

**AFFAIRS OF STATE:
THE INTERAGENCY
AND NATIONAL SECURITY**

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Editor

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CHAPTER 8
SEDUCED AND ABANDONED:
STRATEGIC INFORMATION AND THE
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL PROCESS

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Truth also needs propaganda.
– Karl Jaspers,
German philosopher

INTRODUCTION

Strategic information is a term that cries out for definition. Strategic information is: (1) civilian public diplomacy currently conducted principally by the U.S. Department of State, and by other civilian agencies in a supporting role, e.g., the Broadcasting Board of Governors for international broadcasting, the Agency for International Development (AID) in civil affairs and developmental tasks (many AID programs in democracy building and AID training programs have an obvious public diplomacy link or provide opportunities for public diplomacy); and (2) military psychological operations and peacetime information operations with aims and methodology compatible with civilian public diplomacy, such as Civil Affairs, the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, and the expanded IMET (e-IMET) program.

Strategic information may also have a clandestine component and utilize grey or black propaganda where the source of information is either masked or falsified. This latter form is used by intelligence agencies but is not used by civilian public diplomacy or peacetime military psychological operations.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY DEFINED

Civilian public diplomacy has evolved from its first use in 1965 by Dean Edward Gullion of the Fletcher School at Tufts University, when he coined the term to refer mainly to nongovernmental actions and people-to-people programs or what is often now termed

“citizen diplomacy.” By the 1970s, however, public diplomacy came to mean the U.S. Government’s informational, educational and cultural exchange activities abroad. The classic definition of public diplomacy is attributed to the U.S. Information Agency and is still the preferred definition in the United States. Accordingly, “public diplomacy seeks to promote 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

Peacetime public diplomacy of this form was already in use as early as 1938, when Nelson Rockefeller’s Office of Inter-American Affairs embarked upon an ambitious educational and cultural exchange program with Latin America to blunt actual and potential Nazi and fascist influence.²

World War II and the creation of the Office of War Information (OWI), the Voice of America (VOA), and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) provided broad additional means for civilian-directed public diplomacy. At the same time, the War Department and the uniformed services honed under British tutorage psychological operations and other military information operations skills.

THE TOYS OF WAR

Following the war, as is the U.S. custom, the “toys of war” were put aside in peacetime. In a practical sense, this meant the demobilization and deactivation of most of the American civilian and military capability of waging a “war of ideas.” The Office of War Information, which also had significant domestic information coordination functions as well as its more documented foreign propaganda activities, was dismantled immediately upon the conclusion of hostilities. The remnants of OWI’s overseas operations were deposited in the Department of State where they remained until 1953. The Voice of America was continued, albeit with much reduced resources.³ The OSS evolved into the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 1947 and retained a capability for clandestine influence measures and black propaganda. The peacetime military placed

“psyops” and other information operations firmly on the back burner.

THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

The Beginning of the National Security Council Process.

With the passage of the National Security Act and the creation of the National Security Council (NSC) with Public Law 80-253 of July 26, 1947, the national security process began in the Harry Truman administration.⁴ Continuing the World War II interagency cooperation and coordination begun by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee established in 1944 at the Assistant Secretary level and at the Secretary level in 1945, the NSC attempted to give institutional stability to national security policymaking. The NSC was under the chairmanship of the President, with the Secretaries of State and Defense as its key members. Other original members included the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and the Chairman of the National Security Resources Board. The President could designate representatives of other executive agencies to attend meetings. The CIA reported to the NSC, but the Director of Central Intelligence was not a member; he attended meetings as an observer and adviser. The stated function of the NSC was to advise the President on the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to national security and to facilitate interagency cooperation. This vastly significant legislation also created the position of Secretary of Defense, the National Military Establishment, the CIA, and the National Security Resources Board.⁵ Despite the preponderance of military members, during the Truman administration the NSC was dominated by the Department of State. State’s Policy Planning Staff drafted most NSC papers for discussion, approval, and dissemination.⁶

From the beginning, strategic information was reinvented to the table. An early National Security Council document, NSC-4 entitled “Coordination of Foreign Information Measures,” brought strategic information in all of its forms to the forefront. The document reads in part:

NSC 4

Washington, December 17, 1947

REPORT BY THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL ON
COORDINATION OF FOREIGN INFORMATION MEASURES

The Problem

1. To determine what steps are required to strengthen and coordinate all foreign information measures of the U.S. government in furtherance of the attainment of U.S. national objectives.

Analysis

2. The USSR is conducting an intensive propaganda Campaign directed primarily against the U.S. and is employing coordinated psychological, political and economic measures designed to undermine non-Communist elements in all countries. The ultimate objective of this campaign is not merely to undermine the prestige of the U.S. and the effectiveness of its national policy but to weaken and divide world public opinion to a point where effective opposition to Soviet designs is no longer attainable by political, economic or military means. . . .

3. The U.S. is not now employing strong, coordinated information measures to counter this propaganda campaign or to further the attainment of its national objectives.

4. None of the existing departments or agencies of the U.S. Government is now charged with responsibility for coordinating foreign information measures in furtherance of the attainment of U.S. national objectives.

Conclusions

6. The present world situation requires the immediate strengthening and coordination of all foreign information measures of the U.S. Government designed to influence attitudes in foreign countries in a direction favorable to the attainment of its objectives and to counteract effects of anti-U.S. propaganda.⁷

The Memorandum goes on to charge the Secretary of State with responsibility to formulate policies and coordinate all information measures designed to influence attitudes in foreign countries. The Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs was delegated to exercise these functions for the Secretary, and he would be assisted by an interagency staff.

In a separate Memorandum, NSC-4-A entitled "Psychological Operations," the NSC notes that there are two related but separate purposes, i.e., (1) to ensure that all overt foreign information activities are effectively coordinated, and (2) to initiate steps looking toward the conduct of covert psychological operations. NSC-4 dealt with overt methods and a separate document, a directive to the Director of Central Intelligence, dealt

with the covert operations and established formal institutionalization of covert operations.⁸ Perhaps the most famous of these forays was CIA's covert support to The Congress for Cultural Freedom, established in 1950 which once had offices or representatives in some 35 countries.⁹

In 1951, the Psychological Strategy Board made up of the Deputy Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and the Director of Central Intelligence was created to coordinate a U.S. response to unconventional Soviet tactics. The Board worked closely with the NSC in managing both overt and covert counteroperations.¹⁰

The U.S. Information Agency and the National Security Council.

By 1953, psychological and influence operations were considered sufficiently indispensable to the conduct of foreign relations that a new entity was created which assumed the mantle for civilian overseas information, and cultural and educational exchanges activities authorized under the Information and Cultural Exchanges Act (Public Law 402 of January 27, 1948), also known as the Smith-Mundt Act. These activities had previously been carried out by the Department of State.¹¹ In addition to these duties, the new agency, the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), was charged with responsibility for the Voice of America, which eventually moved from its New York studios to Washington, DC. The Dwight Eisenhower administration, already well-disposed to what would later come to be called "public diplomacy" as an effective tool in the "war of ideas" against the Soviet Union, not only brought the USIA into existence but also codified the mission of the new agency in NSC Document number 165/1.¹² The Agency's mission has remained virtually unchanged until its demise in 1999.

In recent years, there has been a belated recognition that public diplomacy is an essential element in the conduct of foreign relations. Essential it is, but it is not the "silver bullet" or panacea that some pundits might claim. Indeed, no one can claim that public diplomacy in its many forms can solve America's relationship problems.

LOCALIZED PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

A myth worth exploring is the notion that public diplomacy works best when centrally planned and focused on a single message or set of messages. Those that believe this myth would have us believe that nothing worthwhile in public diplomacy happens without Washington's direction.

Anyone who has worked in public diplomacy abroad – “in the field” – is aware of how important on-the-ground experience and sensitivity to the local milieu is to successful public diplomacy. Successful public diplomacy campaigns are rarely “invented” in Washington. Indeed, most of the “brilliant” ideas from inside the Beltway are at best marginally successful in an overseas context. They too often presuppose a cookie cutter approach to the world with a one-size-fits-all policy line to which the hapless public diplomats abroad are expected to tow.

If there is one concept that seems to elude the political masters of the Washington bureaucracy, it is that in public diplomacy it is all about *context*. Thus a skilled practitioner of public diplomacy must find a way to take the “flavor of the month” cooked up by Washington and make it palatable to key contacts in the host country. The public diplomacy officer must find a way to place the message in a context that is both understandable and reasonable (if not likeable) to the target audience.

Three examples of localized public diplomacy which, in the language of the old USIA was “field driven” public diplomacy, illustrate what is meant by “localized” public diplomacy. The examples are illustrative of countless public diplomacy campaigns over the past half century that originated in the field rather than in the Washington bureaucracy, despite the national security systems' jealously guarded hold on power.

The first takes place in communist Czechoslovakia in the late 1970s and early 80s, the second in Finland in the late 1980s, and the third in Thailand in the late 1990s. There is nothing inherently more profound about

these three choices versus the many other examples of field-driven public diplomacy. They are all vignettes from this writer's own public diplomacy career and thus may be verified in their authenticity.¹³

Czechoslovakia.

In the waning days of World War II, as the Red Army raced westward to Berlin and the Western allies moved up the boot of Italy and across France to the Rhine, Czechoslovakia, especially Bohemia, became one of the last redoubts of the Nazis. Both the Russians and the Americans moved to eliminate this potential hold-out. General George Patton's Third Army moved aggressively into western Bohemia, and for a time it appeared that he would be the first to enter Prague and liberate that city. The communist-dominated partisans in Prague called for the Red Army to liberate the city, and thus Patton's army slowed and met up with the Red Army in the town of Rokycany just east of Plzen (Pilsen). At the end of the war then, American GIs occupied western and southern Bohemia, and the Red Army occupied the remainder of the country. As the Red Army was reluctant to leave, the GIs also stayed on until there was a mutual withdrawal in 1946. During that interval, the American GIs and the residents of western Bohemia seemed to have formed a close friendship. After the war, dozens of monuments were erected by local townspeople as tributes to their American liberators.

Following the Communist Party coup of February 1948, the regime wished to create the myth that it was the Red Army alone which liberated all of Czechoslovakia from fascism. Honoring the GIs was actively discouraged. After crushing the Prague Spring with a Russian-led Warsaw Pact occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the authorities took more drastic measures. Ostensibly in "outrage" over the Vietnam War, local officials had many of the monuments to American liberators removed and/or destroyed. But the memory remained.

In part to look into the history of the American liberation and in part as a cover for American military attachés' travel to border areas and districts of military interest, the Defense Attaché's Office at the American Embassy in Prague in the late 1970s began a series of

automobile trips each May to the towns in western Bohemia liberated by the United States. A similar series of journeys was organized in November to visit crash sites and monuments to fallen U.S. airmen in Slovakia. Initially only Department of Defense (DoD) personnel made the journeys but in the early 1980s, other personnel from the Embassy, including U.S. Ambassador Jack Matlock joined the small motorcade to Bohemia in May each year. The visits to the sites where markers once stood and to the small towns and villages was very low key and attracted almost no notice, except for the ubiquitous *Statny Tanjy Bezpečnosti* (STB or State Secret Security) detail which shadowed the Americans. Where a monument remained, a small wreath “from the American people” was placed on the marker.

In May 1983, the newly arrived Public Affairs Officer (PAO) joined the motor trips in May and November and realized the potential that these events might have for the United States to remind the people of Czechoslovakia of the American role in their liberation from the Nazis and also the enduring interest and concern on the part of the United States for the oppressed people of this communist state. Beginning in 1984, the Embassy’s May and November “wreath-layings” – as they came to be known – took on a higher profile and a different character. All embassy employees and their families were actively encouraged to join the motorcades which now grew much larger, with up to two dozen vehicles moving in tandem through the back roads and byways of Bohemia. The dates and times of the “wreath-layings” were announced through the Czechoslovak Service of the Voice of America (VOA) – the most widely listened-to foreign radio station in Czechoslovakia, (known euphemistically as “Prague Three” by most Czechs who had two domestic networks). Radio Free Europe’s (RFE) Czech and Slovak Services also announced the events. The Public Affairs Office (aka The Press and Cultural Service) was able to obtain thousands of Czechoslovak-American crossed-flag lapel pins from the U.S. émigré organization, the Czechoslovak National Congress, VOA bumper stickers, lapel pins, ballpoint pens, and other “souvenirs” for distribution to well-wishers along the route.

By 1986, the Press and Cultural Service was printing special commemorative postcards by the thousands with a photo of GIs liberating Pilsen for mass distribution to the by now thousands of Czechs lining the route and participating in the ceremonies at each site. Wreaths from “the American people” were placed in each location where there had been a monument whether removed or not, and American Ambassador William Luers addressed large audiences in near-fluent Czech recalling the friendship between Americans and the people of Czechoslovakia. The STB observers were beside themselves. The crowds were too large to intimidate, and the secret police filming and taping the events were hardly a secret but were largely ignored by the crowds who often displayed American flags and other expressions of support. Detailed reports of the growing crowds and their enthusiasm were broadcast back to Czechoslovakia by the VOA and RFE.

This local initiative, from the early forays into the Bohemian countryside in the late 1970s and especially after 1984 brought the events to the level of a major public diplomacy program, proved to be a huge success. The program reinforced the belief among the people of Czechoslovakia that the United States and the West had not abandoned them and was actively demonstrating that fact through the series of “wreath-layings” around the country. After the successful Velvet Revolution in December 1989, which toppled the communist government, the May Embassy “wreath-layings” continued in 1990 and culminated in an event in Pilsen at the newly restored Liberation Monument in front of the city hall. More than 100,000 Czechs honored the American liberators of their city.

Finland.

In 1638 a small band of Swedish colonists (the majority of whom happened to be Finns, then under the rule of the Kingdom of Sweden) founded New Sweden on the Delaware River, south of today’s Philadelphia. Nearly 350 years later, a rather low-key but well-organized effort commemorated this event in both Sweden and Finland. The two countries and the U.S. postal authorities had approved the issuance of stamps to mark the occasion in 1988 and various Swedish-American and Finish-American organization

were making plans to commemorate the event on both sides of the Atlantic.

While studying the Finnish language and culture in preparation for his assignment beginning in July 1987, the future PAO learned about the 1988 anniversary, and it triggered a series of ideas and plans to increase the American profile in Finland and reinforce the positive feelings for the United States that existed there. Recalling the slogan “America’s Bicentennial Salute to Sri Lanka” from an earlier assignment, the PAO recognized how successful it had been to bring all public diplomacy programs – the routine ones as well as those created just for the event – under a single banner as the PAO had done in Sri Lanka in 1976.

Using this formula as a model, the incoming PAO, in discussion with the Finnish Embassy in Washington and the USIA and Department of State, began to focus on 1988 as “The National Year of Friendship with Finland.”

Upon arrival in Finland, he was able to convince Ambassador Rockwell Schnabel and the Country Team of the value of using this event to further U.S. public diplomacy goals in Finland. Within a few months, an elaborate program of the National Year of Friendship with Finland was announced and underway. A logo for the Finnish-American Year of Friendship was adopted by both the U.S. Embassy and the Finnish Foreign Ministry, and soon this logo was on everything from cultural presentations to educational exchanges to publications and special events. The U.S. Information Service alone listed some 38 separate programs in honor of the “Year of Friendship” which included an all-star program at the prestigious *Finlandia Hall* featuring a video address to the *Finlandia* audience (and the national TV audience) by President Ronald Reagan on the importance of the relationship between Finland and the United States over the 350 years since the first Finn set foot in the New World. The event also kicked off a 5-year \$5 million dollar fund-raising campaign to increase the number of Fulbright grantees between Finland and the United States. The “Year of Friendship” culminated in a visit to Finland by President Reagan, the first-ever by a sitting U.S. president.

Among the benefits of this elaborate program in cooperation with the Finnish Government was an increased favorability rating for the United States as a nation and for specific U.S. foreign policies as measured by public opinion polls. The high level of favorability proved to be important as Finland assumed the Presidency of the Security Council just prior to the Gulf War and played an important and positive role which supported U.S. positions. Shortly thereafter Finland bought its first-ever U.S. military aircraft when a major contract was awarded for the F-16. This era of good feeling between the United States and Finland continued as the Baltic states gained their freedom from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the Soviet Union itself disintegrated shortly thereafter.

Thailand.

The Thai economy was one of the fastest growing of the so-called Asian Tigers in the 1990s. Construction cranes (the national bird) were seen in every direction in Bangkok, which went from a charmingly sleazy backwater to New York on the Chao Priya River in less than a decade. Wooden houses were replaced by 60-story buildings, and tropical gardens in the capital and similar scenes could be seen in other urban centers throughout the country. Thailand became the Detroit of Asia as dozens of automobile brands were manufactured there for the Asian market and auto parts makers proliferated. But this house of cards was built on speculation and what came to be called “crony capitalism” with loose banking practices, slipshod securities laws, and massive corruption; and it was all about to come crashing down.

The U.S.-Thai relationship has had its ups and downs in the 156-year history of diplomatic relations. Essentially, the relationship in Thai eyes was a classic *pi-non* relationship, that is, an elder brother-younger brother relationship with the United States as the *pi* and Thailand as the *non*. It was the *pi*'s responsibility to look out for the *non*, to assist when needed, to protect and to guide the *non*. The *non*'s responsibility was to be loyal to the *pi* and to follow the *pi*'s lead. This *pi-non* relationship survived the military dictatorships

in Thailand's post-war era, the Vietnam War, and American withdrawal from Southeast Asia and seemed unshakeable in July 1997.

Earlier in the year there had been "runs" on several international currencies by hedge fund operators, the most famous being George Soros' run on the British pound which netted him hundreds of millions of dollars in profit. In July 1997 it became the Thai *baht's* turn to be attacked by currency traders, and it proved to be the beginning of a cascade of economic troubles that caused first the Thai *baht* to crumble, and then the Thai financial system to crash, and eventually the Thai economy to come tumbling down. A run on a country's currency can be overcome easily if the underlying fundamentals of the economy are sound. But in Thailand's case, the fundamentals were in a shambles thanks to the crony capitalism and corruption of the banking and securities sectors.

Thailand became the first of the Asian Tigers to fall, but it soon had company. Indonesia and then South Korea followed in Thailand's footsteps and for many of the same reasons. When the dust had settled, the Thai baht went from about 24 to the dollar to about 55 to the dollar. Thousands of workers in the financial sector were suddenly without a job when their banks and securities firms closed their doors.

This is essentially an economic story, but it relates to public diplomacy because at its heart is the *pi-non* relationship. When Thailand's economy crashed, it looked to the United States for help. But the U.S. Treasury Department, looking through the framework of economics, not public diplomacy, looked at Thailand and saw that it basically got what it deserved for not having its house in order. The State Department deferred to the Treasury in all things having to do with economics and finance. So the United States did nothing when Thailand's crash came. Puzzled and resentful, the Thai saw the United States as abandoning Thailand, and renouncing the *pi-non* relationship when the going got tough.

Newspaper editorials pointed to the United States as the cause of Thailand's woes. George Soros and

other western currency traders were vilified, and by implication Western governments, especially the United States, were seen as responsible for the collapse throughout Asia. As if this was not bad enough, the U.S. Government decided that things were beginning to get out of hand in Asia and announced that it would bail out Indonesia and South Korea with billions of dollars in credit. This was like throwing gasoline on a fire in Thailand. The Thai media and influential Thais across the spectrum of society exploded in indignation. The United States would not help Thailand but would help Indonesia! Thailand was one of the five U.S. treaty allies in the Pacific, it was a functioning democracy, it was a loyal U.S. ally, and took its lead from the United States. Indonesia was none of these things – not a treaty ally nor even an informal ally, a dictatorship not a democracy; and Indonesia, more often than not, was at odds with the United States.

A major financial decision had been made in Washington without input from two important sources – first, there was no consultation with regard to the public diplomacy dimension of this decision in any of the countries affected, and, second, there was no consultation with the Embassy in Bangkok which actually understood the situation in Thailand. Even before this unfortunate decision was made, the PAO had outlined a series of public diplomacy strategic and tactical measures to explain U.S. policy to the Thai and limit the damage to the relationship. Following the announcement about aid for Indonesia, Ambassador William Itoh and the Country Team met to develop an overall strategy to cope with this near rupture of the relationship.

Public diplomacy was a central part of the strategy, which also included convincing State and Treasury to reverse course and provide an aid package for Thailand at least proportional to the aid package proposed for other countries. DoD was called upon through the Defense Attaché's Office and the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group to cancel an outstanding contract for F-16 aircraft and parts which would free up hundreds of millions of dollars for the Thai Government.

The U.S. Information Service's public diplomacy

strategy focused on several fronts. Because of the crash of the Thai economy and currency, many of the 8,000 Thai students in American higher education were suddenly without the financial means to continue their education. For the United States, this meant well-publicized and immediate assistance from public and private sector sources to provide work-study and loan opportunities for Thai and other Asian students, and the Institute for International Education and American higher educational institutions took the lead. In addition, the Public Affairs Section proposed to Washington that a special high profile scholarship program be established for 156 students selected by the Thai Government to attend U.S. universities for 3 years. The 156 was linked to the 156 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, and the total funding for the scholarship program provided through Economic Assistance Funds and administered by AID came to about \$3 million. This is a tiny sum when compared to the \$4 billion in loan guarantees provided to Thailand or the nearly \$1 billion in debt cancelled by recalling the F-16 contract, but because it involved people, not hardware or loans, it registered with the Thai public as real help from America. Other smaller exchange programs were augmented too, like the Fulbright Program and other government-funded internships; but the 156 scholarships made the biggest headlines.

Determined to demonstrate that the United States was interested in Thailand, the Embassy encouraged as many high level visitors as possible to visit Bangkok. For its part, the U.S. Information Service used each of these cabinet level or equivalent visits to get the message out that the United States was interested in Thailand and would do whatever it could to ease the burden during a difficult economic time. Every high level visitor held a press conference and interviews with Thai media, made highly visible public appearances, and consistently expressed the deep concern of the United States for Thailand and the Thai people. It was a rare week in 1998 when a U.S. cabinet-level official, congressional delegation, or senior military officer did not visit Thailand with a full public diplomacy program.

Recognizing that there was a reservoir of good will in Thailand built up over many years and reinforced by the visit by U.S. President Bill Clinton in 1996, another key component of the public diplomacy strategy focused on reaching out to the gatekeepers of information and the “influencers” in the society to make the case for the United States. The PAO arranged a series of lunches with key editorial boards and influential columnists to provide them with briefings on the complexities of international finance and currency speculation. U.S. Ambassador William Itoh, the fluent Thai-speaking Deputy Chief of Mission Ralph Boyce, the Embassy’s entire economic reporting section, and public diplomacy officers were all mobilized to this effort. In the end, it was Thai columnists, commentators, and editorial writers who put the Asian financial debacle in context and into the proper perspective for their readers, listeners, and viewers.

The United States emerged not as the villain it appeared to be when it ignored Thailand’s crisis but rather as the prime mover in rectifying a corrupt and mismanaged financial system in Thailand and in other Asian countries. This was seen as an act of responsibility worthy of the *pi*. Ironically, despite their own best efforts in aiding Thailand, it was Japan that was blamed for the instability in the Asian financial world because it continually postponed reforms to its own banking and financial sector. In opinion polling following the resolution of the financial crisis, the U.S. favorability level was nearly identical with the high mark it had reached immediately after the Clinton visit in 1996.

With this background on the reality of public diplomacy as it works in the field, we can return to the more complex battles for control of strategic information within the Washington bureaucracy and the National Security Council system.

THE NSC AND INFORMATION

The NSC system evolved into the principal arm of the president in forming and executing military, international, and internal security policies in the Eisenhower administration.¹⁴ President Eisenhower

was more comfortable with the NSC concept than was Truman, and he created a highly structured system of integrated policy review based on the Cutler Report. This system was described as the “policy hill” process wherein drafts from the agencies moved up from the agency level through an NSC Planning Board for review and refinement before reaching the NSC for consideration. At that time, the NSC consisted of five statutory members: the President, Vice President, Secretaries of State and Defense, and the Director of the Office of Defense Mobilization. Depending on the subject matter for discussion, other Cabinet members and advisors including the Secretary of the Treasury, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of Central Intelligence would participate. The President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs was a facilitator of the decision making system, oversaw the recommendations coming up and down “the hill,” and briefed and summarized discussions but unlike National Security Advisors from the Kennedy administration to the present, had no substantive role in the process.

President Eisenhower created the Operations and Coordinating Board (OCB) to make sure that decisions taken by the NSC were followed-up. Meeting weekly at the Department of State, the OCB was composed of the Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs (chair), the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Directors of the CIA and the new U.S. Information Agency, Special Assistants to the President for National Security Affairs and Security Operations Coordination. Some 40 interagency working groups reported to the OCB which had its own staff of 24 to support the working groups.¹⁵

The Eisenhower NSC provided regular, fully-staffed, interagency reviews of major national security issues which resulted in decisions at the highest level. Eisenhower himself was fully committed to the process and chaired 329 of the 366 NSC meetings that took place in his 8 years as President. While the NSC was in charge of the policy review process, the Department of State continued to exercise, under the strong hand of Secretary John Foster Dulles, full control over the day-to-day operations of foreign policy.¹⁶

The Eisenhower NSC system was sharply criticized, however, notably in the hearings conducted in 1960-61 by the Senate Subcommittee on National Policy Machinery (aka the Jackson Subcommittee), for being inflexible, overstaffed, unable to anticipate and react to immediate crises, and weighed down by committees. President Kennedy strongly agreed with the Jackson Subcommittee critique and immediately moved to cut the NSC staff and to simplify the foreign policymaking process, making it more intimate. The OCB was abolished, and the NSC no longer was required to monitor the implementation of policies. President Kennedy also installed McGeorge Bundy as the National Security Advisor, and the responsibilities and authorities of the NSC Advisor grew throughout the Kennedy years.¹⁷

In the realm of strategic information, this redefinition of the NSC and the abolition of the OCB took the wind out of the sails of the new Director of the USIA, the renowned CBS radio and TV newsman Edward R. Murrow, who expected to wield considerable influence in the new administration. Murrow was unaware of the future diminished role of the NSC when he accepted the USIA position and was soon outflanked by some of his own subordinates with strong personal ties to the White House.¹⁸

Murrow found himself and his agency marginalized despite the fact that he was often invited to attend NSC meetings. The real decisionmaking lay elsewhere, leaving Murrow more visible but less influential than his predecessors under Eisenhower.

The NSC met less and less frequently and some of its activities were taken up by a more select body, the "Standing Group." By April 1963 the Standing Group was reconstituted with McGeorge Bundy as its chairman and a membership that included the Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, the Attorney General, the Chairman of the JCS, the Under Secretary of the Treasury, the Director of USIA, and the Administrator of AID.¹⁹ Strategic communications, in the form of USIA, was back at the table at least at the operational level, but it was too late

for the seriously ill Murrow, and the Kennedy years were nearing an end.

Lyndon Johnson had even less faith in the NSC process than his predecessor. He considered the NSC to be a “leaky sieve” and preferred small intimate groups for decisionmaking. Johnson’s relationship with USIA and military information operations – and thus with strategic information – was defined and shaped almost entirely by the Vietnam War. Illustrative of the widened role for strategic information due to the war was Johnson’s National Security Action Memorandum, No. 325²⁰ which responded to the USIA Director’s suggestions for an information strategy in Vietnam. It reads in part:

NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM NO. 325
TO: THE DIRECTOR, U. S. INFORMATION AGENCY

1. I have reviewed your memorandum of March 16 on the informational and psychological warfare programs in South Vietnam. With the exception noted in paragraph 5 [regarding Viet Cong defectors], I hereby give my general approval to the rapid and effective execution of the improvements you propose. This approval is subject to review and concurrence by Ambassador [Maxwell] Taylor
2. By copy of this memorandum I request the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the Administrator of the Agency for International Development to give all possible support to an intensified information and psychological warfare program along the lines developed in your report.
3. By copy of this memorandum, I request the Director of the Bureau of the Budget to review with you and as necessary with other agencies the financial implications of such an intensified program and to make his recommendation to me as to the best way of meeting any additional costs.
4. Meanwhile you are directed to proceed with all necessary actions on the firm understanding that *it is my fixed policy that any worthwhile undertaking shall not be inhibited or delayed in any way by financial restrictions. We can and will find the resources we need for all good programs in Vietnam.* [Emphasis added]

Rarely does the strategic information function find itself in such an enviable position with the implication at least that there is a blank check for information and psychological operations.

The Richard Nixon National Security Council process was so dominated by Henry Kissinger, first as National Security Advisor, then as the dual-hatted NSC Advisor and Secretary of State, that strategic communication was a top-down decision no less than any other, and all decisions were made without reference to the NSC process.²¹ The administration paid less and less attention to overseas strategic information and more and more attention to domestic information management as the Watergate crisis mounted.

The Ford administration brought Kissinger's deputy Brent Scowcroft in to replace him as NSC Advisor, bowing to congressional disapproval of having so much foreign policy power in the hands of a single individual. Kissinger continued as Secretary of State, and Scowcroft managed a cordial relationship with his former boss while instituting a more low-key NSC coordination role.²² Strategic communication drifted as though on auto-pilot.

INFORMATION BECOMES COMMUNICATION

President Jimmy Carter entered office with no particular design for strategic information but with the plan to merge the State Department's Cultural Exchanges Bureau (CU) into USIA and to soften the hard edge of "information" in the process.²³ Carter eliminated the word "information" from the foreign policy lexicon and replaced it with "communication."

Thus, the USIA was augmented by the addition of a reluctant partner (CU) to form the Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau of the newly named International Communication Agency or USICA. USIA, the propaganda agency, was no more. But in field operations overseas, the USICA looked too much like the USCIA for many people, an unfortunate error of judgment on Washington's part that caused no end of irritation for those implementing information, cultural, and educational programs at U.S. embassies and consulates overseas.

Jimmy Carter came into office determined to eliminate the abuses of the NSC system under Kissinger, and envisaged the role of the NSC to be

one of policy coordination and research. The structure of the NSC was changed to ensure that the NSC Advisor would be but one of many advisors. Carter also reduced the staff by 50 percent, and reduced the number of standing committees from eight to two: a Policy Review Committee (PRC) usually chaired by a department, most often the State Department and the Special Coordinating Committee (SCC), always chaired by the NSC Advisor.²⁴

The Carter NSC has been criticized for failing to monitor implementation of the President's policies. In addition, because there were no clearly developed foreign policy principles other than arms control (the prerogative of the SCC), the President frequently changed his mind depending on who offered advice last. Carter's informality complicated the decision making process. Often no formal records of decisions were made, leading to indecision and embarrassment.²⁵

As an example of the scant regard the Carter administration had for strategic information, when the new President's U.S. National Strategy was formulated and disseminated, not so much as a carbon copy of the document ever reached the USICA, but copies did go, in addition to the Vice President and the Secretaries of State and Defense, to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of Central Intelligence. The Top Secret Presidential Directive/ NSC-18 set out the foreign policy priorities of the nation and the means to achieve them.²⁶ An examination of the now mainly unclassified document [passages relating to military strategy, policy, and practices are still redacted] reveals that among the means to achieve U.S. foreign policy priorities, there is no mention of any method of strategic information overt or covert, civilian or military. For Carter, strategic information just did not exist – after all, he had eliminated the word from the foreign policy lexicon in 1978.

ZENITH OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

If there is any certainty in the ways of Washington, it is that the pendulum always swings back. And

the pendulum on strategic information swung back dramatically with the beginning of the presidency of Ronald Reagan. It is no exaggeration to state that the Reagan administration was the zenith of strategic communication. Reagan, “the great communicator” himself, knew the business of persuasion very well indeed. He chose as his Director of the USICA – hastily renamed the U.S. Information Agency – Charles Z. Wick, a close Hollywood confidant and family friend with constant and instant access to the President.²⁷

A series of National Security Decision Directives increased and institutionalized the access, the power, and the scope of Wick’s agency and brought public diplomacy not only to the table of the NSC but to the very center of the foreign policy process. Five key NSC documents trace the growth of strategic information within the Reagan administration. They are NSDD 77, NSDD 130, NSDD 186, NSDD 266, and NSDD 276. All five of the key documents have been declassified and are available through the Reagan Library, Simi Valley, California.²⁸

In National Security Decision Directive Number 77 entitled “Management of Public Diplomacy Relative to National Security,”²⁹ the President states: “I have determined that it is necessary to strengthen the organization, planning, and coordination of the various aspects of public diplomacy of the U.S. Government relative to national security.” NSDD 77 established a Special Planning Group (SPG) of the NSC under the chairmanship of the NSC Advisor and consisting of the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Director of the USIA, the Director of AID and the Assistant to the President for Communications. The role of the SPG was “to be responsible for the overall planning, direction, coordination, and monitoring of implementation of public diplomacy activities.”³⁰

Four interagency standing committees reporting to the SPG were established by NSDD 77. The committees would receive support from the NSC staff and periodic guidance from the SPG which would review their activities for proper implementation of policy and to determine resource priorities. The committees were:

- *The Public Affairs Committee*: Co-chaired by the Assistant to the President for Communications and the Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. The committee was responsible for planning and coordinating U.S. Government public affairs activities relative to national security, e.g., major speeches on national security and public appearances by senior officials.

- *The International Information Committee*: Chaired by a senior representative of USIA; vice chaired by a senior representative of the State Department. The committee was responsible for planning, coordinating, and implementing international information activities in support of U.S. policies and interests. The committee also was empowered to make recommendations and, as appropriate, direct the concerned agencies, interagency groups, and working groups with respect to information strategies in key policy areas.

- *The International Political Committee*: Chaired by a senior representative of the Department of State; vice-chaired by a senior representative of USIA. The committee was responsible for planning, coordinating, and implementing international political activities in support of U.S. policies and interests, including aid, training, and organizational support for foreign governments and private groups to encourage the growth of democratic political institutions and practices.

- *The International Broadcasting Committee*: Chaired by a representative of the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. The committee was responsible for the planning and coordination of international broadcasting activities sponsored by the U. S. Government.

The next major addition to the institutional build-up of strategic information came with National Security Decision Directive Number 130, "U.S. International Information Policy." The Directive³¹ calls international information an integral and vital part of U.S. national security policy and strategy and, along with other elements of public diplomacy, a key strategic instrument for shaping fundamental political

and ideological trends. NSDD 130 cites a need for sustained commitment to improving the quality and effectiveness of U.S. international information efforts, the level of resources devoted to them, and their coordination with other elements of national security policy and strategy. Of interest, the document also calls for a greater role for international information considerations in formulating policies.

The document addresses in some detail an international information strategy, including international radio broadcasting; other international information instruments such as publications, new technologies, cooperation with the private sector, overcoming barriers to communication; strategically targeted information and communications assistance to other nations; psychological factors in maintaining the confidence of allied governments and in deterring military action; and the capability by the armed forces to have an immediate and effective use of psychological operations in crisis and in wartime. Revitalization and full integration of psychological operations in military operations is declared to be an important priority for DoD. The NSDD concludes with a series of functional requirements related to international information and the approval of the establishment of the Foreign Opinion Research Advisory Group. In National Security Decision Directive 223, "Implementing the Geneva Exchanges Initiative," the "softer side" of public diplomacy became the subject of presidential attention. This directive,³² following on the heels of the Reagan-Gorbachev Summit Meeting in Geneva in 1986 and the Geneva Exchanges Initiative, was aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation at all levels; including through educational and student exchanges, people-to-people programs, media, and information exchanges, and consultations.

The President noted that he attached "high priority to the exchanges initiative" and requested all relevant U.S. Government agencies to give it a high priority also and "to render every possible assistance to implementation." A new Interagency Group on the President's Geneva Exchanges Initiatives was established, chaired by the NSC Senior Director for European and Soviet Affairs. A new Office of the

Coordinator for the President's U.S.-Soviet Exchanges Initiative was established at USIA to work with USIA and other agencies and the private sector to develop programs in the agreed areas and work on new initiatives. The remainder of the NSDD 223 detailed the duties and responsibilities of the coordinator and his relationship to existing offices and programs.

THE SPECIAL REVIEW BOARD

The President's Special Review Board (or the Tower Board chaired by Senator John Tower) submitted its Report to the President on February 26, 1987. In a nationwide address on March 4, President Reagan announced that he endorsed the Board's recommendations and intended to go beyond them in rebuilding the NSC process to repair the damage done by the Iran-Contra Affair.

NSDD 266 details specific steps in implementing the Board's recommendation and other reforms.³³ Much of the document goes beyond the scope of the current discussion and addresses the statutory responsibilities and membership of the NSC in some detail. The document must be seen in the perspective of the Iran-Contra hearings and the revelation of covert activities undertaken by staff of the NSC. Much of the document addresses these issues. From the perspective of strategic information, however, the following passage in Section

I. A., "Organizing for National Security," is relevant:

II.

The Directors of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and United States Information Agency are special statutory advisors to the NSC.

The Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency shall be the principal advisor to the President, the Secretary of State and the NSC on arms control and disarmament matters. *The Director of the United States Information Agency shall be the principal advisor to the President, the Secretary of State, and the NSC on international informational, educational, and cultural matters.* [Emphasis added]

The Directive goes on to spell out in detail the role of the National Security Advisor, the NSC staff, the NSC and the Interagency Process, including meetings, the process, covert action, use of nongovernment

personnel, the intelligence process, and reporting. Among the directives is a prohibition on conduct of covert activities by NSC staff.

Continuing the damage control from the Iran-Contra Scandal, NSDD 276³⁴ provides additional detailed guidance on the “National Security Council Interagency Process.” The President defines five groupings within the NSC process, defines their authority, membership, and prerogatives. The five are: (1) National Security Council, (2) National Security Planning Group (NSPG), (3) Senior Review Group (SRG), (4) The Policy Review Group (PRG), and (5) Other Interagency Groups. According to NSDD 276:

Within their respective areas of authority as set forth in NSDD 266, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, the Director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and the Director of the USIA may approve the continuation of existing senior interagency groups to the extent necessary or desirable to promote an effective NSC process; by June 30, 1987, the National Security Advisor shall be notified of those interagency groups they have determined shall continue to function.³⁵

THE POST COLD WAR CHILL

In contrast to the Reagan years, President George H. W. Bush’s NSC held itself aloof from strategic communication. Unlike the rare Reagan-Wick personal relationship, the President’s relationships with USIA Director Gelb and later with Director Henry Catto were more in the norm and not based on long-term family friendships but on political relationships, and as such, were more distant. Charles Wick was the last USIA Director to enjoy instant access to the President.³⁶

With a strong background in international affairs, CIA Director, UN Ambassador, Ambassador to China, and 8 years as Vice President, George H. W. Bush made wholesale changes to the NSC, even following the reforms in 1987.³⁷ President Bush’s NSD-1³⁸ provided a new charter for the NSC, the Policy Review Group was enlarged to a Committee, the Deputy National Security Advisor named as chair of the Deputies Committee and a Principals Committee screened matters for the

NSC. Eight Policy Coordinating Committees (PCCs) were formed to absorb regional and functional responsibilities.

Public Diplomacy was not shut out of the NSC process as it had been under President Jimmy Carter or marginalized to a lesser extent as in the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations, but in contrast to the Eisenhower years, and especially the Reagan administration, the influence of strategic information was weak.³⁹

A blow to USIA came with the unexpected and sudden dissolution of the USSR in 1991 after releasing its grip on the Warsaw Pact with the end of the Berlin Wall and the beginning of the Velvet Revolution in Prague. The absence of “an enemy” created the absence of the long-time rationale for American public diplomacy, especially the robust public diplomacy of the Cold War era. The George H. W. Bush administration decided to take a “peace dividend” and cut the USIA budget in each succeeding year.⁴⁰

This lack of enthusiasm for public diplomacy was adhered to and expanded upon by the new President. The Clinton administration preserved some key public diplomacy programs, notably the Fulbright Academic Exchanges in a kind of posthumous salute to Bill Clinton’s mentor and fellow Rhoads Scholar, Senator J. William Fulbright. But the Clinton administration continued the sharp cuts to the overall public diplomacy budget, especially in international information programs which suffered near catastrophic declines.⁴¹

By the beginning of the second Clinton term, the indications that USIA’s days were numbered grew more obvious. In 1998, there was an Executive-Legislative agreement to “merge” USIA (and originally also USAID) into the Department of State. The ostensible rationale was that this would not only save money but would bring public diplomacy closer to the center of foreign policy formulation. In truth, the accommodation worked out between Secretary Madeleine Albright and Senator Jesse Helms was a compromise to achieve funding for the current U.S. contribution and previous year’s arrears to the United Nations (UN).

The Clinton administration gained funding, including the significant backlog in funding for the U.S. contribution to the UN. In return, Senator Helms was to have his long time wish fulfilled – the emasculation of USAID’s independence and influence in Congress by being placed within the Department of State. USIA’s dismemberment was simply a bonus. In the negotiations that followed, USAID escaped confinement within State and emerged a weakened but still independent voice in the foreign policy establishment, but USIA, already weakened by years of budget cuts after the Cold War, was extinguished as an entity. (See the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998. Public Law 105-277.) On October 1, 1999, the Agency’s public diplomacy personnel and functions were scattered throughout the State Department bureaucracy, and its largest component was shorn away entirely as the Voice of America and the other broadcasting entities were placed with the independent Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG).⁴²

It takes no great imagination to realize that the dismantling of the USIA, the dissolution of its personnel and functions with the State Department bureaucracy, and the creation of a BBG responsible to no one (not the Secretary of State, not even the President) is a compound and nearly fatal blow to the ability of the United States to project a global information strategy. We now examine the present situation in the years following the reorganization of the foreign affairs agencies and what future role that strategic information may have in the National Security Council process.

AFTER THE ANSCHLUSS AND REINVENTING THE WHEEL

In the waning days of the existence of the USIA, the Clinton National Security Council on April 30, 1999, issued a still classified Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 68 on International Public Information. The directive, according to published media reports at the time and the website of the Federation of American Scientists, was issued to “address problems identified during military missions in Kosovo and Haiti, when

no single U.S. agency was empowered to coordinate U.S. efforts to sell its policies and to counteract bad press abroad.”⁴³ In addition, with the soon-to-be-accomplished “merger” of USIA into the Department of State, the existing NSC Directive, NSDD 77 issued in the Reagan administration would be inoperative, and PDD-68 was seen as a replacement for the Reagan document.

Senior officials of the Departments of State and Defense, Justice, Commerce, and Treasury, the CIA and the FBI, according to public sources, were designated as members of the International Public Information (IPI) Core Group. The Core Group was to be chaired by the soon-to-be-created position of Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs at the State Department. The IPI Core Group was to “assist efforts in defeating adversaries.” The U.S. intelligence community would “play a crucial role . . . for identifying hostile foreign propaganda and deception that targets the U.S.” In addition, again according to public reports, the IPI was designed to “influence foreign audiences” in support of U.S. foreign policy and to counteract propaganda by enemies of the United States. Reportedly, the IPI Core Group Charter stated that:

- IPI control over “international military information” was intended to “influence the emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals.”
- “The objective of IPI is to synchronize the informational objectives, themes, and messages that will be projected overseas . . . to prevent and mitigate crises and to influence foreign audiences in ways favorable to the achievement of U.S. foreign policy objectives.”
- Information distributed through IPI should be designed not “to mislead foreign audiences” and that information programs “must be truthful.”
- [Regarding the likelihood that foreign media reports are reflected in American media, information aimed at domestic audiences should] “be coordinated, integrated, deconflicted and synchronized with the [IPI Core Group] to achieve a synergistic effect for

strategic information activities.”⁴⁴

One might term PDD 68 merely “reinventing the wheel” but because the existing mechanism (NSDD-77) was being “deconstructed” along with the USIA, some means to coordinate strategic information had to be found.

The PDD 68 system likely might have worked had it become operational. However, because the incoming Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Evelyn Lieberman, was reluctant to sit down at the same table with the intelligence community, only one meeting of the IPI Core Group occurred during the Clinton administration. It was left to working level bureaucrats to attempt to coordinate their international information activities in the absence of leadership from above.

A NEW DIRECTION

The George W. Bush administration’s first National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD-1) organized the NSC process to the desires of the new administration. NSPD-1 replaced the system of Presidential Decision Directive and Presidential Review Directives as an instrument for communicating presidential decisions about national security policies. The document listed the NSC attendees (both statutory and nonstatutory), the role of the Vice President presiding in the absence of the President, the strong agenda determining role of the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and the NSC’s relationship with the National Economic Council (NEC). The directive also continued the role of the NSC Principals Committee (NSC/PC) and the NSC Deputies Committee (NSC/DC). NSPD-1 further set out the organization of the NSC process as follows:

Management of the development and implementation of national security policies by multiple agencies of the United States Government shall usually be accomplished by the NSC Policy Coordination Committees (NSC/PCCs). The NSC/PCCs shall be the main day to day fora for interagency coordination of national security policy.⁴⁵

Six regional NSC/PCCs, chaired by an official of Under

Secretary or Assistant Secretary rank as designated by the Secretary of State, were established. In addition, “topical” or functional NSC/PCCs were established as follows:

- Democracy, Human Rights and International Operations
- International Development and Humanitarian Assistance
- Global Environment
- International Finance
- Transnational Economic Issues
- Counterterrorism and National Preparedness
- Defense Strategy, Force Structure, and Planning
- Arms Control
- Proliferation, Counter proliferation, and Homeland Defense
- Intelligence and Counterintelligence
- Records Access and Information Security

There was no NSC/PCC designated for Strategic Information, Public Diplomacy, or Foreign Information Activities. The closest approximation was in the PCC on Democracy, Human Rights, and International Operations. NSPD 1 also abolished by March 1, 2001, the existing system of Interagency Working Groups and other existing NSC interagency groups, ad hoc bodies, and executive committees, except for those established by statute.⁴⁶ Of immediate practical concern in the field of strategic information, the IPI Core Group was among the casualties, and no replacement organization or group was named. Strategic Information or Public Diplomacy did not appear to be a high priority in the early days of the new administration.

Following the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11), the Bush administration found itself in need of a strategic information policy and a structure to deal with the acknowledged crisis in American public diplomacy. There was a general recognition that in the absence of an agency like the USIA, there was no central focus for public diplomacy, and the record of the State Department in public diplomacy since the “anschluss” which brought USIA into the Department was generally recognized to have been a failure.⁴⁷

GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS

The solution might have been to resurrect the USIA or create a similar agency either within or outside the State Department as a number of reports and studies recommended.⁴⁸ Instead, the White House called forth a White House solution by creating a new White House Office of Global Communications (OGC) headed by a Deputy Assistant to the President. According to the Executive Order setting up the Office, the OGC's mission was

to advise the President, the heads of appropriate offices within the Executive Office of the President and the heads of executive departments and agencies on utilization of the most effective means for the U.S. Government to ensure consistency in messages that will promote the interests of the United States abroad, prevent misunderstanding, build support for and among coalition partners of the United States, and inform international audiences.⁴⁹

Among the functions of the new Office were:

- assessment of methods and strategies (except for "special activities," i.e., covert operations) to deliver information to audiences abroad;
- development of a strategy for disseminating truthful, accurate and effective messages about the United States, its government and policies, and the American people and culture;
- coordination of the creation of temporary teams of communicators for short-term placement in areas of high global interest and media attention (however no team could be deployed without prior consultation with the Departments of State and Defense and prior notification to the NSC Advisor);
- encouragement of the use of state of the art media and technology.

While on the surface, the Office of Global Communication appeared to be a solution of sorts for the lack of direction and leadership in the strategic communication/public affairs arena, there were built-in flaws in the system that would prevent the OGC from being very effective in any of its functions. Chief among these flaws was that the OGC was outside the NSC process and the interagency system. The Executive Order itself stated that "nothing in this order shall be construed to

impair or otherwise affect any function assigned by law or by the President to the National Security Council or to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs." Further, the Executive Order noted that it did not alter "existing authorities of any agency."⁵⁰ Given the inherent weaknesses in the structure and authorities of the Office of Global Communications, it surprised few observers to note the steady decline in the OGC's relevance and its eventual and unheralded disappearance from the White House organization chart in 2005.

FUSION

Just as in the Clinton administration, for most of the Bush administration a rough form of coordination and cooperation among working level professionals from the public diplomacy bureaus of the State Department and elements of DoD, USAID, and other agencies held the threads together while waiting for senior leaders to decide what form an international information strategy would take. The so-called "Fusion Team" which meets in State Annex 44 (the former USIA Headquarters Building) is the best example of keeping this flame alive. While the Fusion Team has an important function no doubt, it is no substitute for a top to bottom interagency process on strategic information which has not been evident since the end of the Reagan administration.

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

The Department of State inherited public diplomacy from the USIA and would be expected to lead the effort on strategic information. Regrettably, for numerous reasons outlined in the nearly 30 reports and recommendations by public and private organizations designed to rescue public diplomacy from its current nadir, this State Department leadership did not materialize.⁵¹ Without going into the details of systemic failure to utilize properly the resources of public diplomacy inherited by the Department in this venue, one can point to the lack of long-term, unified, and consistent leadership over public diplomacy as one major cause.

A succession of short-term leaders has presided

over public diplomacy in the Department of State since October 1999. Under Secretary Evelyn Lieberman's largely ineffective tenure ended with the Republican victory in 2000. After a lengthy transition, advertising executive Charlotte Beers was sworn in only a few weeks after 9/11. Her tenure was tortured and brief, and when she departed "for personal reasons," she was succeeded by an interim replacement, Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs Patricia Harrison, until the administration was able to convince Ambassador to Morocco Margaret Tutweiler to take up the challenge. Within a few months, Tutweiler, who arrived stating that she would stay only for a short time, left for Wall Street and was replaced again on an interim basis by Harrison. In a surprise appointment, President Bush announced that his close confidant and communications advisor, Karen Hughes, would take up the post of Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, but the new appointment would not be taken up for nearly 5 months due to family commitments. Even under the best of circumstances, with this kind of revolving door in leadership, it is hard to imagine an effective public diplomacy strategy being undertaken.

To Ms. Hughes' credit, she and her Deputy, Dina Powell, "hit the ground running" with a series of outreach encounters and listening tours at home and abroad. Hughes appeared to recognize the most serious flaw in the foreign affairs reorganization of 1998-99, i.e., that there is no unity of command or central authority over public diplomacy in the Department of State. If anything, there is even less unity in the interagency process regarding strategic communication. Input over assignments, resources, and administrative issues can lead to input over policy and strategy, but in the absence of any influence over officers in the field, an Under Secretary is powerless to manage the program responsibilities, and public diplomacy is a program-intensive function. A number of alleged "fixes" were made in the Department to strengthen Hughes' position within the bureaucracy, including assigning one regional deputy assistant secretary in each regional bureau to be in charge of public diplomacy and giving (in theory at least) the Under Secretary shared line authority over that position with the regional

assistant secretary. Evaluation, budgeting, and other administrative functions for State Department public diplomacy bureaus and offices reported to the Under Secretary rather than to individual bureau heads, thanks to Hughes' insistence.

Other minor measures could be taken within the authority of the Department to centralize the Under Secretary's role in public diplomacy. Still, as numerous outside reports point out, only so much can be done within the existing flawed structure. Hughes apparently came to realize this and departed for the greener pastures of the private sector in 2008. After a lengthy Senate hold on his nomination, a new Under Secretary, James Glassman, was sworn in with only a few months left in the Bush administration. Glassman, formerly with the BBG, has a keen understanding of public diplomacy and has made an impressive start in what is surely a lame duck role. There is little time for the kind of dramatic change that is required to revitalize public diplomacy no matter how valiant the effort on Glassman's part. Eventually perhaps, Congress will tire of a band-aid approach to fixing public diplomacy and decide to undo or redo the reorganization of the foreign affairs agencies so badly botched in 1998-99. In the meantime, America's strategic information may be neither strategic nor very informative.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

The 2005 report by the Public Diplomacy Council, *A Call for Action on Public Diplomacy*, made the case that it may be impossible to turn back the clock and recreate the independent USIA, complete with responsibility over international civilian broadcasting. The Council called instead for a semi-independent agency lodged within the State Department but with a unified chain of command and control over overseas public diplomacy operations.⁵² This would eliminate the serious flaw which plagues the Under Secretary and would result in a much improved performance. With the change of administrations in Washington, however, there may exist a brief period during which a reenergized and independent agency for public diplomacy could be created and be well-integrated into the national security process as it was in the Reagan and Eisenhower

administrations.

Importantly, the crucial role of localized public diplomacy must be recognized. Public diplomacy must return to its “field-driven” roots, and public diplomacy officers in the field must have greater latitude to create strategies within the context of the societies and cultures in which they operate. This presupposes that adequate resources, too, must be directed to overseas operations and the increased staffing required. The cleverest strategy will fail if there are too few personnel and financial resources available for its implementation.

It is critical to realize, as several studies have pointed out in recent years, that the Department of State is not the only important actor in public diplomacy or strategic information in the U.S. Government.⁵³ In order to coordinate and manage the breadth of international information and exchange programs conducted by any new agency, State, Defense, USAID, and the more than 60 offices, bureaus, and executive departments that already report international exchanges, training, or information programs, the NSC or interagency process on strategic information must be reconstituted. Indeed, nearly half of all of the reports and studies on public diplomacy undertaken in the past 3 years have pointed to interagency coordination as a serious problem that must be addressed.⁵⁴ Solutions vary and include structures within the NSC and outside it, but there is broad agreement that the current interagency process requires strengthening.

Based on the history of American experimentation with strategic information in the NSC process, there are two periods which emerge as worthy exemplars—the Eisenhower administration and the Reagan administration. Both administrations had elaborate, and perhaps to some overly bureaucratized, systems of advice, analysis, monitoring, and execution of strategic information programs at multiple levels from the working level to the senior leader level. Yet, for the most part, they worked, and for that reason alone are worth a careful look. The criticisms of both the Eisenhower and the Reagan NSC processes over the passage of time seem to be not very cogent. Eisenhower’s NSC process was not too slow and unwieldy, and if it proved to be so—as in a period of crisis—it was by-passed. The

Reagan NSC system is too often seen through the prism of the Iran-Contra Affair; that situation was an aberration, not the norm, and the reforms instituted by the Tower Board set the system straight.

The conclusion is inescapable. Congress and the Executive should relook at the organization of public diplomacy/strategic communication and alter the current flawed design to create unity of command and clear lines of authority whether that is in a separate agency, an agency within the State Department, or some third variant. Because “localized public diplomacy” has been shown to be more effective than world-wide strategies designed inside the Beltway, public diplomacy should be field-driven. In addition, the Executive Branch should return to a more elaborate and tested formula for an interagency process that worked in both the Eisenhower and the Reagan NSCs.

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