

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**BUILDING A PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY FOR THE U.S.:  
Leveraging the Informational Element of National Power**

by

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The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies.

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## ABSTRACT

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The “informational” element of national power is often referred to in vague terms without association to specific overarching objectives or explicit ways or means. The other elements of national power – military, diplomatic, and economic – are guided by strategies, policies, or organizations. However, there is no overarching guidance to realize the psychological value inherent in the exercise of these elements of U.S. national power. Recognizing this deficiency, this paper argues for a “psychological strategy.” A national psychological strategy would require a standing bureaucracy to work with the interagency, particularly the National Security Council and the Departments of State and Defense, to develop overarching themes and messages in order to provide an informational “backdrop” for all government activities affecting domestic and foreign audiences. The keys to successful implementation of a national psychological strategy are integration of public diplomacy, public affairs, international military information and coercive diplomacy, supported by the means to understand and communicate with foreign audiences and gauge both domestic and foreign reaction to U.S. plans, policies, and actions. The nation has the resources and expertise to execute an effective psychological strategy which will make the difference for the U.S. in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



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## BUILDING A PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY FOR THE U.S.: Leveraging the Informational Element of National Power

There is a psychological dimension to the employment of every instrument of national power...Psychological and political warfare is about the behavior of individuals and groups under stress, about the cohesion of organizations and alliances.

—Carnes Lord

### Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the U.S. Approach

The “informational” element of national power is often referred to in vague terms without association to specific overarching objectives or explicit ways or means. The other elements of national power – military, diplomatic, and economic – are guided by strategies, policies, or organizations. The National Military Strategy directs the employment of military power. The State Department exercises control of the diplomatic element of power on behalf of the President. State, in conjunction with Commerce, Treasury, and the other departments and agencies coordinate the use of the economic element of national power. However, there is no overarching guidance to realize the psychological value inherent in the exercise of these elements of U.S. national power.<sup>1</sup> Recognizing this deficiency, this paper argues for a “psychological strategy.” It describes its components as well as the structure and processes necessary to leverage the psychologically potent informational element of national power and orchestrate the themes, meanings, and messages conveyed by their use.

The most recent national security policy regarding the development of what could be considered a “psychological strategy” is found in Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 68, “International Public Information (IPI),” signed by President Clinton in April 1999. PDD 68, which has been revalidated by the Bush administration, describes the potential of the U.S. government to plan, coordinate, and execute strategic influence campaigns in support of its worldwide policies.<sup>2</sup> The current National Security Strategy of the United States of America (NSS) generally outlines the nation’s ends, asserting that the United States needs a “comprehensive approach to public information efforts that can help people around the world learn about and understand America....This is a struggle of ideas and this is an area where America must excel.”<sup>3</sup> A report by the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy noted the need to accomplish this objective, with a long-term requirement to promote dialogue, share ideas, develop relationships and cross-cultural initiatives, and focus on persuasion and communication of values.<sup>4</sup> Within the Department of Defense, the National Military Strategy (NMS) only peripherally addresses the explicit psychological value of the exercise of U.S.

military force except as a deterrent when used as part of theater security cooperation efforts.<sup>5</sup> While the NSS declares that the U.S. military symbolizes U.S. commitment, resolve, and willingness to defend its interests,<sup>6</sup> this symbolism is not explicitly linked to a regional or national informational effort or State Department program. In addition, the Department of State tends to focus on public diplomacy and public affairs as the key means “to influence opinions in ways support U.S. interests and policies” and mostly ignores the psychological impact of the use of military force.<sup>7</sup>

Since the tragic events of 11 September 2001, there has been a recognition that the U.S. needs to articulate persuasively its values, beliefs, and policies in ways that garner understanding from hostile foreign audiences and support from ambivalent ones. Nonetheless, little headway has been made to counter the negative and conflicting images of the U.S. in the international arena. Polls taken since 11 September 2001 consistently show that globally, particularly in the Middle East and in Muslim countries, the U.S. suffers from an image problem.<sup>8</sup> This problem is compounded internationally by the number of issues the U.S. is a party to and our piecemeal approach to dealing with them. The State Department has acknowledged the negative U.S. image abroad complicates attempts to secure support for its efforts in the global arena.<sup>9</sup> Poorly articulated policies, insufficient understanding of foreign values and beliefs, and the pervasiveness of American power constantly on display have fueled feelings of resentment against the U.S. government and American foreign policy in particular.<sup>10</sup> This anti-U.S. sentiment has manifested itself in the bombings of American fast-food restaurants overseas, attacks on U.S. troops in Kuwait, and assassinations of U.S. missionaries in Lebanon and a USAID official Jordan.<sup>11</sup>

Clausewitz stated “War is merely the continuation of policy by other means.”<sup>12</sup> He was referring to a clash of arms in combat over a political end. However, another kind of warfare plays out daily on the international stage – political warfare. Such warfare is rooted in the idea that men are influenced through their minds, and their thinking is affected by the words and deeds of an adversary. Seabury and Codevilla have described political warfare as “the art of heartening friends and disheartening enemies, of gaining help for one’s cause and causing the abandonment of the enemies’.”<sup>13</sup> They argue that war consists primarily of intentions rather than words or deeds, and that decisions and actions result from intentions to support a particular objective. In this context, a psychological strategy is essential to ensuring the nation’s words and deeds coherently and comprehensively communicate U.S. intentions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century global arena.

## **ORIGINS OF U.S. PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY**

Information and the psychological element of national power were first recognized by the United States as essential to the conduct of war in World War I; until then, the U.S. had never conducted a propaganda campaign.<sup>14</sup> The government's first institutional attempt was the formation of the Committee on Public Information, established by executive order on 14 April 1917 and headed by George Creel. He believed that the "fight for the minds of men" was as important as the war on the ground. He claimed that "lies had the force of divisions" and that the verdict of mankind would be held in the jury of public opinion.<sup>15</sup> His endeavors drove the organization from its stand up in 1917 to its dissolution in November 1918 and final report in mid-1919. The stated goals of the Committee were to combat negative portrayal of the U.S. in foreign press, enhance morale of the troops, engender support and belief in the United States from the Allies, and convince the Central Powers of the "ideals, determination, and invincibility" of this nation.<sup>16</sup> Another part of the Committee's efforts was to educate the world about America as a nation, not merely engage in counter-propaganda.<sup>17</sup> The Committee's efforts employed all available media and addressed both domestic and foreign audiences, including the foreign language press. It had offices in every world capital.<sup>18</sup> Overseas, the U.S. controlled no media and was entirely dependent on the foreign press.<sup>19</sup> Creel and the Committee made a special effort to ensure that the content of any statements forwarded by the Committee was truthful and unbiased, guarding against misstatements and correcting any false releases as soon as they were identified. Any censorship of U.S. film or print media was voluntary to avoid alienating the media outlets.<sup>20</sup>

The Committee analyzed enemy propaganda to support counter-propaganda efforts.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the Committee coordinated and controlled daily news related to military operations and acted on behalf of the Departments of State, War, Navy, Justice, and Labor, along with several war-related councils and boards.<sup>22</sup> The Committee's products and initiatives directly addressed foreign-born Americans and Americans of foreign descent in their native languages to encourage support for the U.S. cause.<sup>23</sup> Creel understood the importance of accepting the contributions of non-English speaking American communities. He sought loyalty from inside these groups, not enforcing it from the outside.<sup>24</sup> A Foreign Information Service touted the positive aspects of the U.S. to foreign language groups in the American press.<sup>25</sup> The News Division of the Committee recognized the war was global and launched a 24-hour operation to support timely information dissemination.<sup>26</sup> The Committee focused on several key areas, including a World News Service, foreign mail, and films.<sup>27</sup> Congressional enmity toward the

Committee precluded establishment of a permanent public information activity, so it was abolished when the war ended. Creel pointed out that it was a “war organization only” and that a Committee for Public Information in peacetime would only cause on-going controversy, as it had from the moment it was created as a wartime measure.<sup>28</sup>

The first major national effort that looked beyond the immediate requirements driven by a crisis or conflict was the establishment of a Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) by President Truman in June 1951. Truman’s directive established the PSB under the National Security Council (NSC) to formulate and promulgate national-level psychological objectives, policies, and programs.<sup>29</sup> The membership consisted of the Undersecretary of State, Deputy Secretary of Defense, Director of Central Intelligence, and the Chairman of the JCS, who served as military advisor for the integration of military psychological operations. Although an initial draft excluded overt economic warfare and restricted the PSB from conducting psychological operations, the final directive did not. Instead, it pointed out the integral relationship of economic activities in a psychological strategy as well as the need for centrally directed operations.<sup>30</sup>

Eisenhower also recognized the importance of federal responsibility and direction for psychological warfare. He restructured the PSB as an Operations Coordinating Board and made it an equal player in the NSC.<sup>31</sup> However, by 1955 certain efforts were delegated to the Planning Coordination Group (PCG), which included the President’s National Security Advisor and Director of the U.S. Information Agency. The PCG was chartered to lead interagency efforts and coordinate overall economic, psychological, and political activities and ensure interdepartmental planning.<sup>32</sup> The PCG had no directive authority, but was tasked to wage psychological warfare against the Soviet bloc and act as a think tank to keep track of psychological dynamics.<sup>33</sup> With a goal of concerted action, it was to develop “outline plans” that identified situations in each country, including agreed upon actions, responsibilities, measures of effectiveness, timing, and priorities.<sup>34</sup> The PCG identified the need to analyze overseas impacts of public announcements and advanced a process by which the U.S. could take an official position and action on upcoming events.<sup>35</sup> The PCG succeeded in coordinating several high level policies, including Open Skies, Atoms for Peace, and the U.S. position on political asylum. It ensured consistency among actions considered and taken on national security issues.<sup>36</sup> For all it accomplished, the PCG suffered from several critical deficiencies, including the lack of a clear mission, interdepartmental infighting over equities, lack of organizational structure, resources, and budget, and, most importantly, lack of significant support from the President or his senior cabinet members.<sup>37</sup> These shortcomings ultimately doomed the PCG.

President Kennedy abolished it and the OCB on 19 February 1961, subsuming its functions under existing agencies and activities, including the Oval Office, State Department, and USIA.<sup>38</sup>

George Kennan's famous "X" article and its successor, NSC 68, laid the foundation for what is arguably the most successful U.S. psychological strategy. Kennan's "X" article describes the use of information to support U.S. actions and to create favorable impressions of the nation in the minds of foreign audiences. Kennan cited the need for coordination to avoid seams or conflicts between policy positions or actions. NSC 68 further declared that the information inherent in "practical demonstration" of the U.S. system can create situations which will induce accommodation, making use of force a last resort.<sup>39</sup> The document also recognizes the need for covert political and economic warfare as well as overt and covert psychological warfare.<sup>40</sup> Since U.S. policy sought to avoid the use of nuclear superiority to coerce or engage in "preventive" war, the policy of containment was described as a non-military effort to modify behavior, akin to calculated and gradual coercion. NSC 68 also lauded the psychological impact of military readiness as a deterrent – as part of an overall "political attitude."<sup>41</sup>

The seeds planted by the "X" article and NSC 68 came to fruition under President Reagan. Three of his National Security Decision Directives – NSDD 130, 77, and 45 – defined U.S. policy for international information, management of public diplomacy relative to national security, and international broadcasting. NSDD 130, "U.S. International Information Policy," emphasized a global information strategy. It identified information, along with public diplomacy, as a strategic instrument and specified the need to coordinate other elements of national security policy and strategy as part of policy formulation.<sup>42</sup> NSDD 130 recognized that different programming was required for different countries, regions, elites, opinion centers, and general populations. It also noted that private and commercial information sources offered increased credibility over government dissemination.<sup>43</sup> In addition, NSDD 130 directed DoD to develop overt peacetime PSYOP programs (OP3) and to coordinate OP3 activities as part of interagency plans for international information activities.<sup>44</sup> As in earlier efforts, there was a recognized need for research on public opinion, media reaction, and cultural factors, as well as feedback mechanisms. Significantly, the document observed that "major national security policy studies and decision documents should include an impact of policy options or decisions on foreign opinion."<sup>45</sup>

Reagan's policy on "Management of Public Diplomacy Relative to National Security," NSDD 77, focused on the organization, planning, and execution of public diplomacy. It defined U.S. public diplomacy efforts as "actions that generate support for U.S. national security objectives." NSDD 77 established a Special Planning Group (SPG) chaired by the Assistant to

the President for National Security Affairs (APNSA), with membership consisting of the Secretary of State (SECSTATE), Secretary of Defense (SECDEF), Directors of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) and Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Assistant to the President for Communications. The SPG was responsible for planning, directing, coordinating, and monitoring implementation of public diplomacy activities. It had four committees. The Public Affairs Committee planned and integrated major speeches and appearances with foreign and domestic dimensions. The International Information Committee directed actions in accord with information strategies; it also coordinated and monitored strategies in key functional or geographic areas. The International Political Committee planned and coordinated international political activities, ensured collaboration with related economic, diplomatic, and military efforts as well as with American society and business. Finally, an International Broadcasting Committee conducted diplomatic and technical planning for direct radio, TV, and other broadcasting.<sup>46</sup>

The Reagan Administration considered international broadcasting so important that it promulgated NSDD 45, a separate document outlining its importance and role in national security policy. NSDD 45 focused on articulating U.S. policy and actions to foreign publics through the communications means available – Voice of America (VOA), Radio In East Berlin (RIAS), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), and Radio Marti – thereby ensuring availability of a surrogate free radio in target areas. The document also provided guidance to ensure the content of the programming supported U.S. policy objectives while “ensuring the integrity of news broadcasting” and maintaining “the autonomy and special character of the surrogate radios.”<sup>47</sup> NSDD 45 further acknowledged the need for modern broadcasting facilities and an expanded transmission base, tasking VOA and RFE/RL to undertake long term expansion programs. It also tasked the Department of State to work the diplomatic and technical issues associated with acquiring new sites and facilities, going so far as to examine direct broadcast TV as a way to penetrate a jammed environment. Finally, NSDD 45 anticipated the need to use these assets in periods of crisis and war and tasked DoS and DoD to review efforts for integration of international broadcasting into political and military contingency planning,<sup>48</sup> a hint of what was to come during the OPERATION ALLIED FORCE/NOBLE ANVIL campaign in 1999.

As mentioned previously, the most recent policy effort was the development of Presidential Decision Directive 68 (PDD 68), signed by President Clinton in April 1999. It sought to improve the “use of public information communicated to foreign audiences” with an explicit aim of developing an intentional internal public information strategy.<sup>49</sup> Specifically, in

addition to dealing with our global partners and allies on issues such as regional conflict and trade, the NSS calls for the effective use of “public diplomacy to promote the free flow of information and ideas to...those in societies ruled by the sponsors of global terrorism.” PDD 68 specifically identified public affairs, public diplomacy, and international military information as elements of an international public information strategy designed to promote national interests and prevent and mitigate international crises.<sup>50</sup> The schedule of tasks assigned under the PDD was comprehensive, including the development a national IPI strategy to provide guidance on regional and transnational issues and a report on the status of implementation in key areas, such as training and human resources; engagement with international, non-governmental, and private voluntary organizations; overseas media; and funding. However, the initiatives directed by PDD 68 were not smoothly implemented. The Defense Science Board (DSB), in an October 2001 study, Managed Information Dissemination, identified numerous means at the disposal of the government, but highlighted a lack of “an immediate, responsive means to communicate with foreign audiences during heightened tensions or crises.”<sup>51</sup> Coordination efforts were further complicated when the US Information Agency was disbanded as the primary organization responsible for U.S. public diplomacy. This function now resides in DoS regional bureaus and the Office of International Information Programs. In addition, IPI efforts under PDD 68 have not received the sustained support required for its full implementation. Although President Bush revalidated PDD 68, the DSB report also noted that PDD 68 lacked sufficient implementing authorities and structure, failed to assign specific responsibilities to agencies, and never achieved strategic success.<sup>52</sup> The tensions among public affairs, public diplomacy, and military operations present certain risks including U.S. public perception of coordinated information efforts, along with potential seams that an able adversary can exploit.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY DEFINED**

A discussion of psychological strategy must begin with a working definition. First, it must be understood that psychological strategy is a grand strategy that provides an overarching approach to the use of the diplomatic, economic, and military elements of national power.<sup>53</sup> For the purposes of this study, a psychological strategy is defined as the comprehensive orchestration of the implied and explicit information associated with the use of the national elements of power (diplomatic, economic, and military) so that coherent, consistent messages, meanings and themes are conveyed in ways that shape and influence understanding of and support for U.S. beliefs, values, and national security policies. This definition borrows heavily from existing definitions of public diplomacy.<sup>54</sup> But it goes further because public diplomacy is a

process of dialogue and information-sharing. This definition includes “implied” information, because many economic and military actions have implied messages associated with their use (or non-use, as the case may be). The implied message associated with the use, or threatened use, of military force has been termed “coercive diplomacy.”<sup>55</sup> Combined with other peacetime military operations and public affairs, use or threatened use of force complements the stated aims of public diplomacy.

## **ELEMENTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY**

A national psychological strategy must leverage the information inherent in the exercise of the national elements of power. This information presents itself through declarations of U.S. policy and its execution in the diplomatic, economic, and military arenas. The primary elements of a psychological strategy as defined above are public diplomacy, public affairs, international military information, and coercive diplomacy.

## **PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**

Because we are a great power, we should act like a great power, we should be willing to put resources into public diplomacy and take it seriously because the whole world is, in fact, our stage.

—David R. Gergen  
in Reinventing Diplomacy in the Information Age

Public diplomacy is an essential element of a psychological strategy for two reasons. First, the rise in the quantity of information available to large publics everywhere directly affects public opinion and attitudes, which in turn influence the actions and decisions of governments. Second, perceptions are just as important as reality. What appears to be true is assumed to be, more so in parts of the world that do not have access to a free press. The confluence of these two factors makes the job of U.S. public diplomacy – to inform, or to try to correct misinformed or disinformed publics – even more important.<sup>56</sup>

Although there is no accepted definition, it is understood that the intent of public diplomacy (PD) is to communicate to foreign publics, through various means, a government’s goals and policies as well as an understanding of its culture and values.<sup>57</sup> Public diplomacy reached in its zenith during the Reagan Administration in the midst of the Cold War. It was a key element of NSDDs 77 and 130, since it offered the Eastern bloc countries an alternative to Soviet propaganda and helped hasten the collapse of communism. However, with the rise of global private media via the internet and satellites, the United States has relied on commercial media to broadcast America’s message. As a result, the image of the United States abroad is



one primarily based on the material aspects of American culture. Commercial media rarely elaborate on U.S. foreign policy or its impact in the international arena. Resources devoted to PD have decreased to the point where it now accounts for only eight percent of the State Department's budget.<sup>58</sup>

Public diplomacy should be recognized as a strategic weapon and moved "from the sidelines to the core of diplomacy."<sup>59</sup> The 2002 Report of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy noted "U.S. foreign policy has been weakened by a failure to systematically include public diplomacy in the formulation and implementation of policy." As former USIA Director Edward R. Murrow put it, public diplomacy must be included in both the "takeoff" of policies, not just the "crash landings."<sup>60</sup> The Commission recommended that PD be recognized as a strategic component of American foreign policy. However, the U.S. must recognize that PD is not confined to long-term programs that communicate American beliefs and values, but must also be capable of clearly articulating U.S. policies to a global community who often views America positively as a culture but disagrees with the U.S. position on key issues. The U.S. approach must be tempered with the knowledge that it "should not be in the business of getting people to love us.... We should however, try to help the world understand us."<sup>61</sup> The issue of whether the United States is viewed with approval as the world's sole superpower is not as important as making sure the issue is addressed on the basis of complete and accurate reporting.<sup>62</sup>

As we advance into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and continue to fight the war on terrorism, we must acknowledge this is a "total war" in the sense that all the elements of national power are in play. International discourse will take place not just with ruling parties and elites but more and more with the foreign publics themselves. The need to communicate with publics uncovers a weakness that resulted from the integration of the USIA into the State Department. Specifically, the perception of the independence and utility of the USIA as an information activity was lost in the merger.<sup>63</sup> In the CNN age of 24/7 news, there is a decided lack of agility on the part of the U.S. to respond to negative propaganda or inaccurate reporting.<sup>64</sup> It may be time to "undo" this merger: As an independent activity, USIA would be better postured to act and react to this type of reporting as part of a comprehensive psychological strategy. Currently, layers of State Department bureaucracy prevent real-time responses. Rapid response is invaluable in an era of instant reporting, where sound bites are played repetitively on CNN and sensationalized photographs are plastered on internet websites, often devoid of context.<sup>65</sup> In addition, while many exchange programs have continued, they have been scaled back. As a result, media outlets such as VOA and RFE/RL do not serve as timely means of disseminating essential

information, relying on programming more than real-time reporting. Although commercial media perform this function well, they do not, and should not be expected to, act as advocates for U.S. policies. One way of dealing with this seeming incongruity is to create reportable “events” rather than programming and then allow the current media outlets to propagate the message.<sup>66</sup> Another option is to develop a series of outlets designed specifically to support strategic communication. The drawback is that once they are recognized as “official” government outlets, they tend to be dismissed and become only marginally effective.

## PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Doctrinal distinctions between public diplomacy and public affairs--intended for foreign and domestic public respectively....confuse rather than clarify. In a world with porous borders, messages can no longer be pigeonholed as domestic or foreign. What American diplomats say in New Delhi is heard in New York.

—Barry Fulton, Project Director  
Reinventing Diplomacy in the Information Age

The function of public affairs (PA) is to provide timely and accurate information relating to government goals, policies and actions to domestic audiences. While all federal departments have public affairs offices, the primary departmental PA offices offering information on the conduct of foreign policy are the State Department’s Bureau of Public Affairs within the office of the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs. Both are charged with getting the message out to the American people on the rationale for U.S. foreign affairs policy. These offices facilitate the free flow of information to the media, the public and select internal audiences.

However, as technology has evolved, PD and PA have simply become two sides of the same coin. Communication technology is daily becoming more global – direct broadcast TV covers not just regions, but is broadcast to worldwide audiences. Further, the Internet is by design transnational and global. When the President of the United States addresses the U.N. as part of a public diplomacy initiative and requests a display of international solidarity against Iraqi intransigence on WMD programs, the audience is international. In a similar situation in January 2003, a news briefing by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers to the Foreign Press Center at the Pentagon was broadcast to Baghdad by U.S. Air Force Commando Solo aircraft.<sup>67</sup> As the “firewall” between PA and PD continues to deteriorate, messages cannot be considered strictly foreign or domestic.<sup>68</sup> The 1948 Smith-Mundt Act was written specifically to prevent domestic dissemination of any “information about the United States, its people, and its policies” prepared

for foreign dissemination. The 1985 Zorinsky Amendment prohibits funds authorized for appropriation to the USIA to be used “to influence public opinion in the United States, and no program material prepared by the United States Information Agency shall be distributed within the United States.” These laws should be amended to reflect the new reality of unrestricted real-time global communication, allow domestic dissemination of material intended for foreign audiences, and permit State Department (since USIA was disbanded) appropriated funds to influence domestic public opinion.<sup>69</sup> In short, the laws are archaic and information policy should be based on current communications realities and capabilities.

As the means of global communication proliferate, it becomes more difficult to “de-link” U.S. domestic politics from foreign affairs and maintain two separate messages. The domestic agenda will reign supreme and force the hand of foreign policy. We run the risk of a disconnect between the domestic and foreign messages.<sup>70</sup> In January 2003 such seams were apparent in efforts to gain foreign and domestic support for war with Iraq over ongoing efforts to eliminate Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. When France, Germany, and Russia withdrew support, there was a concurrent demand from the American public for the Bush Administration to make its case for war.<sup>71</sup> The need to use the U.N. as a forum to garner support for U.S. policies clearly demonstrates the potential synergies and pitfalls of gaining support from both foreign and domestic audiences.

#### INTERNATIONAL MILITARY INFORMATION

He who excels at resolving difficulties does so before they arise. He who excels in conquering his enemies triumphs before threats materialize.

—Tu Mu’s commentary on Sun Tzu, The Art of War

In the most recent NSS, four specific tasks are assigned to the military: to assure our friends and allies; to dissuade future military competition; to deter threats against U.S. interests, allies and friends; and to decisively defeat any adversary in the event deterrence fails.<sup>72</sup> The first three are all inherently psychological in nature – to assure, dissuade, and deter. They dramatize the informational influence available through the peacetime exercise of military force, defined here as International Military Information (IMI).

The role of the military in peacetime as a means of exercising U.S. national power has evolved in recent years. The DSB Managed Information Dissemination study defined International Military Information (IMI) primarily as PSYOP, based on the previous use of the term in PDD 68. This definition is overly restrictive and fails to recognize that engagement activities conducted by regional combatant commanders as part of their Theater Security

Cooperation Plans (TSCPs) are a source of “military information” in much the same way that government-sponsored exchanges and training, such as the Fulbright Program, contribute to public diplomacy. IMI consists of two elements. The first is information communicated to foreign audiences through execution of the theater commander’s TSCP, which includes such measures as forward deployments, military-to-military contacts, unit visits, conferences, etc. Second, IMI also includes overt peacetime psychological operations programs (OP3). Highlighting both elements expands the Defense Science Board’s October 2001 definition of IMI beyond military PSYOP.<sup>73</sup> It provides a more comprehensive view of the influence of regional military activities.

Theater Security Cooperation Plans (TSCPs) represent the latest iteration of the Theater Engagement Plans (TEPs), first directed by the Secretary of Defense in the 1998 Contingency Planning Guidance. TEPs were to be accomplished by each regional combatant commander and were intended to act as strategic planning documents linking regional engagement activities with national strategic objectives.<sup>74</sup> Notionally, each combatant commander would develop prioritized theater, regional, and country objectives, then develop a strategic concept which would be reviewed and integrated with other regional TSCPs by the Joint Staff and approved by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The next phase would lead to the identification of specific resources and engagement activities, again reviewed by the Joint Staff and then approved as a “Global Family of Plans” once all were completed. The intent of these comprehensive reviews was to guarantee the creation of an integrated national plan that ensured that all projected activities supported national objectives.

An analysis of TEP effectiveness in 2000 indicated that reliance on component commands and defense agencies to execute the regional commander’s TEP resulted in compromise and sub-optimization of activities in support of the regional commander’s intent rather than prioritization and synchronization of events. The current theater engagement planning process “does not consistently include guidance at any of these levels.”<sup>75</sup> However, the themes and messages laid out in a national psychological strategy would allow OSD to provide more specific guidance on TSCP development by including prioritized national, regional, and global objectives. Likewise, a coordination process including DoS would ensure consistency between policy planners and military action at the theater level.<sup>76</sup>

Military PSYOP is defined in a May 2000 Defense Science Board report as “programs ... that induce or reinforce the attitudes, opinions, and emotions of selected foreign target governments, organizations, groups, and individuals to create a behavior that supports *U.S. national policy objectives* and the theater commander’s intentions at the *strategic*, operational,

and tactical levels” (emphasis added).<sup>77</sup> Both the May 2000 DSB report and the NSS recognize PSYOP as having the potential for global strategic impact. Since the mid-1980s, overt peacetime psychological operations programs (OP3) have nominally remained in place as annual programs that regional combatant commanders have coordinated with the chiefs of U.S. diplomatic missions to provide for the conduct of psychological operations in support of U.S. regional objectives, policies, interests, and theater military missions. But OP3 has failed due to a lack of high-level of attention and resources. When it is funded, it usually focuses on narrow issues that obliquely support U.S. foreign policy objectives.<sup>78</sup> In addition, OP3 is not integrated with other regional peacetime military engagement efforts, so opportunities for synchronization and reinforcement are lost. Deliberate exploitation of U.S. military activities already planned as part of theater security cooperation efforts could accomplish a great deal in support of the NSS goals of assurance, dissuasion, and deterrence.<sup>79</sup> A national strategic PSYOP effort, designed to synchronize and orchestrate a revitalized OP3 program, may be required to integrate themes and messages at a national and global level. Lastly, OP3 conducted as part of theater engagement efforts and in coordination with the U.S. diplomatic missions in each AOR could enhance its visibility and relevance both regionally and globally.

Another aspect is that PD, PA, and IMI are commonly recognized elements of the US government’s information efforts, but they have not been integrated into a comprehensive psychological strategy.<sup>80</sup> The term “International Military Information” must assume a strategic dimension that allows for the integration at a regional and global level of information associated with the programs and actions depicted in each theater commanders’ TSCP and OP3 efforts. The wide variety of initiatives and activities conducted by the U.S. military in peacetime offers a means to inform foreign audiences of U.S. values, beliefs, plans, programs, and policies at every level, from individual troops during an officer exchange to four-star contacts in theater. Military activities demonstrate resolve, capability, and intent. Combined with military PA and integrated into the overall psychological strategy, they present a backdrop for the successful execution of U.S. foreign policy. However, these activities are often planned and executed in separate channels, and none of the unified commands have a centralized dissemination capability for a credible, timely response in both peacetime and crisis. In order to leverage these contacts and mechanisms, each combatant commander should have an office responsible for integrating and executing peacetime TSCP and OP3, including crisis/conflict PSYOP programs, as part of national efforts and cultivate known, credible, professional channels to support theater information dissemination.<sup>81</sup> Two concurrent actions can fully leverage IMI. First, regional combatant commanders must consider OP3 as part of TSCP

execution, not as separate programs. Second, OSD and the Joint Staff must routinely and actively make tradeoffs and allocate assets between AORs in support of TSCP and OP3 to ensure a consistent global message. An office such as the now-defunct Office of Strategic Influence (OSI) would be an excellent step in that direction. Properly supported, a new OSI would be well positioned to craft military policy and to counter propaganda targeted against the employment of U.S. military force. It could also trumpet U.S. military successes and support of humanitarian and civil assistance efforts.

## COERCIVE DIPLOMACY

Once this influence of the political object on war is admitted, as it must be, there is no stopping it; consequently we must be also be willing to wage such wars, which consist in *merely threatening the enemy with negotiations held in reserve*.

—Carl von Clausewitz, On War

The use of intimidation and threats to coerce an opponent to comply with a nation's demands is as old as conflict itself. The threat of military force has long been a part of foreign policy and has played a key role in international affairs.

In the wake of the breakup of the U.S.S.R. the bi-polar balance between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union has given way to a “new world order.” Conflict between the global powers evolved from the ideological and military balance of the Cold War to the enforcement of policies agreed to in international forums.<sup>82</sup> Military force has become a routine part of the enforcement of international standards and policies. As the world's sole remaining superpower, the U.S. would inevitably leverage its military might as a coercive element in its foreign policy. Strategic coercion – “the deliberate and purposive use of overt threats to influence another's strategic choices”<sup>83</sup> – is a fixture in international politics. It reflects a preference for the threat of force, but assuredly acknowledges its use.<sup>84</sup> Strategic coercion, encompassing both deterrence and “compellence” (both described by Thomas Schelling in his landmark text in 1966<sup>85</sup>) gives leaders a way to use military force short of its full application in executing foreign policy. Deterrence is still a key element in U.S. national strategy—our nuclear and conventional capabilities as “forces in being” send an unmistakable signal. The fact that U.S. military spending is three times that of Russia, China and Japan combined, and exceeds the combined spending of the next fifteen nations is not lost on our adversaries.<sup>86</sup> However, since the fall of the Berlin Wall it has become evident that the predominant use of U.S. military forces has been as a coercive element of foreign policy as opposed to the total application of U.S. military power, with the sole exception of the 1991 Gulf War. The threat or use of military force in Bosnia, Haiti,

Kosovo, Afghanistan, the current stand-off over weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, even the air strikes preceding the ground war during Desert Storm, were all exercises in coercion. The Bush administration has even declared that state sponsors of terror could justify the response of military force, linking an imminent offensive against Iraq to “sending a strong message to Iran and Syria to stop backing Hezbollah” — coercive diplomacy in its purest form.<sup>87</sup>

Coercive diplomacy (CD) has been described as “diplomacy presupposing the use or threatened use of force”<sup>88</sup> in efforts to persuade an opponent to stop or reverse an action.<sup>89</sup> It is primarily a defensive strategy intended to stop or undo an action taken by an adversary. A noted expert on coercive diplomacy, Alexander George, has made a distinction among deterrence, blackmail, and coercive diplomacy. Whereas the point of deterrence is to convince an adversary not to take an action, he describes blackmail and coercive diplomacy using Schelling’s definition of compellence, with blackmail as “threats employed aggressively to persuade a victim to give up something without putting up resistance.”<sup>90</sup> The U.S. does not generally employ its military in ways that can be considered “blackmail,” because historically the U.S. has not been the initiator in overseas military action. America characteristically waits until a situation reaches a threshold of consciousness within foreign policy or domestic circles, then the administration reacts. As this reactive approach comes to dominate U.S. foreign policy, coercive diplomacy naturally rises to the fore as part of an on-going psychological strategy.

According to George, coercive diplomacy may achieve three key objectives: First, it may persuade an opponent to stop short of a goal; second, it may convince an opponent to undo an action; and third, it may persuade an opponent to make fundamental changes in its government.<sup>91</sup> In effective coercive diplomacy the use of force, if required, must be “exemplary.” That is, the military force applied should be tailored to achieve the given objective. The application of sea and airpower and a lack of the use of ground troops are considered in this context as coercive diplomacy.<sup>92</sup> The difference between coercive diplomacy and a full-scale use of force is its intent to limit escalation.<sup>93</sup> The concept of “limited force” is important because it provides the adversary with a choice, whereas full-scale use of force implies control and imposition of the will of one opponent over the other at the conclusion of the conflict.<sup>94</sup> In the last ten years, the use of coercive diplomacy to achieve each of the three types of objectives can be seen in U.S. actions against Iraq, Bosnia, Kosovo, Haiti, and Afghanistan.

One obvious characteristic of coercive diplomacy is that it is reactive in nature. Increased use of coercive diplomacy as a tool of U.S. foreign policy reflects the tendency of the U.S. to wait until a situation reaches a “threshold” before taking action. In many cases, by the time the U.S. agrees to definitive action, it has exhausted the other means available through standard

diplomatic channels. Another consideration often largely ignored by U.S. foreign policy-makers is the need to assess enforcement costs in the event coercive diplomacy is successful.<sup>95</sup> While “exit strategies” are often discussed when planning military operations, the cost of enforcement often encourages planners to come to overly optimistic conclusions on the length and magnitude of future U.S. military involvement, leading to second order issues, including the impact of extended deployments of U.S. forces in a post-conflict region.

The concept of coercive diplomacy is attractive because, if successful, it offers an opportunity to achieve one’s objectives at lower costs in both money and bloodshed. On the other hand, the costs of either backing down from or following through on the threatened use of military force vastly increase the overall political, economic and military costs. The use of coercive diplomacy as an effective foreign policy tool requires resolve and credibility, both of which the U.S. has demonstrated in the past. However, coercive diplomacy is more difficult for a coalition to implement than for the U.S. to employ unilaterally. A sense of urgency, strong leadership from at least one of the coalition members, and adequate domestic and international support have all been identified as conditions that favor successful execution of coercive diplomacy. But these elements are either not always available or difficult to maintain for an extended period.<sup>96</sup> In addition, the coalition must display a willingness to use force and communicate this effectively to the adversary. Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has often borne the responsibility for leading these coalitions by developing a credible strategy and bringing forces to bear.<sup>97</sup>

Military action cannot effectively serve as a medium of communication without direct and indirect political communication. As an element of foreign policy, it can either reinforce or undermine diplomatic actions.<sup>98</sup> The threat of or use of force changes the dynamics of strategic relationships. Coercive diplomacy requires diplomatic skill. The coercer must convince the adversary of his resolve and willingness to use force, while assuring the adversary that compliance will not lead to new demands. In addition, the coercer should be able to offer “carrots” without appearing weak.<sup>99</sup> Strategic coercion in general and coercive diplomacy in particular depend greatly on how the actors perceive their situation and “construct their reality.” In some cases, a successful outcome or compromise depends almost entirely on such perceptions. In other situations, the conditions that led to the use of coercive diplomacy are perishable. Logistics, training, and support issues for forces deployed in support of coercive diplomacy make it a perishable option.<sup>100</sup> Other intangibles can come into play as well. Coalition operations are a case in point. As time goes by, coalition cohesion can be threatened



by political pressures, seemingly forcing the hand of the coercer toward full-scale combat while leading the adversary to believe that “time is on his side.”

Coercive diplomacy provides the final element of a psychological strategy. While PD, PA, and IMI are often long-lead actions supporting efforts to influence foreign and domestic publics to understand and support U.S. beliefs, values, goals, policies, and actions, coercive diplomacy offers only a reactive, short-term response that can undermine other public diplomacy, public affairs, or international military information efforts if not properly “calibrated” to the target as well as the non-target audiences. The rationale for including coercive diplomacy as an element of a psychological strategy is its value in deliberation of a case for or against the use of military force. As with public diplomacy, there are advantages to applying coercive diplomacy in the execution of U.S. foreign policy if it is considered within the context of a national psychological strategy. The current international reaction to U.S. posturing on the potential for military action against Iraq is a case in point. Inclusion of coercive diplomacy as an element of a national psychological strategy explicitly acknowledges that the use or threatened use of military force has both short and long-term implications for U.S. foreign policy beyond the impact on the specific situation to which it is being applied. In an age of global terrorism, understanding how other nations and groups view U.S. policy and actions is critical to our success in the international arena.

## **DEVELOPING A PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY**

Every American foreign policy setback, from Indochina to Somalia, has resulted from the failure to define objectives, to choose means appropriate to those objectives, and to create a public opinion prepared to pay the price over the requisite period of time.

— Henry Kissinger  
in Reinventing Diplomacy in the Information Age

A common complaint is that U.S. national leaders often fail to move beyond a reactive approach to information. The U.S. seems to lack an effective means to plan for and disseminate government-sponsored information or to leverage outside channels, or to anticipate reactions to its policies or activities.<sup>101</sup> An overarching strategy will ensure the administration analyzes any potential action and anticipates consequences. A three-pronged approach would work. The “proactive” approach focuses continuing actions supporting U.S. positions on key global issues. The “active” approach concentrates on interests rather than issues; it extends to the analysis of the impacts of short-term or opportunistic actions (typically, coercive diplomacy, use of force, economic sanctions, changes to diplomatic or trading status, etc) and the potential

impacts to long-term objectives.<sup>102</sup> Finally, the “reactive” approach anticipates the government’s responses to unintended or unforeseen outcomes. Failure to deal with short-term negative press can have long-term implications.<sup>103</sup> Development of a comprehensive psychological strategy avoids the predominantly reactive approach taken to date during times of crisis or conflict. It helps U.S. policymakers avoid the appearance of conflict or inconsistency between positions on key global issues and actions as the world’s sole superpower. These approaches can be weaved into an effective foreign policy “blanket” only if the designers of a national psychological strategy understand the audience they are trying to reach, tailor the message accordingly, and communicate it effectively.

#### UNDERSTANDING THE “INFLUENCE SPACE”

What’s the message? Who’s the messenger? And where can it be delivered and on what timeline?

—Charlotte Beers  
Remarks to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 7 May 2002

As with any communication, there are three key considerations: the audience, the medium, and the message. An effective psychological strategy must account for these components – what the October 2001 DSB Study calls “a three-dimensional influence space describing publics, channels, and U.S. national interests for each country or sub-region.”<sup>104</sup> Failing to address any of the three could render the U.S. unable to attain the support and advocacy it desires for its foreign policy measures, both at home and overseas.

#### Foreign and Domestic “Publics”

Americans have become painfully aware of the lack of understanding – indeed, misunderstanding – between our world and the Arab world; between our world and much of the Islamic world.

—Harold C. Pachios  
Testimony Before the Committee on Government Reform, 8 October 2002

The most important and perhaps most undervalued element in the exercise of U.S. national power is the need to understand the audience. Any effective exchange between two groups requires an understanding of both the individuals within the group, the psychology of the group, and sensitivity to cultural context.<sup>105</sup> Accounting for the “operating environment” or “target culture” either in a domestic or international context is critical to achieving understanding

and credibility.<sup>106</sup> American foreign policy may well succeed or fail based on how well we understand the cultures, beliefs, and values of the target audience.<sup>107</sup>

However, Americans tend to make two incorrect assumptions about communicating U.S. foreign policy: (1) that merely getting the message out is enough and (2) that the world sees events the way we do -- that U.S. interests are common global concerns and that our notions of fair play and due process are universal.<sup>108</sup> As Charlotte Beers, the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, observed in her remarks to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, "The inevitable bottom line of any communication is: 'Just because you say it doesn't mean I believe it -- or even hear you.'"<sup>109</sup> Simply stated, conveying the message does not add up to influence, and conferring information does not guarantee understanding.<sup>110</sup> While there are numerous public and private means of assessing U.S. public reaction to foreign policy initiatives, the same level of effort and resources are not dedicated to measuring the responses of foreign audiences. Although there are many means available to help the U.S. understand the various foreign publics and gauge reaction to U.S. policies and actions, the nation expends little effort to do this, considering the potentially huge return on investment. America must spend more on foreign public opinion polling, attitudinal research, and target marketing. Consider this: In 2001, the State Department spent \$5 million on worldwide opinion polling, half of what Mike Bloomberg spent on polling for the New York City mayor's race.<sup>111</sup>

A psychological strategy must specify short and long-term objectives in order to focus on the "right" populations. Once execution begins, the U.S. must remember who the target is, so the strategy can properly aim its "info bullets." Amorphous discussions about reaching out to the Arab or Muslim "street" diffuse effort. Subsets of populations that need to be targeted may include the middle class, business owners, and academics that are in a position to influence government.<sup>112</sup> Focused polling and research efforts offer a means for identifying influential "soft" supporters of U.S. policies; they may become "hard" supporters who increase dialogue and understanding of U.S. initiatives. Providing these supporters with a context, "warts and all," for U.S. policy and actions could be vital to defusing sensitive issues related to the deployment and employment of U.S. forces overseas in support of coercive diplomacy during a crisis situation. While this approach could lead to informed criticism of U.S. policies and efforts overseas, the improved dialogue also results in increased credibility.<sup>113</sup> In addition, understanding the nuances of societies can help to avoid "target saturation" and apathy by informing us when certain issues lose support, when given approaches to informing audiences begin to fail, or for "inoculating" an audience before a new or modified U.S. foreign policy

position or initiative is released.<sup>114</sup> Finally, these groups and individuals, if properly informed, can become a significant “medium” for the message as well.

## **Channels**

To trust this weapon [the shaping of public opinion through electronic media] to advertising agents and interested corporations seems the uttermost folly.

—Graham Spry to Alexander Gross, 12 May 1931

In the information age, the “crowded universe” of communications channels—newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, cell phones, e-mail, internet chat rooms and web sites, including exchanges and speakers -- means the U.S. has a “smaller and smaller voice” in the global arena.<sup>115</sup> Cultivating channels is essential to the success of a national psychological strategy. At least two considerations come to mind: the ubiquity of the message and the credibility of the transmission media. Ubiquity of the message facilitates sending an accurate, consistent message. Credibility is essential for the message to make an impact with the target audience.

Likewise, communications channels and media must maintain a perception of objectivity and independence.<sup>116</sup> The U.S. currently has no independent ability to talk “directly” to foreign audiences through the media in a timely fashion.<sup>117</sup> Merely disseminating information during a crisis does little to accomplish this end, particularly when the origin is known or suspected to be the U.S. military or is considered to be a U.S. “mouthpiece.”<sup>118</sup> In addition, the U.S. cannot count on international news media to advocate U.S. positions and policies for the same reason.<sup>119</sup> Finally, restricted or denied access in regions or countries lacking a free press complicates information sharing. A lack of access magnifies the impact of “official” state-controlled media, making US public diplomatic efforts even more important.<sup>120</sup> In these situations, the need for additional, impartial means of communicating with foreign publics in a consistent, coherent, and timely manner is all the greater. Establishing a number of reliable sources to provide information to foreign audiences will build needed credibility. Creating this set of circumstances will allow the U.S. to bridge what Edward R. Murrow once described as the most important stretch between speaker and listener, “the last three feet.”

The key technical means available to the U.S. are the various activities overseen by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), which manages U.S. civilian diplomatic broadcast efforts such as the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, internet activities, etc. The U.S. has recently agreed to be more active in its outreach to foreign publics through avenues such as VOA, as well as increasing outlets by moving from a radio-based approach to direct broadcast TV and the Internet.<sup>121</sup> In addition, changes to the U.S.

approach to public affairs must be considered as technology advances and the “firewall” between PD and PA breaks down. Increased international TV markets and the Internet have made it virtually impossible to influence foreign publics without that information being available to and affecting domestic audiences. As noted earlier, changes in how the U.S. conducts business in this respect will require policy and legal changes.<sup>122</sup>

Other available channels include those associated with regional U.S. military activity. A full integration of theater commanders’ Theater Security Cooperation Plans (TSCPs), OP3 and PA efforts into a strategic framework will provide consistent themes and messages in peacetime by establishing a foundation that demonstrates U.S. military policy in action through advertised force movements, military-to-military contacts, joint exercises and training, port visits, etc. Leveraging these outlets during crisis and wartime can directly support coercive diplomacy.

International programs need to be “global with a regional cast” in order to facilitate understanding over the final three feet.<sup>123</sup> The State Department’s Fulbright and international visitor exchange programs – considered the “bread and butter” of public diplomacy – in addition to DoD’s IMET, National Defense University International Fellows programs, and other international exchange programs are long-term assets with potential strategic value if properly supported.<sup>124</sup> Communicating to foreign publics through foreign opinion leaders, our allies, and foreign journalists is important; these elites, if convinced of our policy position, bring credibility to the table.<sup>125</sup> Finally, a change in State Department culture is necessary – one that empowers ambassadors, embassies, and Foreign Service Officers and other U.S. officials abroad to engage regional leaders and media groups.<sup>126</sup> The diversity of this approach will lend authority to the message as well.

Building these channels will provide a credible means of disseminating the U.S. foreign policy message and ensuring the message and intent are clearly communicated to both foreign and domestic audiences. However, the follow-through is just as important as the wind up. As Edward R. Murrow noted, “no cash register rings when somebody changes his mind.”<sup>127</sup> We need to seek feedback from the target audiences. The same media research that helps us understand the audience can be used to gauge the success of the communication, letting us know whether the message is being received as intended. Feedback helps determine the psychological impact of the message and its effect on foreign policy implementation. As noted in the October 2001 DSB Study, “effective communication is only possible if strategists commit time and resources to understand audiences *before* they disseminate information and evaluate its effectiveness *after* they disseminate it.”<sup>128</sup> Without the analysis and evaluation in place to

determine the effectiveness of the attempted communication, it will be impossible to properly tailor the message or the means of dissemination.

### **Interests**

While *interests* have dominated the conduct of diplomacy over the past five decades because of the threat to national survival, the *issues* that will dominate the new agenda should be considered as well....Interests and issues are not contradictory, but reinforce each other. Just as our vital interests require sustained diplomatic engagement with other nations, so do the issues that transcend national boundaries and alliances.

—Barry Fulton, Project Director  
Reinventing Diplomacy in the Information Age

Having discussed the audience and the means of communicating with them, it is necessary to return to the issue of the message. Earlier, the need to address this issue from three perspectives was raised. The “proactive” perspective is an issue-based approach; it focuses on such subjects as multilateral trade, democracy and human rights, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, drugs and global crime, refugees, migration, or disease and famine. Recently, the Kyoto Treaty, the International Criminal Court, and the Comprehensive Test Ban treaty come to mind as examples of on-going international issues. These activities often lead to policy statements, treaties, conventions, summit statements, or the like. The “active” approach is interest-based, more concerned with the actual exercise of national power on the international scene, such as the current deployment of force to the Middle East, the nuclear impasse with North Korea, U.S. support to Israel, conferring Most-Favored-Nation trading status and its potential impact on other international relationships and long-term objectives. Done correctly, the “active” approach lays the groundwork for the successful execution of coercive diplomacy. In the “reactive” approach, the U.S. deals with “seams” in its policies and actions. Two recent examples were the unanticipated counter-propaganda to U.S. airdrops of food in Afghanistan shortly after the start of Operation Enduring Freedom, and the cry of “double standard” from North Korea in contrasting U.S. treatment of them after voluntary revelation of their nuclear program with U.S. treatment of Iraq, who claims to have no weapons of mass destruction. Both issues are examples of how failure to deal with short-term negative press can have long-term implications.

National issues and interests that are going to be played out in the forum of domestic and foreign public opinion must be decided up front. A common theme in current literature is the need to recognize that the US does not require universal adoration and that it “is better to be

respected than loved.” The proponents of this position advise us to improve understanding of American values, goals, and policies.<sup>129</sup> Charlotte Beers has emphasized the need to define “who America is” to foreign audiences.<sup>130</sup> The extent of foreign understanding of American beliefs and values will influence the U.S. ability to clearly articulate policy on global and regional issues, such as global warming, the ICC, NATO expansion, etc. As policy is developed, part of the process should include an analysis of global and regional reactions. The State Department’s Office of International Information Programs (IIP), responsible for the direction of strategic communication from the State Department, is routinely left out of this process.<sup>131</sup> Conversely, military peacetime PSYOP efforts are usually issue-oriented and unlike wartime PSYOP efforts, not always deconflicted with national messages and themes.<sup>132</sup> The October 2001 DSB study noted that the “US Government routinely disseminates information without dedicating the resources to coordinate sophisticated communications strategies.”<sup>133</sup> This disconnect takes on considerable importance as we undertake military action in Iraq or elsewhere. It will determine how the various publics in the affected regions, as well as those of potential allies, respond to US actions.

The problem with State Department efforts is that they focus almost exclusively on promoting understanding of U.S. culture, values, and beliefs, primarily among foreign publics and elites. The missing link is to communicate U.S. policy, its execution, and its impact on relations in the international community. Even in the wake of September 11, surveys show increased anti-American feelings on a global basis, not just in the Middle East. However, these same surveys tell us that American cultures, values, and economic system are not the target of this animosity; this enmity focuses on U.S. policies.<sup>134</sup> Another method of developing context is to move the discussion from American values to a dialogue on individual freedoms.<sup>135</sup> This approach steers the discussion away from whether or not the U.S. has the “right” moral values or “universal” beliefs, taking it back to the local situation within the foreign body politic. This situation-specific tactic provides a more meaningful backdrop for questions about U.S. foreign policy than clashes over values or beliefs. Overall, interests and issues highlighted by American foreign policy suffer from unclear articulation, misunderstanding, or honest opposition.<sup>136</sup> A national psychological strategy will enable us to develop prioritized themes and messages associated with U.S. positions on key international issues and interests. The strategy will ensure a consistent message, promote open dialogue, and establish a viable context for policy formulation, dissemination of information, interaction of officials in the field, as well as unilateral or coalition efforts involving military force or the other elements of power.

The bottom line is that the U.S. must recognize the importance of understanding the audience, the channel, and the message to successfully execute a psychological strategy. The recent suspension of a TV campaign intended to win the hearts and minds of Muslim audiences overseas offers an excellent example of our lack of an effective approach to gain this understanding. The portrayal of the success of Muslim-American immigrants in one- and two-minute sound bites, instead of articulating the rationale for U.S. policy, is instead an example of the continued inability of U.S. public diplomacy to realize who the U.S. is trying to talk to and what America should be saying.<sup>137</sup> The senders thought they were communicating a positive message about the tolerance and diversity of U.S. society. The Muslim audience received another message conveying U.S. superiority to their indigenous cultures.

## **STRUCTURE**

The United States needs a sustained, coordinated capability to understand, inform, and influence foreign publics that is rooted in the information age....America's leaders need to give information dissemination a much higher priority...Without it, no policy or strategy is complete.

—Vincent Vitto, Chairman  
DSB Task Force Report on Managed Information Dissemination

The development and execution of a successful national psychological strategy requires support from all levels, up to and including the President. Reviews and studies from both inside and outside the federal government have highlighted the lack of sustained senior leadership attention as an issue that severely limits opportunities for consistent, coherent representation of beliefs, values, goals, policies and actions of the U.S. in the international arena. In the past, this level of support has been episodic at best, resulting in an inability to execute an effective national strategy. In past administrations, the lack of domestic support for a psychological strategy led to inadequate backing from the highest levels of government.<sup>138</sup> More recently, the Council on Foreign Relations identified the need for advocacy from the NSC Principal's Committee for successful execution of public diplomacy.<sup>139</sup> At the NSC level, the structures prescribed for the implementation of PDD 68 lacked dedicated resources and staff as well as support from participating agencies.<sup>140</sup> A comprehensive strategy requires committed leadership to promote a methodology that ensures thematically consistent integration of information associated with new or on-going policies, initiatives, or measures. Themes and messages associated with long-term global concerns, regional interests, and topical issues must be coherent and synchronized with PA at home and with other crisis/wartime policies, statements, and actions. Audience research on foreign publics and domestic audiences must



be an integral part of the process, as well as feedback on the success or failure from an informational or psychological standpoint as the concern, issue, or crisis evolves. The primary alternatives for increased leadership presence and management center on an expanded role for the White House Office of Global Communication or a revamped Policy Coordination Committee (PCC).<sup>141</sup>

A key consideration in planning and execution of a psychological strategy is the need to review State Department culture and organization as the principal player in policy formulation and implementer of public diplomacy. DoS tends to rely on a highly centralized control of the flow of information from top to bottom.<sup>142</sup> However, in an age of non-stop global communications, maintaining America's image is a 24/7 endeavor that impacts the execution of U.S. foreign policy from the strategic to the tactical level. Implementation of a national psychological strategy requires centralized control and decentralized execution.

Centralized control is essential for the top-down direction required for the development of prioritized, coherent, consistent themes and messages based on current U.S. interests and positions on key issues. One way to improve the execution of public diplomacy and begin to address some leadership deficiencies is for the White House Office of Global Communications (WHOGC) to provide strategic direction and themes to U.S. agencies that communicate with foreign audiences. Since the OGC already coordinates communications across agency lines, this approach only extends an existing function.<sup>143</sup> However, this scheme is DoS-centric and ignores the significant contributions of the DoD in planning and execution.

A better alternative, one more consistent with existing structures, is the establishment of a Strategic Influence (or more politically correct Strategic Communication) Policy Coordination Committee (PCC) under the NSC.<sup>144</sup> The advantage of this approach is that the PCC structure better lends itself to interagency coordination; it can draw immediately from the expertise available in the interagency. The October 2001 DSB Study on Managed Information Dissemination proposed membership for such a PCC. It includes representatives designated by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and the Secretaries of State, Defense, Treasury, and Commerce; the Attorney General; the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director of Central Intelligence; the Director of USAID; and the Chairman of the BBG.<sup>145</sup> With the stand-up of the WHOGC, a senior representative from that organization must also be included. In order to avoid issues associated with interdepartmental "turf battles," the NSC or WHOGC representative should chair the PCC.<sup>146</sup> This approach provides a mechanism to coordinate expertise into the development of a national psychological strategy and the backing to ensure its implementation at all levels. In addition, it would allow for implementation

of another DSB study recommendation – the execution of a National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) that requires all regional and functional NSC PCCs to “assess the potential impact of foreign public opinion when national security options are considered and recommend or develop ... public information dissemination strategies before or in concert with policy implementation.”<sup>147</sup>

Another vital element required at the national level is an NSC core group – a PCC secretariat – that coordinates and directs activities in peacetime, along with memoranda of understanding with the appropriate agencies and departments to surge during a crisis. While there has always been a willingness to “rally around the flag” in wartime, the lack of a structure or a failure to exercise key information dissemination capabilities in peacetime results in an ineffective follow-through in periods of heightened tension or periods of war. The core group would assume a national-level strategy is executed in peace and wartime and ensures that we “train as we fight” in the information realm.<sup>148</sup>

Decentralized execution is essential for an effective 21<sup>st</sup> century psychological strategy. The themes and messages that are at the heart of the strategy must be woven into regional Theater Security Cooperation Plans and Overt Peacetime PSYOP Programs (OP3), while coordination must occur at the national level. US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) is a logical choice to be tasked with developing a strategic PSYOP plan overarching the regional OP3 effort. This would require the development of influence “targets.” So, identifying the actual decision-makers and their closest advisers, as well as their decision-making methods, is critical. Since USSTRATCOM has the global information operations mission, it would be an appropriate site for a “think tank” with a global outlook that can leverage the regional joint intelligence centers and their human factors analysis.<sup>149</sup>

The DSB study proposed that SECDEF establish an IPI committee within the Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict (OASD(SO/LIC)) to accomplish this coordination.<sup>150</sup> An IPI Committee would effectively resurrect the Office of Strategic Influence (OSI) that closed in February 2002. However, a more appropriate place for a new OSI or “Office of Strategic Influence (or Communication) Policy” might be within the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (USDPA) at a level equal to that of the current office of International Security Affairs (ISA) -- that is, as an Assistant Secretary. This office would work with OSD Public Affairs, Joint Staff/J-39, and the combatant commands to ensure DoD plans were synchronized and integrated in support of a national strategy in support of national objectives.<sup>151</sup>

Decentralized execution on the State Department side is more problematic. One way to break old DoS habits would be to establish six regional divisions, closely aligned with the Combatant Commander's areas of responsibility. Realigning the State Department bureaus to match the new State Department divisions "AORs," the deputy assistant secretaries of State for these regions could be collocated with their respective regional combatant commander to ensure greater interaction and consistency between State and DoD in the field.<sup>152</sup> This decentralization could result in more real-time value-added policy input, improve both military and diplomatic reaction times to global events, and encourage interagency planning with an eye toward execution within a State Department bureaucracy that favors process over programs.<sup>153</sup>

Several initiatives were proposed in a recent CSIS report that advances the decentralized execution of public diplomacy: empowering ambassadors, embassies, and Foreign Service Officers; increasing American presence in posts outside of foreign capitals; developing outside validators; and cultivating foreign opinion leaders. All of these steps point toward decentralization.<sup>154</sup> They all rely on informed dialogue concerning U.S. policy; they provide outlets for articulating U.S. positions and engaging in debate with foreign audiences, instead of merely repeating platitudes on the "goodness" of American values.

As previously mentioned, a 1998 action should be reconsidered -- the merger of the USIA into the State Department. In assessments conducted since the integration of USIA into the State Department in 1998, one conclusion finds that the role of public diplomacy has taken a back seat to traditional diplomacy within DoS. As a result, the collaborative relationships between USIA and other departments and activities, such as DoD and USAID, have not continued. We have thus lost a vital link between the public diplomacy process and its "contributors" and "consumers."<sup>155</sup> In addition, removing the former USIA public diplomacy assets (including those under the BBG) from the State Department would help in budget battles. If USIA is represented within the Strategic Communications PCC, it will have a separate voice in the budgeting process instead of competing with other DoS activities for funding. A more independent USIA would also streamline control of information dissemination. If, for instance, there was an opportunity for the use of DoD assets to broadcast a USIA message, this could be coordinated directly and then vetted with the PCC, instead of working several layers down in DoS and then coordinating approvals.

In summary, the publication of a new NSPD and a dedicated Strategic Communication PCC led by senior representation from the White House and supported by a standing secretariat would have the authority to provide top-down direction required to plan, fund, and execute a psychological strategy. It would have the visibility into the process of defining national interests

and objectives required to develop consistent and coherent themes and messages and monitor their progress in terms of both domestic and foreign reactions. The decentralized approach to getting the message out leverages all available outlets at our disposal and optimizes the chances for independent feedback and responsive change.

## **CONCLUSION**

A coordinated capability to manage the dissemination of information to foreign audiences in support of U.S. interests is necessary, feasible, and an urgent national priority....The rules have changed. Today, governments must win the support of people and their leaders in other countries if diplomacy and military actions are to succeed. This is more than just public relations or getting a "good press." It is a political necessity.

—Vincent Vitto, Chairman  
DSB Task Force Report on Managed Information Dissemination

The implementation of a national psychological strategy requires a separate standing bureaucracy to coordinate USG-wide information dissemination. A Strategic Communication PCC should be established and tasked to develop and implement a national psychological strategy. It would work with the interagency, particularly the NSC, its PCCs, and the Departments of State and Defense, to develop overarching themes and messages in order to provide an informational "backdrop" for all government activities affecting domestic and foreign audiences. As stipulated in PDD-68, the primary actors will be the White House, NSC, and Departments of State and Defense. State must initiate efforts to reinvigorate PD and more fully leverage PA through changes to public law affecting the division of PA and PD. DoD must work to integrate the use of TSCPs and OP3 as strategic elements which are executed at the regional level. Both must work with the White House to develop and implement means of understanding foreign audiences in particular and gauging both domestic and foreign reaction to U.S. plans, policies, and actions. Overall acknowledgement of the psychological impacts of coercive diplomacy will enhance its effectiveness, particularly in those cases where the U.S. may opt to "go it alone." The long-term intended or unintended consequences of such action must be assessed up front, as the realities of global terrorism take center stage.

The U.S. has the resources and expertise to implement an effective psychological strategy. If it is treated like a presidential campaign, which is essentially an influence campaign to convince voters to agree with one candidate's positions over another and if the entire organization is working toward that single goal, a properly executed a psychological strategy will make the difference for the U.S. in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

WORD COUNT=12,060



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<sup>120</sup> Vitto (October 2001 Report), 9,32; Tuch, 5.

<sup>121</sup> Vitto (October 2001 Report) 3,6,21; Campbell and Flournoy, 147; CFR Task Force Report, 172-173.

<sup>122</sup> Fulton, 68-69; Williamson, 184; Lord, 18.

<sup>123</sup> Fulton, 70; Bardos, 428, 430.

- <sup>124</sup> Vitto (October 2001 Report), 3, 40.
- <sup>125</sup> Peterson, 82-83; Campbell and Flournoy, 149.
- <sup>126</sup> CFR Task Force Report, 172; Campbell and Flournoy, 146.
- <sup>127</sup> Bardos, 428.
- <sup>128</sup> Vitto (October 2001 Report), 49.
- <sup>129</sup> Pachios Testimony; CFR Task Force Report, 172-173; Tuch, 5; Hickey, 23; Bardos, 429-430.
- <sup>130</sup> Hickey, 23.
- <sup>131</sup> Vitto (October 2001 Report), 36.
- <sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.
- <sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.
- <sup>134</sup> Peterson, 74-76.
- <sup>135</sup> Trost Interview.
- <sup>136</sup> David E. Morey, "The Battle For Hearts and Minds; U.S. Public Diplomacy Should Be More Than Public Relations," The San Diego Union-Tribune, 1 September 2002, Opinion Section, p. G-1 (1343 words) [database on-line]; available from Lexis-Nexis; accessed 12 January 2003.
- <sup>137</sup> Vanessa O'Connell, "U.S. Suspends TV Ad Campaign Aimed at Winning Over Muslims," The Wall Street Journal, 16 January 2003, sec A, p. 3.
- <sup>138</sup> Lord, 25.
- <sup>139</sup> CFR Task Force Report, 170.
- <sup>140</sup> Vitto (October 2001 Report), 51.
- <sup>141</sup> Pachios Testimony; U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (2002 Report), 3; Vitto (October 2001 Report), 61-62; Clinton, 3; Campbell and Flournoy, 180.
- <sup>142</sup> William P. Kiehl, "Unfinished Business: Foreign Affairs Consolidation Was Only The Beginning," National Security Studies Quarterly VII, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 124.
- <sup>143</sup> U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (2002 Report), 5; Pachios Testimony.
- <sup>144</sup> Vitto (October 2001 Report), 53.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Trost Interview.

<sup>147</sup> Vitto (October 2001 Report), 53.

<sup>148</sup> Trost Interview.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Vitto (October 2001 Report), 63.

<sup>151</sup> Trost Interview.

<sup>152</sup> Kiehl, 124.

<sup>153</sup> U.S. Advisory Committee on Public Diplomacy, "Consolidation of USIA Into The State Department: An Assessment After One Year," October 2000, available from <<http://www.state.gov/www/policy/pdadcom/acpdreport.pdf>>; Internet; accessed 12 January 2003, 6; Kiehl, 124, 127.

<sup>154</sup> Flournoy and Campbell, 145-150.

<sup>155</sup> U.S. Advisory Committee on Public Diplomacy (2000 Report), 6.





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