now report to State's regional assistant secretaries below the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Thus, public diplomacy field reporting that once went swiftly through proprietary channels to senior public diplomacy decision-makers must now endure lengthy embassy staff and ambassadorial reviews that are standard procedure for State's political reporting. Public diplomacy lost its separate budget, control over representational housing, cars, and specialized computer and communications equipment. To support field initiatives, public diplomacy area directors must persuade State regional assistant secretaries with little familiarity or interest in overseas communications to share resources.

The institutional expertise that skillfully managed information programs for foreign audiences and opinion leaders no longer exists. Public diplomacy's domestic counterpart (public affairs) is still largely dedicated to reactive press briefings, although it has developed a useful Web site and has facilitated some press encounters with State's senior leaders. Staffed by civil servants historically denied opportunities for public relations training or overseas experience, it was relegated to organizing press conferences and distributing lengthy speeches by senior officials in the 1990s.

Media and public opinion research is misplaced in State's intelligence bureau, which analyzes classified material for State's political decision-makers. It should be in the public diplomacy hierarchy where public diplomacy officers can drive its activities and immediately access data to shape communications strategies. The Foreign Press Center and television production staff now sits in the domestically focused Public Affairs Bureau, which has little experience in dealing with foreign audiences or making video products for overseas distribution. Key programs curtailed in the 1990s, such as U.S. government-supported libraries in foreign countries, remain virtually extinct. The already decimated educational and cultural exchanges, including Fulbright fellowships, will be cut by an additional 2,500 slots next year.

The Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act made foreign broadcasting independent and strengthened the Broadcasting Board of Governors, giving it authority to act as "a collective CEO" in the words of Board member Norman J. Pattiz.[13] This had disastrous consequences when, shortly after September 11, 2001, the new BBG appointed a Bush Administration candidate to direct the VOA and some BBG members then allegedly undercut his decisions, resulting in a resignation and needless public scandal.[14] The new BBG structure also presents opportunities for conflict of interest. Sitting board members serve part-time and may continue as executives in their real-life businesses.

11. Fact sheet, "Radio Sawa: The U.S. Middle East Radio Network (MERN)," Broadcasting Board of Governors, undated.
12. The day after Radio Farda went on the air, the studios received more than 1,000 e-mails from Iran, many of them like the following: "Thx for thinking to Iranian people. Free News, Free mind and thinking, A free life and freedom is somthing which everyone need it! An Iranian." See "Radio Farda Emails," Broadcasting Board of Governors, December 27, 2002, at *www.bbg.gov/_bbg_news.cfm?articleID=56&mode=general* (April 6, 2003).
13. Independent Task Force on Public Diplomacy, Public Diplomacy: A Strategy for Reform, Council on Foreign Relations, July 30, 2002, p. 32.
14. For insights, see David R. Sands, "VOA Director Was Undermined by Doubts," *The Washington Times*, September 5, 2002, and Paul M. Weyrich, "Radio Static: The Controversy at the Voice of America," CNS News, September 19, 2002, at www.cnsnews.com/Commentary/Archive/200209/COM20020919c.html (March 19, 2003).

LESSONS FROM MILITARY PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Military public affairs was created by executive order during World War I and expanded during World War II from a handful of persons cranking out news stories to thousands of public affairs officers in a burgeoning career field.[1] Not that creating new bureaucracies is a good thing, but since then, public affairs has been taken seriously as a support function for America's defense. Although its practice varies by service, it usually consists of four missions: informing the public, communicating with the troops, maintaining good community relations (where installations are located), and analyzing opinions and planning public affairs efforts.

Doctrinal concepts contained in field manuals promote telling the truth, disseminating bad news quickly and completely, and communicating often. When public affairs provides favorable news on military activities, it is said to make a deposit in a public "good will account." When a crisis or disaster occurs, public understanding and support are maintained temporarily by drawing on that account—by reminding the public of what it already knows about the institution and how it serves the people. Integral opinion analysis and planning ensures that messages are attuned to the public interest, address current issues, or target those about to emerge. Its mission is thus strategic, and it has very long-term goals.

Public affairs is a respected career field in which soldiers receive in-house training, graduate-level schooling, and opportunities to serve temporarily in the public relations departments of major American industries. Although the Department of Defense and each service has its own public affairs directorate, public affairs officers (PAOs) and their staffs serve and depend on regional and unit commanders directly. PAOs are normally members of each commander's senior staff down to the battalion level.

Unlike military public affairs, however, U.S. public diplomacy efforts have never been so systematically organized, expanding and contracting according to isolationist versus internationalist trends in Congress and congressional desires favoring institutional independence or consolidation into a larger bureaucracy. During USIA days, headquarters-level public diplomacy officers did not serve on the staffs of top State Department diplomats. Today, although public diplomacy officers get more career-specific training in the State Department's Foreign Service Institute, it pales against the continuing career formation PAOs receive at the Defense Information School. Indeed, the State Department offers no specific career training to its domestic public affairs officers.

1. Scott M. Cutlip, Allen H. Center, and Glen M. Broom, *Effective Public Relations* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1994), p. 119.

While that brings welcome expertise to the Board, there is little to keep members from directly hiring business associates to work in subordinate agencies.

Congress has steadily reduced the budget for international broadcasting from $844 million in FY 1993 to a proposed $560 million for FY 2004, necessitating cuts in services targeted to regions such as the Middle East and Latin America at a time of growing upheaval. In 2001, the BBG dropped Portuguese-language radio service to Brazil, the world's eighth largest economy. Yet the BBG's confusing organization and collection of services, stations, affiliates, and surrogates still waste money with ineffective and overlapping efforts.

Surrogates Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty still receive substantial U.S. funding although they no longer broadcast to captive nations. Radio Martí has lost effectiveness by catering to Miami's Cuban exile community, while TV Martí is hardly seen. Radio Sawa and Farda reach new listeners with pop music and balanced news as if they were surrogates, but the BBG plans to cut VOA transmissions with editorial content that could address extreme anti-U.S. propaganda in Middle Eastern media.[15]

The Bush Administration is seeking approval of an ambitious $30 million effort to start a Middle Eastern satellite television service, but the planned 24-hour operations may not be cost-effective considering its unknown impact in a region where sat-

ellite TV is still banned in two large countries (Saudi Arabia and Iran) and faces stiff competition from Arab networks in other countries. Elsewhere, the Voice of America continues shortwave broadcasts even though listenership on that bandwidth is disappearing. WORLDNET TV wastes some of its potential on innocuous public affairs shows and old science documentaries dubbed in foreign languages.

Finally, civil service personnel rules continue to enshrine a static workforce that keeps VOA from flexibly expanding and contracting according to critical needs, necessitating the use of surrogate outlets.

DISARRAY AT A CRITICAL MOMENT

Arriving in office, the Bush Administration was uncertain about playing the public diplomacy hand dealt by the Clinton Administration. Aware of the decline in America's image among foreign publics, it sought new tools to win the hearts and minds of potential adversaries. Initially, the White House created an Office of Global Communication to coordinate messages to foreign audiences and nominated a former advertising executive, Charlotte Beers, as the new Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs in the State Department.

Meanwhile, the DOD Defense Science Board commissioned a task force on "managed information dissemination" that found U.S. public diplomacy programs to be understaffed, underfunded, poorly coordinated, and insufficiently integrated into national security planning and implementation processes. It prepared a detailed report that recommended the creation of a National Security Council policy coordinating committee on international information dissemination and that both State Department public diplomacy programs and DOD foreign communication programs be strengthened along traditional lines.[16]

Rude Awakening. On September 11, 2001, when America was attacked by foreign terrorists in hijacked airliners, it became apparent once again that the United States had enemies in the world. The Bush Administration tried to clamp down on the bad news by asking U.S. television networks to limit replays of Osama bin Laden tapes, urging Qatar's government to do the same with their popular al-Jazeera TV channel, and firing a VOA director who permitted an interview with Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar. Critics reasoned that America needed to fight back with its own communication efforts.

While the State Department set about preparing a $15 million advertising campaign to showcase Muslim life in America to Islamic nations, the Pentagon established the Office of Strategic Influence to provide a harder sell with a combination of public affairs and information warfare. Although details were never revealed, the office would have been engaged in a broad range of activities, from dispensing truthful news releases to planting stories through outside contractors to conducting cyberattacks against enemy computer networks and Web sites.

Some senior officers complained that it would ruin the credibility of legitimate public affairs. (See text box, "What Is Public Diplomacy?") Media critics charged that false news planted in foreign news outlets could end up in the American press, violating a ban on government propaganda activities in the United States.[17] Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld closed the office in 2002 and eventually replaced it with one to coordinate combat information activities along more traditional lines.

Meanwhile, only four Islamic nations aired the State Department's television ads touting Muslim tolerance in the United States, and critics like Mamoun Fandy, an Egyptian media analyst who served briefly as a consultant to the campaign,

15. According to Arab media analyst Mamoun Fandy, "There's this tremendous intellectual terrorism, if you will, in the Arab and Muslim world, and that to really speak differently, and talk about issues differently, you are in the minority, and you are not given much of an air time." Interview with Terrence Smith, *The NewsHour*, Public Broadcasting System, January 2003, at *www.pbs.org/newshour/media/public_diplomacy/fandy_1-03.html* (March 31, 2003).

16. U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Under Secretary for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Managed Information Dissemination*, October 2001, p. 1.

17. James Dao and Eric Schmitt, "Pentagon Readies Efforts to Sway Sentiment Abroad," *The New York Times*, February 19, 2002, pp. 1–7.

charged that it seemed expedient, insincere, and likely to inflame anti-American sentiments.[18] On March 7, 2003, Charlotte Beers resigned as Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

Congressional Action. The Bush Administration has not been alone in trying to improve the government's foreign communication efforts. The Freedom Promotion Act of 2002 (H.R. 3969), introduced by Representative Henry Hyde (R–IL) and co-sponsored by Representative Albert R. Wynn (D–MD), took a comprehensive approach, seeking to refinance and restructure public diplomacy as well as streamline foreign broadcasting's disparate management elements and broadcast outlets. Among its major provisions, H.R. 3969 (which ultimately died in the Senate) would have:

- **Amended** the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 to make public diplomacy a key element in planning and executing U.S. foreign policy,
- **Created** a "reserve corps" to augment public diplomacy activities during critical circumstances overseas,
- **Emphasized** recruiting State Department officers with mass communications skills,
- **Expanded** career-specific training for new public diplomacy officers,
- **Increased** attitude research to evaluate the effectiveness of public diplomacy efforts,
- **Strengthened** exchange programs in the Muslim world, and
- **Amended** the International Broadcasting Act of 1994 to reorganize foreign broadcasting elements under a U.S. International Broadcasting Agency.

While such measures attempt to repair and strengthen the machinery of overseas communication efforts, however, Congress must further address lingering structural deficiencies in public diplomacy's placement at State, deal with weaknesses in public diplomacy's sister public affairs bureau, revise the outdated 1948 Smith–Mundt Act that prohibits the dissemination of materials produced for overseas audiences in the United States, and define the roles that the White House and the Department of Defense should play in foreign communication efforts.

REVITALIZING PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Public diplomacy and related international broadcasting efforts cannot be put back together the way they were before the 1999 reorganization, as some concerned USIA alumni have suggested. Another complete reorganization would cause needless anxiety and waste. Furthermore, the improvements already achieved would be lost. Merging USIA into the State Department has enabled public diplomacy to become an integral part of foreign policy planning and implementation. It more closely follows corporate public relations practice and the institutional model of military public affairs. (See text box, "Lessons from Military Public Affairs.") Independence has brought creative thinking to international broadcasting, allowing it to fill a gap rapidly by beaming balanced news to certain captive audiences in the Middle East.

With the substantive changes already made, the Bush Administration and Congress should go back and correct some of the oversights committed along the way. To do a more effective job of winning the hearts and minds of foreign citizens, they should:

- **Recognize that public diplomacy is a strategic, long-term effort that requires consistent application.** It cannot deliver instantaneous support for U.S. policies that may be unpopular overseas. Given time, it can nurture a positive image of America and establish relationships that provide a basis for trust and understanding. Once confidence is established, it can cultivate tolerance and support for U.S. actions if they are well-articulated and connect with the interests of the target audience. But knowing those interests requires extended dialogue and research into underlying beliefs and attitudes. A mix of interpersonal and mass communications channels must be used, depending on the best way to reach different audiences. Public diplo-

18. Interview with Terrence Smith, *The NewsHour*, Public Broadcasting System, January 21, 2003, at *www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june03/diplomacy_1-21.html* (March 17, 2003).

macy must be multi-dimensional and flexible, as well as strategic and consistent.

- **Restore public diplomacy's independent reporting and budget channels** within the Department of State so that public diplomacy officers may conduct their overseas mission without begging for table scraps from a bureaucracy that hardly understands it. Congress should ensure that budgetary authority and reporting flow from the Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy through a new Assistant Secretary for Public Diplomacy Operations to the PD/PA area directors to the Public Diplomacy Sections in the embassies. (See Figure, "Proposed Reorganization of U.S. Public Diplomacy.") Ambassadors and regional assistant secretaries should retain inputs to public diplomacy personnel performance evaluations, but overall responsibility for writing them should be returned to the public diplomacy hierarchy. This must be the structure until the State Department itself is reformed into a modern institution that can better support diverse activities.[19]
- **Return dispersed public diplomacy units** within State to the PD hierarchy. First, USIA's media and public opinion research office, currently located in State's classified Intelligence and Research Bureau, should be moved to the PD Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) where it can help shape public diplomacy programs and recommend entrées to free and captive media around the world instead of languishing behind closed doors. Second, the TV studios that the Public Affairs Bureau received in the merger should be incorporated into IIP. Domestic Public Affairs has little need for television production. Third, USIA's Foreign Press Centers, currently under State's domestic Public Affairs Bureau, should fall under the new Public Diplomacy Operations Bureau (PDO), which would work with foreign audiences.
- **Restore funding to strengthen exchanges and revive worthwhile programs.** Exchange programs that once helped educate burgeoning opinion leaders about the United States have been gradually cut over the past decade, leaving America with a dwindling cadre of supporters in leadership positions around the world. Congress should restore exchange programs cut over the past decade in troubled parts of the globe, particularly in developing nations. Public diplomacy's outreach should not be limited to safe but impersonal programs such as the Internet, VOA, and television broadcasting.

  U.S.-funded library operations in major city centers should be revived on a country-by-country basis where Internet use and access to printed information is limited. Where foreign audiences are starved for information, U.S. public diplomacy should seize the opportunity to supply it. Coordinating with USAID on the provision of foreign language textbooks to host-country educational institutions is an example.[20]
- **Reorganize foreign broadcasting to streamline management** and eliminate ineffective and duplicate services. Eventually, all broadcast operations should be consolidated under one roof (a reformed Voice of America) with services tailored by channel and content to priority countries and regions. Chairman Hyde's proposed restructuring of the international broadcasting bureaucracy, originally proposed in the Freedom Promotion Act of 2002, offers a good start toward organizational reform.

  First, reform foreign broadcasting by giving it a name like the International Broadcasting Agency (IBA) and guiding it with a politically appointed, bipartisan Board of International

19. A more detailed view of how public diplomacy could be strengthened within the State Department is contained in a paper by former USIA officials Fred A. Coffey, Jr., Stan Silverman, and William Maurer, "Making Public Diplomacy Effective, State Department Public Diplomacy Must Be Realigned," March 13, 2003.
20. Programs that do this well include a school-based project, sponsored by the National Strategy Information Center (a Washington-based non-governmental organization) in collaboration with the Mexican Ministry of Education, to introduce civics curriculum in public high schools along the U.S.–Mexico border to reduce crime and violence in those areas. Others include U.S. Embassy efforts, such as those in Uruguay, to provide English teaching texts to Uruguayan public schools.

Broadcasting (BIB) with powers limited to advising the Agency's overall efforts and dispensing grants to surrogates as long as they exist independently. The IBA director, heads the Voice of America, ad hoc regional offices, and Technical Support offices would be appointed by the White House. Board members would not be allowed to intervene directly in personnel decisions or micromanage individual broadcasting operations as they do now. The Secretary of State would be a full voting member of the BIB.

Gradually bring surrogates into the VOA fold. Considering the need for rapid response and adaptation to new media environments, Congress should permit the new IBA to hire part-time and contract personnel. It should begin phasing out grants for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty as the nations they were chartered to serve engage in less censorship and allow more independent media, eventually incorporating their services into VOA and eliminating any overlap. Savings could be used to modernize VOA's programming toward the Middle East to complement Radio Sawa and Radio Farda and reverse cutbacks in troubled Latin America. Radio Free Asia could be similarly incorporated, resulting in better coordination of programming and support. VOA shortwave broadcasting efforts should shift to more popular bandwidths like AM and FM, while Cuban broadcasting, though not a surrogate, should return to Washington and abide by the VOA charter.

Reinvigorate television broadcasting. The Bush Administration should establish Middle East television service on a part-time basis until its value is proven. TV Martí should cease expensive and easily jammed broadcasts in favor of providing content programming for monitors in the U.S. Interests Section in Havana and the Internet.[21] Money saved from that operation should be used to modernize content on VOA-TV to include programs that explain various aspects of how democracies and free markets work in support of U.S. development goals.

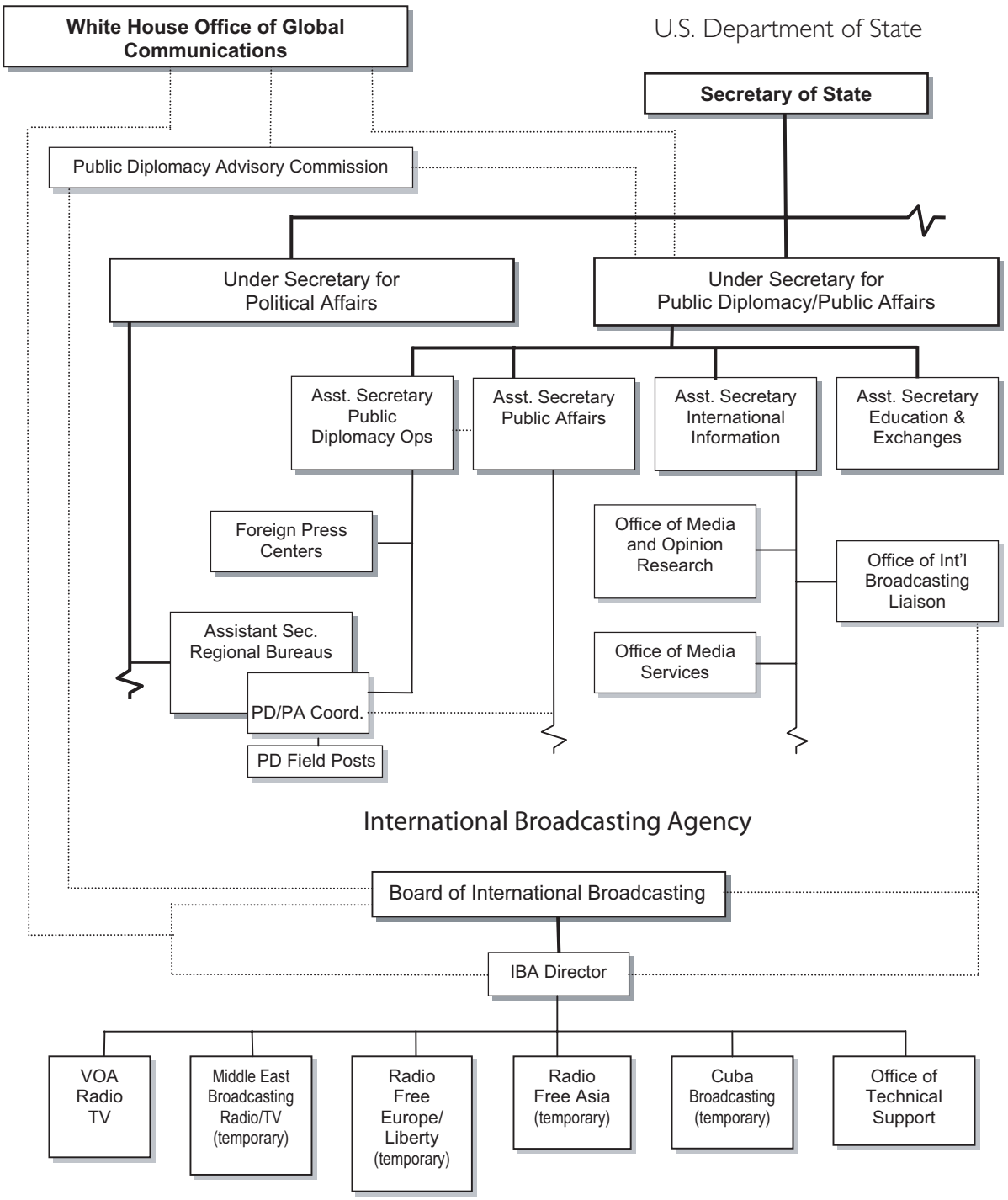
- **Enhance public diplomacy career training** and increase the number of experienced foreign service personnel in State Department public affairs. USIA came into the State Department with a balance of trained foreign service versus civil service (domestic career) personnel attuned to its mission. State's Public Affairs bureau, however, is almost all civil service with little in-house career training or experience in field operations. More positions in State Public Affairs should be made available to public diplomacy officers to tap their expertise, while the domestic public affairs staff should have opportunities to serve overseas excursion tours to broaden their experience. Although the Foreign Service Institute provides career training for junior public diplomacy officers, both public diplomacy and the domestic public affairs staff should be given continuing career training similar to the training provided to U.S. military public affairs officers.
- **Strengthen inter-agency coordination** through the White House and better define the scope of DOD international information efforts. The White House Office of Global Communications should become the coordinator for inter-agency public diplomacy programs and help dissolve resistance to public diplomacy activities in U.S. departments and embassies.[22] DOD should continue its public diplomacy by promoting positive relations between foreign publics and U.S. soldiers on deployments by coordinating their efforts with U.S. embassy public diplomacy personnel. Information warfare and psyops, however, should remain a separate endeavor intended primarily to support combat operations to avoid damaging the credibility of other activities.
- **Modify outdated language in the 1948 Smith–Mundt Act** that places irrelevant restrictions on domestic use of public diplomacy materials. Global media and the Internet make

21. Anecdotal evidence indicates that more Cubans are likely to see independent television while waiting to apply for a visa in the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, or by contraband home satellite dish, than by the degraded TV Martí signal that now reaches Cuban TV sets.

22. *Building America's Public Diplomacy*, p. 6.

Figure 1 B 1645

Proposed Reorganization of U.S. Public Diplomacy



it impossible to prevent public diplomacy products from being accessed in the United States. The Smith–Mundt Act should simply prohibit U.S. government agencies from disseminating international information products directly in the United States.

- **Utilize existing commissions.** Many of the preceding recommendations have been made before in reports by the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. As far back as 1993, the commission recommended strengthening inter-agency coordination, increasing State Department participation in the public diplomacy mission, phasing out ineffective and no longer needed foreign broadcasting activities, reconsidering library closures, and modifying the Smith–Mundt Act. If such a commission is worth having, both the White House and Congress should pay attention to it. By doing so, they can avoid making changes like the 1999 merger that proceeded without a road map and can take advantage of existing and future technologies to enhance the public diplomacy mission.

CONCLUSION

In the information age, it is remarkable that the United States government has been hesitant to embrace and effectively implement mass communication to support America's defense and foreign policy goals. In recent times, only the Reagan Administration consistently factored communication strategies into meeting its domestic and international political challenges. Now, when Washington wants public diplomacy to come to the rescue, it seems to expect public diplomacy to deliver goodwill instantly among foreign publics without first establishing the necessary foundation of mutual trust and understanding.

Instead, reflex should become habit. Public diplomacy is effective only when it builds on long-term relationships that identify common interests between people and capitalize on them. It must be strategic, consistent, and flexible in its use of channels and, above all, must encourage two-way communication.

In 1999, after years of decline, the bulk of public diplomacy was folded haphazardly into the State Department, with international broadcasting remaining independent. To its credit, this "reinvention" finally integrates traditional and public diplomacy at the most basic level. Now the resulting structures must be adjusted to make them work. Both public diplomacy and foreign broadcasting should be strengthened and made more efficient. Some programs, like exchanges that were cut, should be restored; others that have fulfilled their purpose, like some broadcasting operations, should be phased out.

Public diplomacy is an important leadership tool. Its mission flowered during the great international conflicts of the 20th century, but its philosophical roots go back to America's founding. In his farewell address, President George Washington counseled, "as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion be enlightened."[23] The same could be said of U.S. diplomacy and foreign views of America.

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23. Scott M. Cutlip, *Public Relations History: From the 17th to the 20th Century* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995), pp. 48–49.