

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

INFORMATIONAL ELEMENT OF POWER:  
THE ROLE OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN UNITED  
STATES-CUBA POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

by

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## ABSTRACT

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THESIS: The United States should reassess its Public Diplomacy strategy toward Cuba and the key role that Public Diplomacy plays in preparing the Cuban people to transition to a free and democratic state.

RATIONALE: The Castro Regime has a monopoly on all media and information in Cuba, which permits the regime to control what the Cuban people see and believe about the outside world and indeed their own country. Therefore, the people of Cuba are Castro's center of gravity and as such are the key force for transition and change to a free and democratic Cuba. The Informational Element of Power and Public Diplomacy are the premier tools the United States has to shape the message to the Cuban population. This tool is designed to provide objective and unbiased information to the Cuban population. As Castro ages and approaches the end of his regime, the United States has a window of opportunity to educate the Cuban population. It is imperative that the United States maximize this window of opportunity. Public diplomacy has the responsibility to shape the informational battlespace and the mandate to address the misconceptions that the populous might have. The United States can not wait until Castro's departure to engage the Cuban people. The United States needs to change its current engagement strategy and directly engage the Cuban people now.

APPROACH: After a brief history of United States-Cuban relations, to include the current state of this relationship, this strategy research paper evaluates the Informational Element of Power, but most specifically, the role of public diplomacy and Cuba. Next, it looks at the current United State-Cuba situation through the Basic Five Ring Model developed by John A. Warden III. The paper then applies Warden's model to the Cuban public diplomacy message. Next, the paper proposes a way ahead for the public diplomacy strategy toward Cuba. Finally, this paper recommends changes to current public diplomacy policy to set the strategy for a post-Castro era.



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## INFORMATIONAL ELEMENT OF POWER: THE ROLE OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN UNITED STATES- CUBA POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

When we say it, we think people know what we mean. It's not what we say, it's what they hear.<sup>1</sup>

- Charlotte Beers  
Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs,  
Statement to the House International Relations Committee on 10 October 2001.

Charlotte Beers' quote is as relevant today as it was in October 2001. Not what we say, but what they hear is the crux of Public Diplomacy and the Informational Element of Power. But what happens when the intended audience can not hear? Or when the intended audience is not receiving the message that the United States wants them to hear? Or when the intended audience is not being allowed to hear?

Now the question becomes: How does the informational element of power, but more specifically, the public diplomacy strategy, need to be shaped to overcome the lack of first receiving, then hearing, and lastly understanding? To be able to shape the message, the message needs to be analyzed from the target audience's perspective. Some of the basic questions needed for the analysis are: What are the barriers and/or filters at the receiving end? (Cultural, Technical, Religious, Educational, Fear, Governmental) Is the United States sending the wrong message? Has the United States missed the target or is it aiming at the wrong target? Is the audience so conditioned that the message does not connect? Is the message arriving at all or only partially arriving? Is the message arriving garbled?

In the case of Public Diplomacy and Cuba, the question becomes: How does the United States through the application of a public diplomacy strategy overcome Fidel Castro's informational blockade?<sup>2</sup> Are the current efforts of public diplomacy effective, adequate and productive in combating Castro's informational blockade? If the United States can not satisfactorily overcome Castro's informational blockade today, how does the United States and the Department of State shape or change its public diplomacy strategy to quickly respond and deliver its message to the Cuban population in a post-Castro Cuba? Can we wait for the post-Castro era to engage? Castro is old and fragile and the United States should not wait.

On 20 October 2004, Fidel Castro suffered his second fall in three years as he walked off a stage after completing a graduation ceremony in Santa Clara, Cuba.<sup>3</sup> This raised the question regarding the leader's fragility, but the more importantly the prospect of a post-Castro Cuba in the not too distant future. As William LeoGrande, a Cuban expert at American University Washington, put it, "It's one more reminder that he won't live forever and, in the not-too-distant

future, politics in Cuba will be politics without Castro."<sup>14</sup> Following the fall, Castro sought to reassure the Cuban nation: he immediately picked up a microphone and told the audience that he was "in one piece."<sup>15</sup> Castro was trying to project an image of strength and reassurance, in order to hold on to control. An article in the Miami Herald stated that "the Cuban population was not shown the footage of the fall, just Castro with the microphone, therefore igniting the Cuban word-of-mouth and frenzied calls to the United States by Cubans for information."<sup>16</sup> The Cuban population is hungry for information and the truth, and the United States needs to capitalize on this informational thirst. That the population was shown half the video, and never the actual fall, is just another attempt by the government to control the media and what the Cubans are fed.

With the thought of a post-Castro Cuba fresh in our minds, this strategic research paper will lay out the current posture of the United States' public diplomacy efforts toward Cuba and the Cuban-American population in the United States. Additionally, this strategic research paper will use John A. Warden's Five Ring Model for Strategy<sup>7</sup> to evaluate the effectiveness of the current policy and whether the United States is targeting the appropriate ring. Then Warden's model will be applied to the public diplomacy strategy to provide suggestions on how to shape the public diplomacy strategy for a post-Castro Cuba.

## **HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The current United States policy toward Cuba is one of economic sanctions, travel restrictions, and political isolation.<sup>8</sup> This policy has been in effect since 19 October 1960 as a result of Fidel Castro's government expropriating all U.S. property in Cuba.<sup>9</sup> Since then, while pursuing its end/objective of a free and democratic Cuba,<sup>10</sup> the United States has pressured Castro's regime militarily and economically without success. During this time the U.S. has adjusted the application of the sanctions to meet the changing policies of Castro's regime and White House policy.<sup>11</sup> It is like chess, where most of the pieces have been taken and neither side can check mate the other. It has become a waiting game. Appendix A shows the timeline<sup>12</sup> of the United States and Cuba's waiting game.

In 1996 Congress passed *The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act* (Helms-Burton Act). This Act has four titles. Title I strengthened sanctions against the current Cuban Government and codified the U.S. embargo.<sup>13</sup> Title II described U.S. policy toward assistance to a free and independent Cuba and outlines a plan for economic assistance to a transition or democratic government in Cuba.<sup>14</sup> Title III authorized U.S. nationals with claims to confiscated property in Cuba to file suit in U.S. courts against persons that may be "trafficking" in that property, but it also provided the President the authority to suspend the lawsuit provisions

for periods of six months to help expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.<sup>15</sup> Title IV deals with the denial of visas to and exclusion from the U.S. of persons who, after March 12, 1996, confiscate or "traffic" in confiscated property in Cuba claimed by U.S. nationals.<sup>16</sup> Since the Act's passage, the U.S. continued to make adjustments to the U.S.-Cuba policy.

The last adjustment to the United States-Cuba policy took place during a Rose Garden speech by President Bush on 10 October 2003<sup>17</sup> where the President stated that the United States' objective is to have a free and democratic Cuba.<sup>18</sup> The President addressed Castro's informational blockade and laid out a plan to get the message to the Cuban population.

Although the September 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) does not directly address the current Cuban situation, we can find the United States desired end state for Cuba, "the emergence of a free and democratic Cuba,"<sup>19</sup> is implied within the National Security Strategy. The cover letter signed by President Bush states that "we will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets and free trade to every corner of the world."<sup>20</sup> This statement aligns itself with the President's Rose Garden Speech because Cuba is the only non-democratic/totalitarian regime left in the Americas. Additionally, a coalition approach to bring democracy was stated by President Bush during his Rose Garden speech on 10 October 2003.<sup>21</sup> This coalition approach is critical in showing the Cuban population and the international community that the United States will work alongside the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and other liked-minded countries.

The United States' approach for national security is to accomplish regional stability by "promoting political and economical freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity."<sup>22</sup> This goal seems to be out of step with the rest of the world when it comes to the U.S.-Cuban bilateral sanctions. On 4 November 2003, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly voted for the twelfth straight year condemning the U.S. policy against Cuba.<sup>23</sup> This vote had its largest plurality with 179 nations in favor of ending the sanctions, 3 against (U.S., Israel, Marshall Islands) and 2 abstentions. On 28 October 2004, and for the thirteenth year in a row, the UN voted against the United States embargo with the vote being 179 nations to 4 (U.S., Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau).<sup>24</sup> Additionally, 22 March 2002, a bipartisan group of House lawmakers called for an easing of the Cuban trade embargo and an end to restrictions on the travel to the communist country.<sup>25</sup> The United Nations vote and the bipartisan action points to the question: Who is right?

## **INFORMATIONAL ELEMENT OF POWER AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**

### **ROLE OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**

The United States Army War College addresses the elements of national power with the acronym MID-LIFE.<sup>26</sup> MID-LIFE stands for Military, Informational, Diplomatic, Legal, Intelligence, Financial and Economic elements of power. This is an expanded version of DIME (Diplomatic, Informational, Military, Economical). The MID-LIFE model further sub-divides the informational element of power into two categories: Public Diplomacy and Information Operations.<sup>27</sup> This paper will not deal with the Information Operations category.

Additionally, one may view these elements in terms of hard power or soft power. In the article "The Changing Nature of Power," Joseph S. Nye, Jr., states that "soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others."<sup>28</sup> The power of the informational element of power rests in shaping the preferences of others; but to shape the preference of others, the audience has to hear the message and understand it. The actual application and the exercise of this soft power rests within the public diplomacy arena.

The Department of State has the lead for public diplomacy and the informational element of power. Within the Department of State, the Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, which is the product of the consolidation of the United States Information Agency (USIA) with the State Department in 1999, has the public diplomacy lead. One of the key partners of the Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs is the White House Communications Office.

The charter of the Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs is to inform and influence.<sup>29</sup> This charter was further refined as "Increase understanding for American values, policies, and initiatives to create a receptive international environment" in the Department of State Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2004-2009.<sup>30</sup> The Strategic Plan lays out a three-dimensional strategy. The first dimension is regional, the second is to maintain dialogue and build support at home, and the third dimension is outreach to both younger and wider audiences.<sup>31</sup> Applying the three dimensional strategy to the problem, we find the following relationship: the first dimension deals with Cuba, the second dimension deals with the Cuban-American population and the third dimension deals with the international community and the Cuban population. Supporting this strategy are five pillars. First; communicate with younger audiences through content and means tailored to their context. Second, quickly counter propaganda and disinformation. Third, listen to the foreign audience. Fourth, use advances in communications technology, while continuing to employ effective tools and techniques. Fifth, promote international educational exchanges and professional exchanges.<sup>32</sup>

Strategic communications requires synchronization of the message at all the levels of government. Currently there is no structure in place to synchronize the Public Diplomacy effort. This paper concurs with the recommendation of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communications that “the President should establish a permanent strategic communication structure within the NSC”<sup>33</sup> and nominates a Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications who chairs the Strategic Communications Committee.<sup>34</sup>

#### PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND CUBA

The day to day application and execution of the Public Diplomacy mission in Cuba is handled by the U.S. Interests Section (USINT) Public Affairs Section (PAS) section in Havana. The U.S. Interests Section implements U.S. policy “to promote a peaceful transition to a democratic system based on respect for rule of law, individual human rights and open economic and communication systems.”<sup>35</sup> “The Public Affairs Section manages press, cultural and educational issues for the U.S. Interests Section and it is the information hub, with modern information technology, internet research capability and access to a variety of specialized databases.”<sup>36</sup> The Public Affairs Officer also handles media affairs, cultural affairs, the book program and the collection of articles from specialized magazines.<sup>37</sup>

The administration is committed to getting the message to the people and to breaking Castro’s informational blockade. The administration is combating the informational blockade by supporting and providing funding to Radio and TV Marti, by launching a new communications satellite in 2003 and by utilizing “Commando Solo” to deliver a Presidential message to the Cuban population in Spanish.<sup>38</sup>

A quick web search quickly returned over 20 million hits for the word “Cuba”. A more refined search for the phrase “Cuban Policy” returned 1.3 millions hits. Finally, a slightly more refined search for the phrase “U.S.-Cuban Policy” returned 1.1 million hits. This indicates the amount of information available for public consumption on the web. The volume of information presents a daunting task to the U.S. Interests Section in Havana and the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs at the Department of State who are trying to counter act misinformation and erroneous information while trying to present the truth. A quick scan of some of the returns revealed that the websites run the gamut of opinions. At one end of the spectrum, you find Fidel Castro with his web propoganda mechanism with the Granma website<sup>39</sup> and the Cuban Mission to the United Nations website.<sup>40</sup> At the opposite end, is the United States with its Department of State public diplomacy website<sup>41</sup> and the U.S. Interests Section website.<sup>42</sup> In between those poles, there are supporters of both sides and a few

moderates. A sample list of over two-hundred sites can be found at the Latin American Network Information Network (LANIC) website.<sup>43</sup>

## **FIVE BASIC FIVE RING MODEL FOR STRATEGY**

### **MODEL APPLICATION TO CURRENT UNITED STATES-CUBA RELATIONS**

John A. Warden's thesis states that "every organization follows the same organizational scheme"<sup>44</sup> and that each organization has the same system attributes are Leadership, Organic Essentials, Infrastructure, Population and Fighting Mechanism.<sup>45</sup> Figure 1 below is the pictorial depiction of John A. Warden's Five Ring Model.

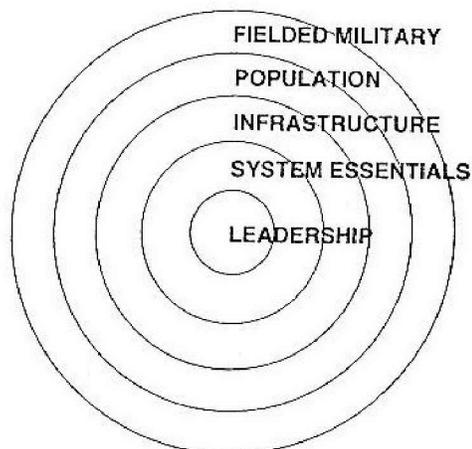


FIGURE 1. THE FIVE-RING MODEL FOR STRATEGIC WARFARE<sup>46</sup>

Warden states that this pictorial gives us five insights. "First, it shows us that we are dealing with an interdependent system."<sup>47</sup> "Second, it gives us some idea of the relative importance of each entity contained within a given ring."<sup>48</sup> "Third, it portrays rather graphically an ancient truth about war – our objective is always to convince the enemy to do what we want him to do."<sup>49</sup> "Fourth, our rings clearly show that the military is a shield or spear for the whole system, not the essence of the system."<sup>50</sup> Fifth, the rings give us the concept of working from the inside to the outside as opposed to the converse.<sup>51</sup> The inner or center ring, Leadership, is the most important/critical ring in the model. As you move outward, the criticality of each ring diminishes with Fielded Military being the least critical in the model. The goal, based on

Warden's thesis, is to apply your means at the center ring, where you can affect and influence the system the most.

Applying the Ring model to Cuba, the attributes are as follows. The leadership attributes are Fidel Castro, his brother Raul Castro, and Fidel's inner circle. The Castro leadership runs a strong anti-American regime and "a totalitarian police state, which relies on repressive methods to maintain control"<sup>52</sup>, such as intense physical and electronic surveillance of Cubans and foreign travelers.<sup>53</sup> The United States message should aim at marginalizing this ring, non-acceptance of a Castro regime, and removal of the regime.

The organic essentials attribute are Cuba's electric, water and food production facilities and plants. These essentials are in short supply to the populous. A speech by James C. Cason, Chief of Missions, United States Interest Section in Havana on 9 November 2004, provides a glimpse to the current conditions and how Cubans are dealing with less electricity, medical and food just to name a few.<sup>54</sup> Blackouts and power outages are part of the daily Cuban life.<sup>55</sup>

Cuba's infrastructure attributes are the standard ones such as roads, electric distribution systems and water distribution networks. Mr. Cason states that "Cuba's basic infrastructure suffers from systemic neglect" and Mr. Cason goes on to point out that water and electric distribution are notable failures.<sup>56</sup> The infrastructure failure is a regime failure and the leadership is failing to provide basic needs and support to the population.

The population attribute is the Cuban people. Here lies the greatest asset for transition and the greatest potential for change. "Waiting for change, waiting for the Castro's strange and unsuccessful experiment to come to an end" is how Mr. Cason describes the Cuban population.<sup>57</sup> This paper agrees with Mr. Cason that the Cubans are waiting for change and the change is a Cuba without a Castro or Castroist regime. The Cubans are spirited people who would like to express their views and ideas, but when they do, they better be pro-Castro or the persons spouting anti-Castro views will most likely receive a jail sentence. This was demonstrated by Castro when he unleashed a sweeping crackdown in March 2003 incarcerating 75 Cubans for an average of 20 years for expressing opposition views.<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, there is a sub-population ring that is worth mentioning here. That sub-population ring is the Cuban-American population in the United States. This sub-population ring can not wait for the post-Castro era. A typical organization is the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF) which "supports a non-violent transition to a pluralistic, market-based democracy in Cuba - one fostering economic prosperity with social justice, grounded in the rule of law and constitutionally guaranteed protection for fundamental human rights as well as the

social, political, and economic rights of the Cuban people."<sup>59</sup> The United States needs to have a domestic message for the Cuban-American population that address roles and responsibilities for this group in a post-Castro Cuba.

Lastly, the fighting mechanism attribute is the Cuban military. In my opinion, this is the wild card during the initial days of a post-Castro Cuba. The United States Public Diplomacy strategy needs a clear message that speaks directly to the military. The message should be one that talks about the opportunity that the military has for reconciliation, of turning their support to a democratic government, of coming under civilian authority. It should also address that they should not support a Castro-like regime.

This paper concurs with Warden's thesis, its attributes and its definition. This paper also concurs with the basic arrangement of the rings and the basic philosophy to target the center ring, since the center ring is where an external entity can influence the system in a way that the highest return is generated and because it causes a ripple effect through the ring. Warden's arrangement fits most strategic situations. When applied to the current United States-Cuba strategy, the model most definitely fits the United States current ends/objectives toward Cuba, which are the end of the dictatorship, transition to democracy, open markets, and respect for human rights.<sup>60</sup> Since these are the ends, targeting Fidel, his leadership, and the Cuban government makes sense. Apply pressure at the center ring to influence the leadership and the system.

Even though the sanctions and restrictions are not aimed at the population ring, the Cuban population, it is the Cuban population who are in actuality shouldering the burden and paying the price of the United States' sanctions and restrictions. As stated in Mr. Cason's speech, Fidel Castro and his inner circle are not going without.<sup>61</sup> The United States informational element of power has been geared to present, support and defend the position that the sanctions are against the totalitarian regime and not the Cuban people. Earlier, this paper mentioned the United Nations' vote on 28 October 2004 condemning the United States embargo in Cuba. Immediately, the informational element of power went to work. Oliver Garza, State Department Area Advisor, speaking before the UN General Assembly stated: "The United States trade embargo against Cuba is a bilateral issue that should not come before the General Assembly. The resolution is an attempt to blame the communist regime's failed economic policies on the United States and to divert attention from its human rights record."<sup>62</sup> Garza proceeded to tell the General Assembly "Let there be no doubt, if Cubans are jobless, hungry, or lack medical care, as the regime admits, it is because of the failings of the current

government.<sup>163</sup> These statements by Garza are aimed at defending the United States' current position against Cuba, against the leadership ring, and against Fidel Castro.

This paper contends that the real question is: As the United States awaits Fidel Castro's last days, should the informational element of power be targeting a different ring? This paper contends that the answer is yes, and here is where Public Diplomacy needs refocusing.

#### MODEL APPLICATION TO PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN CUBA

Contrary to Warden's assertion, this paper contends that these rings are dynamic, which means that these rings can and will move toward the center or toward the outside of the bull's-eye based on which element of power is being applied and based on the desired effect the U.S. is trying to accomplish. This paper contends that when applying Warden's Five Ring Model to the informational instrument of power and more specifically public diplomacy the relational position of the rings changes and new categories are introduced. This is due to the fact that public diplomacy is a soft instrument of power, and it inherently targets the population ring.

It is my position that when applying the attributes from Warden's model to public diplomacy in Cuba, a new ring order emerges with new relative importance and interdependence between the rings. Two of Warden's rings (infrastructure and organic essentials) are no longer applicable in the public diplomacy model since they become part of the message within the new ring structure and attributes.

The new bull's-eye starts with the population ring, the Cuban population, as the center ring. The next ring is the dissident ring. This group has opposed Castro and is paying a great price with unjustified jail sentences, but this group could provide the nucleus for new leadership. The third ring from the center is the military ring, which is the wild card during transition. The fourth ring is the Castro Leadership which needs to be marginalized. The last two rings deal with the United States domestic audience. Next to the last ring, we have the Cuban-American population. The last ring is the U.S. companies with expropriated assets in Cuba. Figure 2 is a graphical depiction of the public diplomacy rings in Cuba.

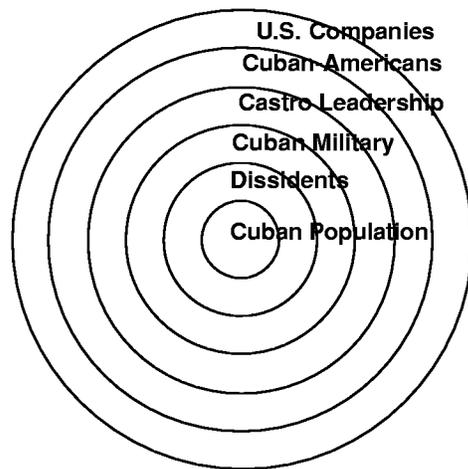


FIGURE 2. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY SIX-RING MODEL FOR SOFT POWER IN CUBA

**PUBLIC DIPLOMACY – THE MESSAGE**

THE CURRENT MESSAGE

“America cannot determine its foreign policy on the basis of what pleases foreign publics. But when policy is adopted, the government should carefully consider the proper means for communicating it to populations abroad.”<sup>64</sup> The United States should not change its policy because of what Cuba thinks or because of international opinion, but the U.S. should use that information to effectively communicate its message. The United States message should address the main point of the policy, the morality of the policy, and the meaning of the policy.

As discussed earlier, there is plenty of information and propaganda on the internet. All this information can be placed into three major categories. The first one is the United States public diplomacy message toward Cuba, the international community and the Cuban-American population in the United States. The second category is the public diplomacy message that Cuba/Castro is promulgating to its people, the United States and the international community. Lastly, there is the message that the international community is sending out to the United States and Cuba.

The United States’ current message toward Cuba continues to be one that still embraces the Cold War Era mentality. The United States’ accepted course of action in dealing with the Cuban government, as long as Castro is in power, is to apply sanctions and restrictions.<sup>65</sup> This message calls for the end of the dictatorship, transition to democracy, open markets and

respect for human rights.<sup>66</sup> These ends were spelled out in a statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 2 October 2003 by Ambassador Roger F. Noriega, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs,<sup>67</sup> reaffirmed during the President's Rose Garden Speech on 10 October 2003,<sup>68</sup> and reinforced on 30 June 2004 when the tougher travel restrictions to Cuba went into effect.<sup>69</sup> The new restrictions call for visits of 14 days every three years with a maximum daily spending of \$50 per person. Prior to this, there were no limits on the length of the visit and a visitor could spend \$167 a day.<sup>70</sup> Cuba continues to be the last hold-out from the Cold War Era in the Western Hemisphere, and the U.S. continues to use the Cold War Era mentality in dealing with Cuba.

Fidel Castro's message is one of anti-Americanism and of victimization by the United States. Castro's propaganda machine utilizes any stage possible to decry the United States embargo against his country. On January 2004 Castro stated that the U.S. is plotting to kill him.<sup>71</sup> For the last year, Castro has been claiming that the U.S. is planning an invasion of Cuba, a statement that the U.S. has denied.<sup>72</sup> Despite the U.S. assurances, on December 2004, the Cuban military conducted a self-defense exercise called "Bastion 2004." Fidel also tries to deflect his governmental failures toward the United States. On 22 December 2004, Cuban art students and cartoonists put up anti-imperialist images. One such was of an eagle painted on the asphalt of Havana's coastal highway so cars could drive over it.<sup>73</sup>

The international community message is one of elimination of the United States embargo against Cuba. The United Nations is the main international organization calling for the total lifting of the sanctions.<sup>74</sup> The UN and the international community believe that the best way to integrate Cuba into the hemisphere is for the U.S. to lift the sanctions now and to start normalizing relationships. The European Union seems to be split over the issue and is revisiting its relationship with Cuba.<sup>75</sup> The main benefit of lifting of the sanctions is that the spotlight will shine on Cuba and Castro could no longer blame the U.S. for the woes of Cuba. I believe that Castro could try to deflect the spotlight away from Cuba and back onto the U.S. Castro could tell the Cuban population that four decades of U.S. sanctions are the root cause of the failures and suffering, that restoration will demand years of recovery, and that since his leadership brought the end of the embargo, therefore he is the person to lead them through recovery. I believe that this deflecting approach would be short lived. From the U.S. perspective, lifting all the sanctions is not feasible because it flows counter to the current strategy. It fails the acceptability test on two counts: the U.S. government can not accept the revival of communism in the hemisphere<sup>76</sup> and it would enrage the Cuban-American population. Lastly, it fails the suitability test because the U.S. position is one of dealing with Castro by enforcing the sanctions

as stated in President Bush's speech<sup>77</sup> and by "adjusting U.S. economic pressure to counter the ever evolving ways the Castro regime attempts to replenish the coffers that fund the subjugation of the Cuban people"<sup>78</sup> as stated by Secretary of State Colin L. Powell in the foreword of the *Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba Report to the President*.<sup>79</sup> The speech and the report call for strengthening the sanctions and better enforcement of the same. The risk of implementing this course of action is that Castro could claim victory over the U.S. which would strengthen his grip on Cuba. Additionally, the Cuban-American population would likely denounce the U.S. policy, triggering protests. This course of action is a high-risk one since Castro could easily spin the lifting of sanctions to his advantage.

#### THE NEW MESSAGE AND THEMES

The Castro era is coming to an end in the not too distant future and the United States should refocus its message by utilizing the Public Diplomacy Six-Ring Model in Cuba and targeting each ring with specific themes.

The United States themes directed at the Cuban population ring are critical. The themes should include such things as: Cuba is for Cubans; do not support Raul Castro; a democratic Cuba is a prosperous Cuba; the U.S. will help rebuild the infrastructure and services such as power and water distribution; the U.S. will work with the United Nations and the Organization of American States; the U.S. will help coordinate humanitarian assistance; the U.S. will provide technical assistance in opening up all the media means in Cuba; the U.S. will provide assistance in improving basic needs such as medical and dental care; the U.S. will take no legal action against the population; and lastly the U.S. will not invade Cuba.

Themes directed at the dissidents should provide hope, support, and a better future. These themes should include: do not despair, the U.S. supports your democratic spirit; we will work together for a democratic Cuba; and lastly you are the nucleus for Post-Castro era leadership in Cuba.

Themes directed toward the Cuban Military need to be direct. Some of these themes are: do not support Raul Castro; do not conduct as Quo; stay in your garrison; do not attack the population; and transition to a military that supports a democratic Cuba.

Themes aimed at Castro and his leadership should continue to stress democracy and giving up power. Additionally, themes should also address: do not transfer power to Raul Castro; there are no military invasion plans; the U.S. is not planning to assassinate Fidel Castro; step down from power and negotiate; and lastly consider the possibility of asylum in a different country.

The next set of themes is aimed at two domestic audiences. These themes need to be perceived in the correct light and not as an information operations campaign. First is the Cuban-American population. These themes should be of patience and thanks. Themes should include: potential role during transition; become the spoke group to American public during transition; potential role in democratic Cuba; do not rush to Cuba in boats and planes; and U.S. will facilitate reunions. Lastly, the themes aimed at the U.S. companies with expropriated property should be: do you really need that property back; the U.S. will facilitate business opportunities in Cuba; do not seek legal action; and the U.S. will provide compensation.

## **THE WAY AHEAD**

This section presents an approach on how the United States should be conducting its Cuban public diplomacy strategy at a time when the Fidel regime could end at any moment. This approach complements the United States ends/objectives toward Cuba; end of the dictatorship, transition to democracy, open markets and respect for human rights.<sup>80</sup> The way ahead section is divided into three sections or periods of time. Period I starts right now and goes until Castro or a Castro-like regime is no longer in power. Period II starts when Castro or a Castro-like regime is no longer in power through the completion of the democratic election in Cuba. Period III is the post-elections era and the normalization era of United States-Cuba relationships.

There are three key Public Diplomacy documents published in 2004 that shape the Cuban Strategy. The first document is The Report to the President from the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba.<sup>81</sup> The second document is U.S. Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2004-2009.<sup>82</sup> The third document is the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy 2004 Report.<sup>83</sup>

### **PERIOD I: NOW UNTIL NO CASTRO REGIME IN POWER**

This paper considers this period the most important and critical of the three periods. Some might wonder, and with reason, if the elections period should be the most critical period. Even though the elections period is a critical piece to the Cuban transition, this paper supports the position that for these elections to be successful the United States needs to shape the Cuban environment with an aggressive public diplomacy campaign now, prior to elections. Planting the democratic seeds and influencing the Cuban people now will pay dividends during the elections and post elections periods.

The first issue that the United States needs to tackle is overcoming the informational blockade that Fidel Castro has on his people. This calls for an extremely robust on-island

strategy based on enhancing the efforts currently being conducted by the U.S. Interests Section; by improving the delivery of media; and by lifting travel restrictions. The Interest Section should expand its education program of independent journalists; increase its distribution of information via press releases and media clips; increase book distribution via an independent library; and enlarge its computer lab in order to provide more internet access to Cubans.

The second on-island effort calls for improving delivery of media. Technical solutions like satellites, gargantuan efforts like the C-130 with transmission equipment, third party support for TV Marti transmission are great initiatives but fall short due to narrowness. What is meant by narrowness is the number of Cubans that the United States is reaching with these methods. It is a small number since the vast majority lacks the technical means to receive the information. It is time to consider massive distribution of satellite radios (XM) and the exploitation of this technical means for media delivery. It is extremely hard to jam a satellite signal.

The last and most controversial on-island tactic calls for the lifting of travel restrictions to Cuba. Personal contacts and family contacts are the best ways to overcome the blockade. Visitation rights every three years is not frequent enough. As we move rapidly toward a post-Castro era, higher visitation frequency is what is needed. The question that needs to be answered is who gets the most benefit from the lifting of travel restrictions? Is it Fidel, who can exploit the visits for economical, propaganda, and/or personal gain? Or is it the United States who will be able to plant numerous seeds of democracy during the visits? Here the United States has the opportunity for relatives and friends to share with the Cuban population in a one-on-one setting the unlimited possibilities of the post-Castro era. The U.S. could use the visit application window as a tool for change and education. When residents apply for travel to Cuba, and as part of the application procedures, the person would have to visit key internet sites that would educate them on human rights, democracy and economic prosperity. Additionally, at the time of visitation approval, the U.S. could provide the traveler with a package of material. These materials might include flyers, books and/or pamphlets from international organizations; it could include information on sports, business, education, agriculture, health and any other topics the U.S. deems important. The travelers will take the package with them to Cuba and leave it behind with friends and relatives. By liberalizing travel and placing materials in the hands of travelers, the United States has an informational blockade-proof way to get the message to the people of Cuba and plant the seeds of influence and behavioral change. It is my contention that planting the seeds outweighs any short term benefits Castro might gain from unrestrictive travel to Cuba. By lifting the travel restrictions, the flood gates of information are opened for the population to decide.

The second issue that the United States needs to tackle is the Articles of the Helms-Burton Act. In this section this paper will make a recommendation on how public diplomacy should deal with each Title. We should continue to promote Title I because it is directed at the Leadership Ring and the United States needs to maintain the pressure on Castro's regime with one exception. This exception is the elimination or waiving of Section 112, Title I of the Helms-Burton Act<sup>84</sup> which reinstates unrestricted travel to Cuba.

Title II is a powerful article in the hands of the public diplomacy experts and is laden with incentives. This Article needs to be part of every message to the population ring. Tell them that the desire of the United States is to provide assistance during the transition period toward democracy with economic assistance and other means. Share with the Cuban population that the United States will work with the newly elected Cuban government to ensure that the Cubans are the winners.

Title III is the most controversial of the articles. Title III needs to be eliminated from the Act. The message to the Cuban population should be that the United States is not coming to Cuba looking for reparations or that the United States is not waiting at the door ready to pounce on Cuba's property. United States nationals have lived without these properties for over four decades and, in my opinion, do not need them and can continue to live without them. The United States should provide other ways of reparation within its domestic means, such as monetary reparation. The United States, but especially the President, has the opportunity to suspend Title III and use it as an olive branch toward transition. Tell them that the United States will keep the reparation out of the court room and out of Cuba.

Lastly, Title IV. Keep informing the Cuban leadership along with the international community that the United States will continue to stringently enforce Title IV along with the "Trading with the enemy Act." The international community needs to understand that the United States will not condemn people or countries dealing in expropriated United States property in Cuba.

The Helms-Burton Act is laden with incentives if and when Castro decides to step down and allow Cuba to become a free and democratic country. Some of the incentives are termination of the economic embargo, loans, sponsorship of Cuba's membership into international financial institutions, sponsor membership into the Organization of American States and NAFTA membership among others.<sup>85</sup> The United States needs to emphasize these incentives while eliminating some of the punitive action (expropriated property) and some of the limiting restrictions (travel). The risk of continuing with the Helms-Burton Act in its current form is three fold: first, the potential alienation of the Cuban population; second, the increased

possibility for succession of Fidel Castro by his brother Raul Castro; and third, the possibility that some other member of the elitist communist party would take power. This paper considers no action on the Helms-Burton Act a medium risk since we can only speculate how the Cuban population will react during a Castro transition.

The third issue that the United States needs to tackle is its perception as a colonial power, a perception that a number of anti-American countries make a centerpiece of their propaganda. Start by informing the people in Cuba that the United Nations or the Organization of American States (OAS) will be the lead organization during the transition period and that the United States will work with these two bodies.

The fourth issue that the United States needs to address is the message to the Cuban-American population. The United States message should be one of teamwork. Inform them that they are part of the solution, transition and restoration of Cuba. By lifting travel restrictions, this group becomes the premier ambassadors for the United States. Additionally, the message needs to deal with the numerous Cuban-American organizations and their role. The State Department should engage these organizations and develop a utilization plan with tasks and responsibilities which show how they fit into the transition.

#### PERIOD II: NO CASTRO REGIME IN POWER UNTIL CUBAN DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

This is the period where the United States takes on a supporting role to the United Nations and to the Organizations of American States. The message needs to be that a regional or international organization is leading Cuba back into the family. The United States should shoulder most of the support and logistical tasks but let the United Nations or the Organization of American States take the credit and the limelight. Let them take on the elections planning and execution. Again, the message needs to be that the United States is in a support role. The support role helps marginalize the colonizer image.

#### PERIOD III: POST-ELECTION ERA UNTIL US-CUBA RELATION NORMALIZATION

This is the time where democracy, free markets, freedom and restoration start to take root in Cuba. This is the time where the United States can help with the infrastructure and system essential rings with economical packages, medical packages, trade packages, etc. Additionally, the United States opens a full embassy and reestablishes diplomatic channels. This is also the time that the United States should start thinking about Guantanamo Bay and the potential to return the property to Cuba. This is the time when the United States sponsors Cuban reintegration into regional and international organizations.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

This strategic research paper recommends that the United State reassess its public diplomacy strategy toward Cuba and the key role that public diplomacy plays in preparing the Cuban people to transition to a free and democratic state.

The people of Cuba are Castro's center of gravity and as such the key force for a transition and change to a free and democratic Cuba. As Castro ages and approaches the end of his regime, the United States has a window of opportunity to educate the Cuban population. It is imperative that the United States maximize this window of opportunity. Maximizing this window of opportunity can only be accomplished by eliminating travel restrictions into Cuba. Unrestricted travel will allow the United States to shape the informational battlespace and plant the seed for a post-Castro Cuba. The United States can not wait until Castro's departure to engage the Cuban people. The Unites States needs to change its current engagement strategy and directly engage the Cuban people now.

When one considers that the enforcing of sanctions has not achieved the desire end state of removing Castro from power, it is time to do a course correction on the Cuban policy.

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