THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

CHALLENGES WITH THE WAR ON TERROR

by

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Abstract

An organization's reputation, productivity, and even its existence often depend on the way the media and the public perceive its goals and policies. As a massive organization, the United States government relies on the success of the messages it disseminates to clearly communicate its mission in regards to the current war on terror. The U.S. government and the Bush administration face challenges in the monumental task of putting together a strategic communications plan to support their policies. U.S. government agencies, including members of the defense, intelligence, diplomatic and security communities, have their own challenges in formulating and executing individual, albeit collaborative strategies in promoting their mission regarding the war on terror. This thesis lies in evaluating strategic communication practices and interagency cooperation. As a partial result of the war on terror, the United States' global credibility has waned and therefore its efficiency in promoting its policies has been called into question. This thesis studies the government's planning and execution of communication tactics in regards to the war on terror. A better organized strategic communication, interagency solution may change the world's attitudes towards certain policy decisions and ultimately the way the public views the war on terror. By exploring how strategic communication methods have been implemented and analyzing

lessons learned post September 11, 2001, this thesis explores the U.S.

government's need for a tailored and refined interagency communication plan

for the ever-changing war on terror.

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Introduction

Today the United States and its allies face serious challenges to their freedoms and way of life. Post September 11th, the world is more interconnected and complex. Globalization and technology together have dramatically changed commerce and the way societies interact. Globalization has accelerated threats stemming from international terrorism as a result of the integration of technology, capital, and information across national borders. Radical extremist movements use global terrorism, the Internet and the media to further their causes. It is imperative that the U.S. government's external and internal strategic communication efforts be agile and effective in countering these radical movements to better serve the nation, the president and congress. There are continuous threats associated with the war on terror targeted at the public. In order to enhance integration and collaboration across the board, a sound tactical plan that counters threats effectively through communication is necessary. The government's public affairs strategy plays a large factor in determining public perception and policy regarding the war on terror. This thesis focuses on specific communication approaches and tracks the implementation of certain events and plans as well as their outcome in

pertinent government agencies. It also evaluates how the U.S. government has handled strategic communication from World War II until present day.

This thesis studies select government agencies' public communication methods in regards to the war on terror. It concludes with future recommendations for the organization of a clear strategic communication interagency plan in dealing with the war on terror in the future. By exploring globalization of the media and how strategic communication theories apply to the way the U.S. government is portrayed around the world, this thesis examines the delicate balance of strategic communication and public perception, particularly when it comes to sensitive security matters dealing with the war on terror.

In today's world, a thorough understanding of globalized cultures and the "24/7" globalized media is vital to the conduct of U.S. public diplomacy. The current administration's policies are often misunderstood and this miscommunication leads to discouragement, confusion, and ultimately failure in public diplomacy. Globalization and communication have changed drastically in the past decade. It is important to explore what is effective and what is not in order to improve America's efforts at home and abroad. Media outreach and clear and consistent messaging is vital to any strategic communication endeavor, especially regarding the war on terror.

Methodology

This thesis defines strategic communication and puts it into context by looking at the U.S. government's strategic communication methods from World War II to present day. By studying strategic communication and globalization, it is easier to understand today's challenges in dealing with the war on terror. When researching the Bush Administration and its communication efforts towards the war on terror, as well as other government agencies who strive to reach specific audiences, strategic communication and interagency efforts are identified.

This thesis explores situations where government agencies utilized their public affairs offices and specialists to get messages across to various audiences and to ascertain whether the outcome was positive or negative. Government agencies' public affairs offices have dealt with the war on terror from a public relations standpoint, but they do not always share the same tactics as the president's communication policies or each other for that matter. First person interviews with agency spokespeople and public affairs officers shed insight into the types of coverage and influence they hope to receive by catering their messages to the American public, international audiences, and the terrorists themselves. This thesis also explores how planning and interagency support is sometimes blocked by bureaucracy and classification issues. Examining public

approval ratings, polls and other data about the war on terror displays evidence that public opinion and attitudes have an influence on public policy and successful implementation of that policy.

This thesis culminates in the proposal of a new interagency task force that would set up offices in each agency to deal specifically with coordinating strategic communication plans with respective agency's public affairs staff. It is not sufficient for just the State Department to try to set the tone for all of the other defense, intelligence and security agencies. The United States would be better able to organize all efforts in combating terrorism by ensuring that each agency has a liaison that coordinates with other pertinent agencies on strategic communication initiatives. Lastly, this thesis investigates what the government has done up to present day to strategically fight the war on terror by using communications methods and also explores what still needs to be accomplished.

Defining Strategic Communication

Six years after the September 11th attacks, the United States' fight in the name of the war on terror poses an insistent question: Is the world more safe, and whether it is or is not, has the U.S. government done an appropriate job of communicating its status and what needs to be accomplished? It is important to first define the term strategic communication, and then study its history in order to provide a contextual background for looking at an interagency approach regarding the United States government's strategic communication challenges and the war on terror.

The term "strategic communication" is used by the State Department, the National Security Council and the Department of Defense to include a number of disciplines that impart messages on a strategic scale.[1] One definition of strategic communication reads: "Focused United States government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs,

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[1] Defense Science Board, Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication (Washington D.C.: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, 2004)

themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions."[2] Public

diplomacy combined with communications has direct strategic impact

regarding the choice of these messages and their intended audiences. Both

public diplomacy and strategic communication encompass multiple elements

and purposes to explain the context of domestic and foreign policy decisions.

The development of strategic communication themes can also be specialized

and customized when explained to the media and public.

U.S. Government Strategic Communication Findings

In 2004, the Defense Science Board (DSB), which was established to

provide independent advice to the Secretary of Defense, formed a task force to

study strategic communication. Its report provided a comprehensive analysis

of the United States' ability to understand and influence the global community.

The DSB described strategic communication as instruments governments use to

"understand global audiences and cultures, engage in a dialogue of ideas

between people and institutions, advise policymakers, diplomats and military

leaders on the public implications of policy choices, and influence attitudes and

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[2] Department of Defense, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02, 511.

behavior through communication strategies."[3] The DSB concluded that

strategic communication is made up of four core instruments. These are: public

diplomacy, public affairs, international broadcasting, and military information

operations.[4]

In terms of public diplomacy, the DSB explained that it is necessary to

build long-term relationships through the exchange of people and ideas, in order

to increase receptivity to the nation's culture, values and policies. The DSB noted

the importance of seeking to directly influence foreign governments, which is a

type of strategic communication that is explored later in this thesis. Public

diplomacy was the focal point of this task force in trying to emphasize the

imperativeness of public support when implicating strategies, policies, or

diplomatic initiatives. The ultimate goal was to increase the understanding of

American policies, values and interests and to counter anti-American sentiment

and misinformation about the United States around the world.[5] The DSB's

recommendations did not apply specifically to the war on terror, although some

of its theories can be applied to it.

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[3] Defense Science Board, Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic
Communication (Washington D.C.: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition,
Technology and Logistics, 2004)
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the State Department has tried to increase its public diplomacy resources dramatically. In 2006, the GAO reported that since 2003, the government lacked an interagency public diplomacy strategy to guide the activities of disparate agencies, and it continues to lack this strategy.[6] GAO also noted that the State Department did not have a strategy to integrate its diverse public diplomacy activities and those efforts generally lacked important strategic communication elements found in the private sector. These elements included having core messages, segmenting target audiences, using in-depth research and analysis to monitor and evaluate results, and finally, an integrated communication plan to bring all these elements together.[7] In addition to the State Department, in 2006 the Pentagon developed a "strategic communications roadmap." The Pentagon's strategic communications roadmap has tried to follow through on its mission to "create a culture" that sees strategic communications as information operations including public diplomacy.[8] Before this roadmap was developed, the Pentagon had trouble getting America's message out to counter the terrorists' highly effective use of media outlets, and the reasons for this will be explored later in this thesis.

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[6] GAO Highlights, U.S. Public Diplomacy. "State Department Efforts Lack Certain Communication Elements and Face Persistent Challenges" GAO-06-707T (May 3, 2006)

[7] *Ibid*.

[8] James Dao and Eric Schmitt. "Pentagon Readies Efforts to Sway Sentiments Abroad," The New York Times, 19 February 2002. http:www.commondreams.org/headlines02/0219-01.htm

Because terrorism is such an ever-changing threat to the U.S., it is difficult for each agency to come up with a separate but cohesive strategic plan to educate the American public and the world. The U.S. would be better able to organize all efforts in combating terrorism by making sure that pertinent information and coordination are being correctly communicated internally, as well as externally, through their individual public affairs office. The people who carry out strategic communication objectives in U.S. government agencies are typically the public affairs staffs in their respective communications offices. Public affairs officers perform a wide range of functions from internal communication to media relations, congressional liaison and partnership management with international and domestic counterterrorism partners.[9] These public affairs officers address communications activities designed to inform the U.S. media. In a world of global media outlets with global audiences, their messages reach around the world. It is the public affairs officer's job to transmit news and information programs to global audiences using radio, satellite television, and the Internet. U.S. government's public affairs officers must also be confident using multi-media production, opinion and media surveys, information technologies, and measuring the influence of communications overseas.

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[9] US Department of State, Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Policy Coordinating Committee, U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication, http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/87427.pdf.

Yet, there are some differences between influencing and educating American people versus a foreign audience. According to the Department of Defense, information operations can only be used on a foreign audience. This is a term used to describe the integrated employment of electronic warfare, which is a part of "military activities that use selected information and indicators to influence the attitude and behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals in support of military and national security objectives."[10] By incorporating this definition, strategic communication can also be described as integrated and coordinated themes and messages that advance U.S. interests and policies supported by public diplomacy, public affairs, international broadcasting and military information operations in concert with other instruments of national power.[11] These strategic communication practices can only be efficient and successful if the United States' level of credibility in the war on terror can be trusted. Over the years the U.S. experimented with different ways to conduct strategic communication depending on the administration and situation at the time. By examining these systems, it is easier to see why some tactics were sustainable and others were not.

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[10] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, Joint Publication (Washington: Department of Defense, March 22 2007)

[11] Peter G. Peterson. *Public Diplomacy and the War on Terrorism.* Foreign Affairs, September/October 2002.

World War II to Today: A Look at the Recent History of U.S. Government Strategic Communication

Before addressing what might be the best way for the United States

government to communicate and advance its interests and policies abroad, it is

valuable to look at what's been done in the past and determine if any lessons

can be learned. It is important to note that throughout U.S. history, Americans

have been uncomfortable with the idea of the government reporting news

domestically and internationally. Government efforts to communicate its

actions are particularly controversial during times of war. The U.S.

government's attempts to sway public opinion by bringing news to people in

other nations can be termed "propaganda," or an "information campaign"

designed to educate the public with facts in regions where "free" and

"unbiased" media outlets are limited in number.[12] Since World War II, it has

been difficult for the U.S. to find a delicate balance in managing its strategic

communications practices abroad without being criticized at home for it.

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[12] John Brown. "The Anti-Propaganda Tradition in the United States," Bulletin Board for Peace, 29 June 2003 http://www.publicdiplomacy.org/19.htm; accessed 20 January 2006.

Early 1940's

The Office of War Information (OWI), which existed from 1942 to 1945, is where the modern practice of influencing public opinion about the U.S. and its global policy agenda started.[13] Before World War II, the United States was the only major power in the world that did not have an officially funded strategy or an infrastructure behind it for carrying out ideological programs.[14] This changed after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The OWI generated media coverage for domestic and overseas audiences on the war effort. It used the service of Voice of America, the U.S. government-funded radio network, to do this, as well as a covert side for propaganda operations that was directed by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a predecessor of the CIA.[15] OSS was responsible for activities such as clandestine radio stations broadcasting to Nazi Germany, planting newspaper stories, and spreading rumors about enemies.[16] During World War II, OWI ran the largest propaganda operation in the world, but the whole operation closed down right after the war ended. Seven years after WWII, President Eisenhower determined that he needed an agency separate from the State Department to oversee America's information programs.

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[13] William Rosenau. "Waging the War of Ideas." RAND Corporation, The McGraw-Hill Homeland Security Handbook, Chapter 72, 2006. United States Institute of Peace. "Iraq Study Group." http://www.usip.org/isg/

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] Lowell Schwartz. "War, Propaganda and Public Opinion." *Baltimore Sun*, December 18, 2005.

The 1950's and 60's

In 1953 the United States Information Agency (USIA) was created to counter anti-American propaganda and coordinate the dissemination of information to foreign audiences during the early days of the Cold War.[17]   At that time the term "propaganda" had negative connotations in the United States, and USIA carefully avoided using that word to describe what it was doing.[18] Although many saw the need to counter propaganda and disinformation from the Soviets, there was also concern that Americans could become the victims of its own propagandistic information program. Misinformation called blowback results from the recirculation of information into the original country by that country's intelligence service that leaves unintended negative consequences. The USIA decided to rename its mission "public diplomacy," and later shifted its focus to educational and cultural programs designed to create mutual understanding rather than unilateral persuasion.[19] This is an area that more focus should be shifted to now on the war against terror.

In 1961 President John F. Kennedy asked one of the top television newscasters of the time, Edward R. Murrow, to become head of the U.S.

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[17] Patrick Cronin, Helle Dale, Stephen Johnson. "Strengthening U.S. Public Diplomacy Requires Organization, Coordination and Strategy," The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder No.1875 (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 5 August 2005)

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Ibid.*

Information Agency. Murrow reluctantly agreed but set one condition. He requested to be consulted when important decisions were being made about communication crises, not just when things went wrong.[20] The lack of early coordination is a problem that has been carried over to the 21st century. President Kennedy's statement on USIA's mission stated: "The mission of the U.S. Information Agency is to help achieve U.S. foreign policy objectives by (a) influencing public attitudes in other nations, and (b) advising the President, his representatives abroad, and the various departments and agencies on the implications of foreign opinion for present and contemplated U.S. policies, programs, and official statements."[21] Since the 1960s, the USIA's primary mission was facilitating effects through public diplomacy and international broadcasting. It did not associate with the Central Intelligence Agency's covert or Defense Department's overt information operations programs. Over the years, USIA demonstrated that it was not proficient in developing communications strategies or coordinating interagency activities at the strategic level, despite its responsibilities. Part of the problem may have been unwillingness by other government agencies to support or follow an outside organization. Recent history has confirmed that most government agencies gain

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[20] Richard Halloran. "Strategic Communication"From *Parameters*, Autumn 2007.
[21] Bruce Gregory. "Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication: Cultures, Firewalls, and Imported Norms" Prepared for presentation at the American Political Science Association Conference on International Communication and Conflict. August 31, 2005

the vast majority of their power through their ability to control funding or some part of the budget of another organization or suboffice. In addition to having little budgetary impact, USIA had difficulty penetrating the individualized culture and operational methodology of other organizations. This all culminated in USIA's demise.

End of the 20th century

Fast forward to the mid-1990s, when Congress slashed USIA budgets and resources for countries like Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country, and consequently, operations took a downturn. An integral part of USIA programs were academic and cultural exchanges, and these fell from 45,000 to 29,000 annually between 1995 and 2001.[22] In 1998 Congress chose to reduce foreign operating expenses and consolidate operations. The Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act merged USIA into the Department of State as part of the project to reinvent government and reformation of organizational management in the face of declining budgetary resources.[23] But the Department of State

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[22] Bruce Gregory. "Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication: Cultures, Firewalls, and Imported Norms" Prepared for presentation at the American Political Science Association Conference on International Communication and Conflict. August 31, 2005
[23] Stephen Johnson, Helle Dale, and Patrick Cronin. "Strengthening U.S. Public Diplomacy Requires Organization, Coordination and Strategy," The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder No. 1875 (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 5 August 2005)

acquisition of USIA was a problem from the start because programs at the USIA

were already weakened by neglect in the decade following the Cold War.

Beginning of the 21st Century

Strategic communication had a high priority in the months immediately

following the catastrophic event of September 11, 2001. But there wasn't an

interagency public affairs body that could be tasked with coordinating

sophisticated strategic communication efforts at that time. It wasn't until 2005

that the president elected to designate the State Department as the lead in the

interagency effort in order to bolster strategic communication with respect to

foreign policy. Bush nominated his close advisor, Karen Hughes, to serve as the

Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. As Counselor

to the President for the first year and a half of the Bush administration, she led

the communications effort for the war on terror, and managed the White House

Offices of Communications, Media Affairs, Speechwriting and Press Secretary.

Today, Karen Hughes' office at the State Department is the head governmental

department that sets the tone and runs strategic communication for the war on

terror. This position was trumpeted by Secretary Rice when it was created as the

way to bridge the gap between the Arab world and the U.S. In her tenure,

Hughes institutionalized a "rapid response unit" on public diplomacy and set up

a government counterterrorism communication center to "counter the message of terrorists and spread instead the message of hope and democracy."[24] Hughes also set up regional media hubs particularly in the Middle East and stepped up Muslim women outreach. Hughes' main objective was to advance effective democratic ideals as the antidote to the ideology of terrorist enemies and the long-term solution for winning the war on terror. Now that longtime President Bush adviser Karen Hughes has announced she is leaving her position at the end of 2007, the power and influence her job once had due to her close ties with Bush may not be sustainable when the next person or the next administration comes to power.

Political appointees as spokespeople are one type of challenge when dealing with hierarchy and strategic communication. The impact of using public affairs spokespersons who are political appointees rather than experts can create tension. Presentation and packaging play a significant role in foreign policy and each administration and political appointee are different. The substance of a spokesperson's position is critical, but how the person acts can be looked at as equally important. Style matters because it can help affect the substance of foreign policy on an international landscape. In this sense, the person's public

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[24] Condeleeza Rice. Speech for Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes departure. November 1, 2007.
http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5iR93RyUsmBGsNBjwnDmqeOPyXw9Q

positioning or style creates the context in which the agency as a whole deals with others and, in turn, how they respond. While political appointees usually have the best access to the president and know what policies the administration wants prioritized, the spokesperson might not necessarily have any real field knowledge of the issues. Some believe that political appointees are just interested in their ideological agenda and don't really care about being good organizational and informational stewards. The key here is that communication and government careerists should help inform and support their spokesperson in coordination efforts. There is a delicate balance when weighing political decisions with the norms of an agency. Yet, it is dependent upon the framework of that agency to provide whoever is elected into office with the proper infrastructure to carry out the core objectives and goals of that particular agency.

Understanding the U.S. Government's Strategic Communication Challenges

Singaporean diplomat and scholar, Kishore Mahbubani, was asked in 2005 what puzzled him about America's antagonism with Osama Bin Laden. Mahbubani replied, "How has one man in a cave managed to out-communicate the world's greatest communication society?"[25] There is a constant battle between the U.S. government and the terrorists who have figured out ways to make major strides with modern media and technology in disseminating their message. The battle that's taking place in the world today shows the terrorists are at the forefront of getting their message across in the right mediums to their target audience. Al-Qaeda has a much smaller budget than the U.S. government and seems to be doing a better job of getting out its message. Osama Bin Laden is able to reach his supporters through videos and other devices posted on the web, and therefore is able to advance his message of fear and hatred by using the world media as his stage. America is dangerously behind in countering terrorist use of the Internet and their messages of hate, violence and unadulterated antagonism towards the United States. Terrorists continue to communicate with fighters, supporters and sympathizers worldwide as they train attackers and gather intelligence on targets through this medium. One propagandist theme

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[25] Interview with Kishore Mahbubani, "China, U.S., Europe - Whose Century?" *The Globalist*, March2005, http://www.theglobalist.com/StoryId.aspx?StoryId=4406.

emphasized by the terrorist through these mediums is that the West is implacably hostile to Islam, and to address this threat Jihad is the only option, because the West only understands the logic of violence. Professionally produced and mass-marketed CDs, DVDs, and the explosion of radical Internet sites have created self-generating cells of potential terrorists in many western countries. Terrorists' ongoing and sophisticated communications efforts on the Internet have defined the information revolution today.

With this in mind, Americans must be ready to live with the long-term risk of large-scale terrorist violence, and the government must have a plan in place to communicate what goals are being met and how, if possible, the public can help achieve these goals through the Internet and other mediums. The war on terror is a new type of "war" and the reputation of the United States has suffered globally due to a combination of the lack of salesmanship about the benefits of democracy and the misperceptions about America's intent. A new type of information strategy has to be devised to explain America's views to the world. The U.S. needs government and civilian ambassadors to work hard to promote U.S. strengths to foreigners abroad, instead of only explaining those distant nations to bureaucracies in Washington.

If the American public is not invested in the war on terror, it will be hard to carry out what needs to be accomplished for the long-term without its support. A strategic communications plan will help sustain the fight if it is relayed through the right mediums. A delicate balance is necessary in communicating the dangers of this war to the public, but also making sure that terrorists know that the United States is true to its word. Public diplomacy requires heavy investment in measures that will help the next generation of leaders improve America's image and promote an ideological fight on terrorism. This requires economic, political, and cultural tools to build a strategy calling for lasting security measures that can sustain failures and promote successes.

U.S. Image Problem

Polling indicates that the United States has a severe image problem, and this poses some obstacles in trying to put together a comprehensive strategy to make America safer. World opinion, especially in the volatile Middle East, has deteriorated significantly since 2001. According to a 2003 Council on Foreign Relations study, many around the world see the United States as "arrogant, hypocritical, self-absorbed, self-indulgent, and contemptuous of others."[26] Anti-Americanism is endangering U.S. national security and compromising the

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[26] William Rosenau. "Waging the War of Ideas." RAND Corporation, The McGraw-Hill Homeland Security Handbook, Chapter 72, 2006. United States Institute of Peace. "Iraq Study Group." http://www.usip.org/isg/

effectiveness of its diplomacy. Not only is the United States at risk of direct

attack from those who hate it most, but it is also becoming more difficult for

America to realize its long-term aspirations as it loses friends and influence. By

standing so powerful and alone, the United States becomes a punching bag for

the world.

Strategic communication is not the only problem, but it is a major

problem. National polling of influential opinion leaders has noted that the

international image of the United States has been tarnished due to the recent

involvement and portrayal of the global war on terror and policies in Iraq.[27]

Richard Wike, Senior Researcher, Pew Research Center, has been heavily

involved from start to finish with Pew's annual "Global Attitudes" report. Wike

said the most recent survey put out in July 2007 showed that the American image

in Muslim-majority countries remained "abysmal," and that solid majorities see

Washington as a military threat.[28] According to this survey, America's damaged

image in the world and the impression that America has lost credibility and

respect are some of the greatest problems facing the nation in regards to

garnering support from U.S. allies in the war on terror. In polling of

international attitudes on the image of the United States, international opinion of

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[27] Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes, "Sincerity of U.S. War on Terrorism." Pew Research Center Study, 2005.
[28] Interview with Richard Wike, 11/1/2007.

U.S. credibility is also declining. Wike said that surveys continue to show global

distrust of American leadership and the US image in some Muslim countries.

This negative image makes for more hurdles in having a strategic

communication agenda that can repair the United States' image at home and

abroad.

The graph on this page

represents opinions from a variety

of countries on the sincerity of the

U.S. led war on terrorism. In some

ways it represents the degree to

which people around the world

trust the United States' judgment
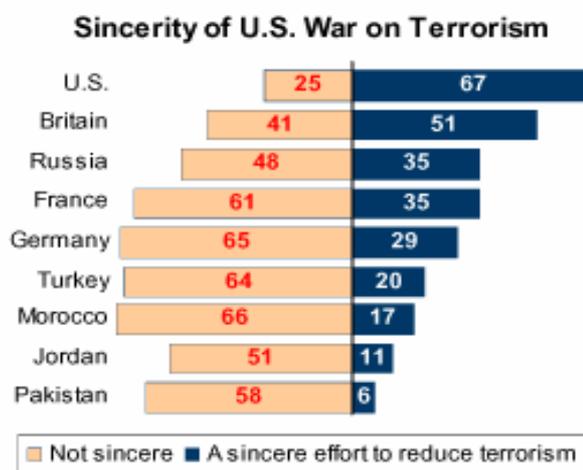
concerning the war on terror. It is

important to note that opinion levels about the sincerity of the U.S. led war on

terrorism are even lower in Muslim nations. Some experts say that the United

States could win more friends by concentrating on good actions and deeds, such

as delivering humanitarian assistance, and encouraging Americans to study

abroad and engage with the world.[29] Communicating these ideas and

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[29] Price Floyd. Former director of media affairs at the State Department, National Public Radio interview, 7.10.07

implementing them as a national security priority must be central to everything

done in government to try and counter America's negative image abroad.

War on Terror Survey Results
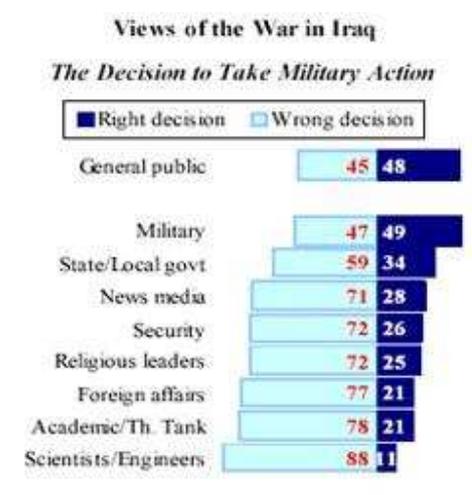
Most Americans rely on the news

media or the government to inform them

about what is going on. Nevertheless, there

is a lot of mistrust involved when it comes to

wartime reporting. The Pew Research Center

for the People and the Press put together a
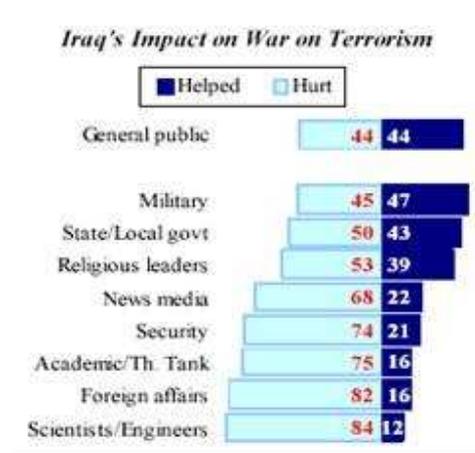
study in November 2005 that surveyed the attitudes of American opinion

leaders, the American public, news media and others towards the war in Iraq

and the war on terror.[30] The results may shed light on why the war on terror has

not been seen as positive by these groups. This investigation found that opinion

leaders expressed deep doubts about the decision to go to war in Iraq, and most

of them believe the war has destabilized the struggle against terrorism. The

study categorized groups and showed that influentials, who are leaders in

respected fields like the military and academia, were divided on whether to keep

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[30] Andrew Kohut. *America's Place in the World 2005*. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. November 2005.

troops in Iraq, but most think that the U.S. will ultimately fail in its effort to

create a stable democratic government there. The public is more divided on

whether the war was a mistake and on how it has affected the war on terrorism.

According to the Pew Research Center, a small majority of the public believes

that the U.S. will ultimately succeed in
establishing a democratic government in
Iraq. Only one group of influentials, military
leaders, is divided over the decision to go to
war (49% right decision, 47% wrong
decision). In all other groups at least 59%
think using force was the wrong decision.

Views of the War in Iraq

The Decision to Take Military Action

	Right decision	Wrong decision
General public	45	48
Military	47	49
State/Local govt	59	34
News media	71	28
Security	72	26
Religious leaders	72	25
Foreign affairs	77	21
Academic/Th. Tank	78	21
Scientists/Engineers	88	11

Similarly, only in the military sample is there an even division on the impact of

the Iraq invasion on the war on terrorism. Half or more in other groups think the

war has hurt America's effort to combat terrorism.[31] The attitudes of influentials

toward the war on terror are politically polarized according to the Pew study. A

split is seen on Iraq's impact on the war on terrorism and on the prospects for

eventual success in Iraq. Opinion leaders generally believe the war was a

mistake, but they are divided over whether to maintain troops in Iraq. About as

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[31] Andrew Kohut. *America's Place in the World 2005*. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. November 2005.

many favor a withdrawal of all or some U.S. forces in Iraq (45%) as say the troops

should remain or even be increased (49%). Most influentials in this study feel the

ability of terrorists to launch another major strike against the U.S. remains

undiminished. Only among military leaders does a slim majority (51%) say that the ability of terrorists to attack the U.S. is less than it was around the time

Most See Terrorists' Capabilities Undiminished Since 9/11

Ability of terrorists to launch major attack on the U.S. is…	Greater %	The Same %	Less %	No Answer %
News media	15	36	43	6=100
Foreign affairs	13	43	44	0=100
Security	15	36	47	2=100
State/Local	7	50	39	4=100
Academic/Think tank	18	38	44	0=100
Religious leaders	28	53	19	0=100
Scientists/Engineers	26	50	23	1=100
Military	17	30	51	2=100
General Public	26	41	29	4=100

of 9/11. Large majorities of influentials say that the absence of another terrorist

attack on the U.S. since 9/11 is either a result of good luck or the fact that

America is inherently a difficult target for terrorists, rather than due to

government efforts to protect the country.[32]

The results of this study seem fairly grim and could have had different

outcomes if the communication challenges were planned for and met in advance.

Today not only do U.S. leaders have to inform and educate their own citizens

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[32] Andrew Kohut. *America's Place in the World 2005*. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. November 2005.

that their public diplomacy efforts are sound, they also have to convince the entire world in order to gain allies to make their mission a successful one. Clear and consistent messaging is necessary when United States' officials from various agencies address other countries in their speeches because the media will put it on display for the entire world to analyze. What the president says and the media coverage it receives makes an impact on how people perceive the United States around the world and at home. Achieving success in the portrayal of U.S. defense policy goals is half the battle to actually attaining them, and it is important that there is open and transparent dialogue between all parties. It looks like the war on terror will not be coming to an end anytime soon, and if there is failure to address the communication problems now, no progress will be made in improving the public's perception. More support and public will is needed for the war on terror to be a successful one. These results will only be attained if improvements are made at every angle of the communication predicament. But if communication mistakes continue to plague our government's public diplomacy efforts, the war on terror cannot and will not be sustainable or successful.

The National Intelligence Estimate

The public's negative sentiments shown in the previous surveys can be tied to evaluating America's current situation in response to the global war on terror by the nation's intelligence agencies' National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) report in 2007. The NIE suggested that the threat of terrorist violence against the United States is growing worse, fueled by the Iraq war and spreading Islamic extremism. According to the NIE, terrorist activities have increased in Iraq since the start of the war in 2003, and the continuing instability there has made the country a breeding ground for anti-U.S. terrorism. The new estimate does cite some gains; known plots against the United States have been disrupted, it says, thanks to increased vigilance and countermeasures.[33] The new estimate also said that the United States is now seen as a "harder target."[34] But the report stated the following, "Al-Qaeda likely will continue to enhance its ability to attack America through greater cooperation with regional terrorist groups, particularly Al-Qaeda in Iraq – currently the group's most visible and capable affiliate and the only one known to have expressed a desire to attack us here. Moreover, although we have discovered only a handful of individuals in the United States

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[33] National Intelligence Estimate "The Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland" The Office of the Director of National Intelligence. July, 2007.
[34] *Ibid.*

with ties to al-Qaeda senior leadership, the group likely will intensify its efforts

to place operatives here in the Homeland. We also must never lose sight of al-

Qaeda's persistent desire for weapons of mass destruction, as the group

continues to try to acquire and use chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear

material." Although this excerpt might sound disturbing, the absence of

successful new strikes in the United States is a development worth noting.

Boasting about this success would be foolish because the future is uncertain, but

it can still be counted as an achievement. The lack of a major attack against

Americans so far should not conceal the fact that al-Qaeda and other terrorist

groups remain capable of another major attack. Numerous senior U.S. officials

have repeatedly warned the public that the United States is at risk of another

attack and it could occur with little warning.

The 2007 NIE prognosticated that the U.S. homeland will face a persistent

and evolving terrorist threat over the next three years. The main threat comes

from Islamic terrorist groups and cells driven by their undiminished intent to

attack the U.S. and a continued effort by these terrorist groups to adapt and

improve their capabilities. [35] The U.S. is continuing to advance its understanding

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[35] National Intelligence Estimate "The Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland" The Office of the Director of National Intelligence. July, 2007.

of radicalization outside of, as well as inside the United States. Jihadist

sentiment has so far turned out to hold little attraction for American Muslims, by

contrast with those particularly in Europe. But successful counter-terrorism is

difficult to measure. In order to identify and preempt new trends and

developments, the American government should work with Muslim

communities to improve their understanding of the sources and evolving trends

of radicalization and identify how changing technologies could affect

radicalization. One potential setback to educating the public about this work is

the fact that most successes in the war on terror are classified and can never be

revealed to the public. This is because U.S. intelligence agencies must protect

their "sources and methods" and cannot lose their connections to crucial

information by making certain things known. The "sources and methods"

requirements of the intelligence community require public affairs and public

information offices to work on a need-to know basis. This is certainly a hard

hurdle to get around in terms of information sharing. Any sensitive information

sharing that occurs is all theoretically collaborated under the Director of National

Intelligence (DNI). The DNI also has budgetary control over all fifteen

intelligence agencies.

     Still, intelligence officials often say the media misreports on matters that

are related to the war on terror. Although this is not necessarily the media's fault

because it tries to hold the government accountable and provide oversight, there is still significant misinformation and false accusations. Strains come from being a country during a time in war. When there's a lot of classified information, more conversations are happening in secret and there are additional issues of access. There is a delicate balance in reaching the right audience, while keeping procedures and plans secretive.

The United States is currently and will continue to be in a heightened threat environment. The NIE gives enough insight to conclude that U.S. strategic communication must be transformed and is part of the problem of why America has a negative image in the world. In the public arena it seems that confidence in the United States government is declining both domestically and internationally. If the U.S. government has a diminished ability to persuade others of its intentions due to low credibility on a world stage, consequences will be faced on an international level. Highlighting democratic ideals and worldwide U.S. aid efforts can help put America in a better light on a global stage. Leadership counts and policies matter in combating any mistakes that may provide enemies with unintentional assistance in spewing their hatred and plotting against the United States.

Strategic Communication and Globalization

Terrorist threats in today's world move at a fast pace due to technology

and communication advancements. Because of this, there have been many

changes in the way the U.S. conducts intelligence, law enforcement, homeland

security, and defense activities. Combating increasing terrorist activity is full of

U.S. military, intelligence, diplomatic, and communication challenges. News

coverage of these events is driven by many different factors. Breaking news,

global issues, and strategic communication are a few of these. Modern mass

media is generally considered to be one of the major developments behind

globalization and while at times it can be informative and entertaining, it can

also prove to be an ideological tool. Positive and negative movements can use

the media to promote their causes. The main object of most terrorists is to get on

the news, which becomes a medium of communication between them and an

audience. In a globalized world, the way in which the U.S. portrays its national

security goals and policies is the driving force behind U.S. power and influence,

especially when it comes to the war on terror. A comprehensive strategic

communication plan of operation is necessary for the U.S. to be able to present its

ideas concisely and persuasively while maximizing available resources and

positioning its government to be proactive instead of reactive. The mission

cannot advance until there is a unified vision of how to communicate its goals.

This will help in fighting the war on terror in the media for the long run.

Clear and consistent messaging is necessary when United States' officials

from various agencies address other countries in their speeches, because the

media will put it on display for the entire world to analyze. What the president

says and the media coverage it gets make an impact on how people perceive the

United States around the world. Achieving success in the portrayal of U.S.

defense policy goals is half the battle to actually attaining them, and it is

important that there is open and transparent dialogue for the world to see. Each

government agency is different with its own set of goals, and by providing and

sharing information with one another, their messages as a whole will be clearer

when they broadcast it to the world. The role of the message is to appeal to the

intended audience and make sure the message is not contradictory to other ones

from different agencies.

When it comes to the U.S. public, six years after the September 11th

attacks, only three in ten Americans believe that the U.S. and its allies are

winning the war on terrorism, according to a September 2007 CNN-Opinion

Research Corporation Poll.[36] That's down from 41% when the same question was asked at the beginning of 2006. Half of all Americans believe that neither side is winning the war on terrorism. And almost one in five Americans believes that the terrorists are winning. A solid majority of Americans (57%) believes that the terrorists will always find a way to launch major attacks regardless of what the U.S. government does. That number is unchanged from one year ago. Only five percent of those questioned think things in the U.S. are now completely back to normal following the September 11th attacks. Thirty percent feel things will eventually be back to normal and 63 percent think things will never be back to normal.[37]

This poll shows that more education is necessary when it comes to getting the public involved with the war on terror. In the U.S. there still seems to be great reluctance to view strategic communication as something that should be pre-emptive and not always reactive to events. In the counter-terrorism community, it is important to emphasize the good that is being done for the world by fighting terrorist extremists and using strategic communication to prevent or reduce the causes of anti-American terrorism.

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[36] CNN-Opinion Research Corporation poll. August 6-8 . 1,029 Americans. The survey's margin of error is plus or minus three percentage points.

[37] *Ibid.*

The pervasive nature of communication technology today is seen through news agencies, radio, television, newspapers, magazines, the Internet, movies, blogs, and mobile devices. Out of all of these mediums, the Internet is the most modern battlefield for strategic communication, and this makes it impossible to address a discrete audience. Perhaps one of the greatest concerns about the drift of opinion and interpretation is in the Muslim world, especially in Afghanistan, where there is increasing political power of fundamentalist parties that are providing an environment for the activity of terrorist organizations. The dichotomy between Muslim extremism and American idealism is an obstacle that strategic communication must overcome.

The Great Divide

There is what can be called a "great divide" between the U.S. and Arab world. Perhaps one of the greatest concerns about the cause of anti-American terrorism is the drift of opinion and interpretation in the Muslim world, where there is increasing political power of fundamentalist parties that are providing an environment for the activity of terrorist organizations. Because the Muslim world is considered to be of strategic importance in the war on terrorism, there needs to be an outline for how messages should go out to certain countries or certain cultures explaining the critical importance of national policy making.

Public opinion polls have continued to show negative sentiments from the Muslim population. In the United States, a poll conducted by Zogby International for Hamilton College found about one-third of American Muslims perceiving the "war on terror" as a "war on Islam."[38] As the leader of the strategic communication effort, the State Department and President Bush must clearly explain U.S. foreign policy actions, and counter misinformation about who the U.S. is targeting in this war. There have been some confusing messages from the Bush administration saying that Iraq is mainly where the United States is fighting the war on terror and it seems there is not enough emphasis on the war on terror in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran.   Since the vast majority of the world's Muslims are not violent terrorists, or even particularly political, it is important to explain how fighting the war on terrorism benefits that population as well. The State Department must successfully engage with other countries to foster mutual understanding towards reducing anti-Americanism and to influence action through public diplomacy efforts. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has taken a couple tours of the Middle East to rally moderate Arab states against extremism in the region and against Iran's nuclear program. While speaking with the leaders of these Arab states is a start, it is not enough. It

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[38] Hamilton College and Zogby International, Muslim America Poll. Clinton NY: Hamilton College. (May 20, 2002).

is important that the State Department is constantly monitoring and responding
effectively to anti-American messages arising from the Middle East, which
would also help in fighting the war on terror.

If Pentagon and State Department public affairs officials are working on
similar initiatives in the Middle East, then they should deliver the U.S. message
in a comparable manner going forward. When a story runs on Al-Jazeera, the
Pentagon and State Departments need to make themselves available for
comment. If they don't, a negative viewpoint will shape the way the media
covers terrorism if they only have access to one side of the story. Also, public
diplomacy efforts need to be the centerpiece of what the government does to
dampen Arab rage and improve relations in the Arab world. The government
needs to explore new ways to promote its messages, whether it be hiring
communications specialists or leveraging the web. Terrorists are very shrewd in
using the Internet and are resourceful when reporting on their own events
without using traditional media. It is the U.S. government's duty to be able to
also use the Internet as a tool for getting out its own counter messages. This is
one aspect that could be part of an interagency coordination plan in fighting the
war on terror.

A Firsthand Look into U.S. Government Agencies' Public Affairs Practices

If the war on terror is partly a war of ideas, the American people should want its government to prevail in this war for its own safety. It seems that the U.S. government agencies' efforts to build support for its policies and continued commitment to fighting terrorism have resulted in the fostering rather than the dwindling of anti-Americanism abroad. Without jeopardizing national security, all U.S. government agencies need to inform the public of what they are doing to fight the war on terror. If different views and plans from different agencies can be incorporated, the U.S.' best interest in protecting its citizens can be achieved by working together and using the latest means of communication. By sharing information and collaborating on similar initiatives, a message can be shaped so it can be effective and unified for relevant agencies.

The interorganizational problems of combating terrorism can be seen on the state government level as well as with numerous local law enforcement agencies. Agencies all have their own organizational interests, jurisdictions, and clout. While all of these agencies cannot necessarily send out the same message or speak with one voice all the time, by consulting with one another they can try to avoid presenting conflicting or altogether wrong information. There are certain roadblocks regarding security clearances, but everything changes when

responding to an emergency. If different organizations can get a chance to see each other's point of view and how they operate, they can establish personal contact and build trust. There are many different players that are potentially called upon depending on the situation. In turn they will all have to coordinate a rapid response. State governments and federal governments seem to be more reactive then proactive when it comes to working together. If there is a terrorist threat to a chemical plant, there is a lot of overlap in which agencies will handle the situation. The local police, FBI, and EPA may all be involved. Local and state government officials are usually on the scene first, and then the federal government will respond and provide more resources if necessary. This is when it's important that federal agencies are on the same page and work with state and local governments in getting the correct message out quickly. In an emergency situation coordination is necessary to decide what actions need to be taken, what resources should be supplied, and what information and messages should be shared with the public.

An example of a critical situation was when anthrax was sent through the mail soon after 9/11. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) was the natural place to handle such an emergency, but it had never dealt with anything like this before. What it knew about anthrax came from agricultural settings, where it occurs naturally and caused problems by infecting animals and farm workers.

But the anthrax attack in September 2001 was criminal and therefore required contact with the FBI. The CDC had to deal with a terrorist threat and work with the FBI, the U.S. Postal Service, state and local police agencies. Terrorist acts are unpredictable in terms of scope and size, and all agencies should be as prepared as they can to work with other agencies in combating terrorism. But first U.S. agencies need to get themselves in order and be better prepared internally before they can achieve success externally.

A Look into CIA, DOD and TSA Strategic Communication Efforts

Paul Gimigliano is one of two full-time spokespeople in the small CIA Office of Public Affairs. He says his work is directed largely towards getting correct information out to the American media about the war on terror. To do this he works closely on day-to-day issues with key administration officials and the National Security Council.[39] Gimigliano said that in such a swiftly moving field, things break every day and night and his office uses formal communication channels to handle these situations. While Gimigliano says he deals closely with his executive branch counterparts on the many media issues that arise on a daily basis, his office does not craft strategic public messages for the U.S. government to use abroad in the fight against terror. The CIA's Office of Public Affairs office

[39] Interview with Paul Gimigliano, CIA Office of Public Affairs, October 23, 2007.

also posts speeches and other material on its website, including material on

counter-terrorism.

Utilizing the Internet and trying to work around bureaucracy seemed to

be the common themes among interviews with strategic communication officials

at the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Homeland Security, the

Department of State, and the Department of Defense. Christopher Beveridge,

Branch Chief, Directed Communications and Strategic Communications at the

Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization under DOD liaises with

DHS, Secret Service and NSA through liaison officers (LNOs). He said that other

organizations are not included in the planning process because they each have

their own strategic communication plans. Beveridge's division separates

strategic communication into two sections. The first one is information

operations, which consists of planning strategy and putting together

informational packets like leaflets for Iraqi and Afghani people. The other is

traditional public affairs outreach and response. Beveridge said they are focused

on Iraq and Afghanistan Internet groups that go out on information operations

campaigns as well as post videos of terrorism on their websites. They also use

their website as an educational tool.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) also uses the Internet as an integral communication tool in fighting the information war on terror. This is according to Chris White, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Strategic Communications and Public Affairs for TSA under the Department of Homeland Security, who says that TSA's communication strategies and current practices are cutting edge. As a spokesperson for TSA, White says that everything his public affairs team does is for the purpose of reaching four audiences. These four audiences are the general public, the traveling public, employees and the terrorists themselves. The main push behind their public relations activities are driven by these target audiences. The top four daily stories on their website are all aimed at each one of the above audiences. Current TSA Director Kip Hawley also blogs on TSA's website to keep the public informed.

TSA also uses deterrent public relations tactics. White says that the information its public affairs officers put out is general enough to not give terrorists specific tips, but is enough to put them on notice that they are being watched. White says TSA could do a lot more when trying to get information out internationally. TSA's intelligence reports show that terrorists hate unpredictability, and TSA tries to keep that in mind as a security philosophy. According to White, TSA is completely radical in deterring terrorists. It shows violent video on its website of how TSA is equipped to handle liquid explosives,

so terrorists know that TSA is prepared for what they might be planning. TSA

also employs conventional strategic communication tactics such as press releases,

media events, and profiles, as well as showing video on YouTube, a user-driven

website where anyone can post video for anyone else to watch, of surveillance of

Reagan National Airport. White says that TSA is continuing to head in a more

viral direction in getting its information out to the public. By posting videos on

YouTube's site, it is ensuring that its message gets out to other sites or users,

creating a potentially exponential growth in its visibility and effect. Still, White

thinks that it needs to test the waters more on viral capabilities. White thinks

that the U.S. government must further integrate the Internet and interagency

coordination in all of its communication practices and principles.[40] TSA must

coordinate with other government agencies, especially State and the Defense

Department in their public relations efforts. For example, TSA must go through

the State Department to set up quarterly tours of airports. This seems to be an

unnecessary step in promoting its programs. White admitted that sometimes it is

a bureaucratic mess to get things approved, and there is more room for

cooperation and other options.

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[40] Interview with Chris White, TSA, September 25, 2007.

The State Department's Strategic Communications Role in the War on Terror

Today it is the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs office's mission to deal with terrorism communications and "offer people throughout the world a positive vision of hope and opportunity that is rooted in America's belief in freedom, justice, opportunity and respect for all; isolate and marginalize the violent extremists; confront their ideology of tyranny and hate; undermine their efforts to portray the West as in conflict with Islam by empowering mainstream voices and demonstrating respect for Muslim cultures and contributions; and foster a sense of common interests and common values between Americans and people of different countries, cultures and faiths throughout the world. "[41]

While this may sound like a good basis for a strategic communication plan to deal with the war on terror, a question looms. Is the State Department potentially the most successful agency in executing this program to develop the United States national communications strategy and lead the interagency effort to effectively communicate U.S. national interests and policies abroad? When the State Department has to coordinate with other departments, there can be issues of credibility and ultimately, a turf war battle. The State Department's mission

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[41] Bruce Gregory. "Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication: Cultures, Firewalls, and Imported Norms" Prepared for presentation at the American Political Science Association Conference on International Communication and Conflict. August 31, 2005.

has a long-established focus on public diplomacy. This begs some more

questions; one, can a State Department that oversees a public information

program that includes covert elements and propaganda still maintain credibility

within its primary mission of traditional diplomacy? And two, is State the best

agency to oversee that pertinent information and coordination are being correctly

communicated internally as well as externally in cooperation with other relevant

agencies?

The State Department realizes that strategic communication is a vital

component of U.S. national security. The United States is engaged in a

generational and global struggle about ideas, not a war between the West and

Islam. It is more than a war against the tactic of terrorism, and public diplomacy

is one way to fight this war. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice remarked at the

announcement of the nomination of Karen Hughes as Under Secretary of State

for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, "The time has come to look anew at our

institutions of public diplomacy. We must do much more to confront hateful

propaganda, dispel dangerous myths and get out the truth. We must increase

our exchanges with the rest of the world. We must work closer than ever with

educational institutions, the private sector and nongovernmental organizations

and we must encourage our citizens to engage the world to learn foreign

languages, to understand different cultures and to welcome others into their

homes. And to be successful we must listen. An important part of telling America's story is learning the stories of others…While we must never compromise our security, we must never close ourselves to the rest of the world…I have said the time for diplomacy is now. Well the time for public diplomacy reform is also now."[42]

While building public diplomacy efforts at the State Department is one piece of the strategic communication puzzle, the events of September 11th have proven that turf battles and more layers of bureaucracy do not help solve complex government problems. Over the last four years, the Defense and State Departments and the National Security Council have been willing partners to improve the United States' strategic communication capabilities. America is confronting new threats and opportunities just as it did when it incorporated strategic communication into U.S. operations in 1947. And today the U.S. faces challenges of a similar magnitude, made more formidable by a world where geography and military power are not all it takes to ensure U.S. security. Strategic communication and other 21st century instruments of statecraft are required to fight this different type of war; a war where the U.S. is not always certain of the enemy or the country it will be fighting in. The real risk for

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[42] Condeleeza Rice. Speech for Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs and Dina Powell as Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs," March 14, 2005. http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/43385.htm

America today comes from not having a comprehensive interagency and global strategy and strategic communication plan to reduce terrorism.

Interagency Collaboration

Given U.S. agencies' parochial interests and the battle for funding, public affairs coordination can be quite difficult when each agency wants to be individually recognized as doing its part in the war on terror. While not all agencies might want to share the proverbial podium, it is in their best interests to help one another on overlapping and complementary issues. An example of the lengths taken to address these overlying concerns can be seen after 9/11, with the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI). These two agencies were created to ultimately provide reforms in the coordination of securing the homeland from terrorist attacks as well as focus efforts in intelligence gathering. Yet, DHS has been criticized for its failure to connect the dots among its many massive sub organizations and with the intelligence agencies. It seems that all strategic communications efforts might be better coordinated for the intelligence agencies under the DNI.

Among the latest efforts in interagency collaboration is the State Department's Counterterrorism Communication Center (CTCC), set up in April

2007. In an introductory memo, the CTCC says it "is an interagency office, housed within the State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs. The center was set up to provide leadership and coordination for interagency efforts in the war of ideas, and to integrate and enhance the US government's diverse public diplomacy counterterrorism efforts."[43] David Benchener, Policy and Planning officer at the Counterterrorism Communications Center, agrees there needs to be more interagency collaboration but says that his center is the one that facilitates communication between Defense, DHS and other intelligence agencies. CTCC uses what he calls the "big arrow" to point relevant agencies in the general direction of what kind of broad message to send out to their key audience. This target audience is considered the international youth audience, ranging from ages 13 – 24. Benchener says they are the ones most affected by terrorism so it is important to reach out to them. While each agency has its own specific message, State is really where interagency communication and new ideas stem. Benchener said the biggest hindrance of trying to coordinate with other agencies is the Washington bureaucracy. He said there is more coordination when State, DOD and Intelligence operatives are out in the field, because it is more efficient when everyone is part of the mission on the ground.

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[43] US Department of State, "Introducing the Counterterrorism Communication Center," memo, 12 July 2007.

The CTCC's newest endeavor is having State Department officials fluent in Arabic blog on Middle Eastern sites and have conversations with people about the U.S. and its policies. State Department has a well-put-together website, with a scroll at the top and videos that catches the viewer's attention in the way it displays top stories. Benchener said that people can go on the Internet and customize what type of information they want. In the Middle East, the Internet is becoming more prevalent and State attempts to reach out to target this audience through blogs.

Strategic Communication Initiative Failures

While there have been some new strategic communication technological improvements within individual agencies, there have also been some interagency initiative setbacks. Attempting to start new organizations to deal with interagency communication challenges has been difficult. The White House Office of Global Communication, established by Executive Order on January 21, 2003, was charged with advising the president and heads of the executive departments and agencies on the "utilization of the most effective means for the United States government to ensure consistency in messages that will promote the interests of the United States abroad, prevent misunderstanding, build support for and among coalition partners of the United States, and inform

international audiences." Part of its charter was to develop a strategic

communication strategy. It never did succeed and the office closed in 2005. This

is an example of the fragmented nature of the U.S. government's strategic

communication operation.

In September 2002, then National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice

established a Strategic Communication Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC)

designed to "coordinate interagency activity, to ensure that all agencies work

together and with the White House to develop and disseminate the President's

message across the globe." The PCC was charged with developing strategic

communications capabilities throughout government. Co-chaired by the

Department of State and the National Security Council (NSC), it met few times

with limited impact.[44] The reason it did not work was because the State

Department had trouble crafting a broad strategic communication policy that the

Department of Defense was supposed to follow.

At the same time, the Department of Defense was working on its own

strategic communication effort. The Defense Department had long been using its

information operations organizations to inform American and world audiences

about military operations around the world. In October 2001, the Department

created the Office of Strategic Influence (OSI) to serve as the focal point for a

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[44] Arnold J. Abraham. The Strategic Communication Process – How to Get Our Message Out
More Effectively, National War College Paper (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University)

"strategic communication campaign in support of the war on terrorism."[45] It was

to "develop a full spectrum influence strategy that would result in greater

foreign support of U.S. goals and repudiation of terrorists and their methods."[46]

But the office got negative press scrutiny when Defense public affairs officials

worried that OSI would undermine their credibility by placing disinformation in

foreign media that might be picked up by the American press.[47] Secretary of

Defense Rumsfeld closed the OSI in February 2002.

To this day it is evident that the military spends great sums of money on

disinformation although the exact amount is classified. Deliberate

disinformation is misleading information announced publicly or leaked by a

government military or intelligence agency in order to influence public opinion

or the government in another nation.[48] For example, during the Persian Gulf War

in 1991, U.S. commanders used news leaks and other means to lead Iraq to think

that Marines would land on the Kuwaiti coast.[49] It is not just the military that

employs these tactics. The State Department and the CIA also determine and

employ the most effective means to bring those who are not friends with the U.S.

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[45] L Kennedy, S Lucas, , R Robin, PM Von Eschen. "Enduring Freedom: Public Diplomacy and US Foreign Policy." American Quarterly, 2005.
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] *Ibid.*
[48] Arnold J. Abraham. The Strategic Communication Process – How to Get Our Message Out More Effectively, National War College Paper (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University)
[49] John Diamond. "Some question motives behind leaks about Iraq." *USA Today*. August 13, 2002.

to exercise their influence constructively. Virtually all information that is leaked

to the press by the military has some sort of an agenda. It could be that an official

wants a plan scrutinized and hopes the exposure will test reaction. These

deliberate disinformation leaks illustrate Winston Churchill's declaration that in

wartime, the truth is so precious that it must be accompanied by "a bodyguard of

lies."[50]

Threats, priorities, preoccupations and missions have changed since

September 11th. While there seems to be many initiatives, there also seems to be

little progress. Successful strategic communications cannot happen overnight.

Several government agencies and think tanks have conducted studies over the

past three years about how to repair America's "image problem" in the world in

order to clear the way for successful relations and communication. The main

conclusion seems to be due to lack of sustained direction and failed leadership to

integrate the "message" into policy formulation in a wartime atmosphere. [51]

Propaganda

One type of messaging used during wartime is propaganda, and for the

United States it has always been a part of warfare. Propaganda is "any form of

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[50] John Diamond. "Some question motives behind leaks about Iraq." *USA Today*. August 13, 2002.
[51] Andrew Kohut. America's Place in the World 2005. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. November 2005.

communication in support of national objectives designed to influence the

opinions, emotions, attitudes, or behavior of any group in order to benefit the

sponsor, either directly or indirectly."[52] Propaganda has been used by the

military and intelligence community as an instrument of American coercion. But

if the United States is to maintain credibility around the world, propaganda

cannot lead the strategic communication effort. These types of current strategic

communication policies might have even aided the decline of America's prestige

abroad. This poses problems of using propaganda in democracies the fact that

putting out an unpopular message to the world will not always be successful.

Selling America and its culture, traditions of free speech, and pluralism is what

public diplomacy is all about. Selling American policy is propaganda and there

are inherent limits of public diplomacy in the absence of desirable policy.

Another form of strategic communication that can also damage the United

States' reputation is the use of state of the art tactics, such as positioning and

spin, which can backfire. This was the case in the information campaign run by

U.S. troops in 2005 in Baghdad. A Washington-based private contractor known

as the Lincoln Group was the subject of a high-level military investigation.[53] The

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[52] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint
Publication (Washington: Department of Defense, 22 March 2007), 430.

[53] Mark Mazzetti and Borzou Daragahi. U.S. Military Covertly Pays Company to Place Stories in
Iraqi Press, The Los Angeles Times. November 30th, 2005

Lincoln Group had been paying to place positive news stories in Iraqi

newspapers. The fact that its cover was blown meant that the U.S. lost credibility

in Iraq at this time. With globalization of the media, it is possible for these types

of information campaigns targeting foreign audiences to find their way into U.S.

media coverage.   While this type of propaganda is used overseas by the

American government, U.S. law forbids the Pentagon from conducting

propaganda efforts that target U.S. audiences. [54] It is not good for U.S. citizens to

be confused or unsure of what is the truth. In another situation, numerous U.S.

agencies made television news segments that were broadcast on some American

local stations without any acknowledgement of the government's part in their

production about reaction to the fall of Baghdad.[55]

There has been controversy since World War II regarding the U.S.

government's use of covert action operations and propaganda. These are ways

that the U.S. government promotes its interests abroad through training,

equipment and technical assistance. If a government wishes to influence the

politics of another country's government, they may use covert action by secretly

funding an opposition party in that country in order to influence that country's

elections. The historical context and the way information shaped opinion may

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[54] George Packer. *The New York Times Magazine.* Section 6, Column 2, p. 13.(April 21 2002)
[55] David Barstow and Robin Stein. "Under Bush, a New Age of Prepackaged TV News." *The New York Times.* March 13, 2005.

likely be the reason that using it as an element of power remained mostly absent

from recent official government strategy documents until the May 2007

publication of a National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic

Communication, well over five years after 9/11.[56]

When reporting a story, journalists avoid propaganda and try to find as

many credible sources as possible to assist in their coverage. A large problem for

journalists is not being able to gather information due to classification issues and

lack of reputable sources. One example of a problem dealing with classification

of certain subjects is the way traditional diplomats operate. Part of their job is to

not always disclose information to the media in fear that they will disrupt

sensitive negotiations by exposing themselves to the public and therefore

complicating their chances of a successful mission.

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[56] US Department of State, Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Policy Coordinating
Committee, *U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication*,
http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/87427.pdf.

The Bush Administration and the War on Terror

Yet, the U.S. mission is shaped by policies and global perception of U.S. foreign and national security objectives in conjunction with the president and his senior officials' statements and actions. Public opinion must be taken into account when policy options are considered and implemented. Policies will not succeed unless they are communicated to global and domestic audiences in ways that are credible. The following actions should also be consistent with the original message.

Since the aftermath of 9/11, President Bush told the world that they are either with the United States or against the United States. His moral vision for the Middle East had democracy as the core ingredient, because President Bush saw a free Iraq serving as a catalyst for peace in the region. When the U.S. was attacked on 9/11, it had the whole world's support and sympathy.   The fact that policy has now gone astray in Iraq directly results to there being more strategic communication challenges in bringing stability to the region and all parties involved. For the five year anniversary of 9/11, President Bush said,

"Some wonder whether Iraq is a central front in the war on terror. Among the terrorists, there is no debate. Hear the words of Osama Bin Laden, 'This Third

World War is raging' in Iraq. The whole world is watching this war." He goes

on to say it will end in "victory and glory, or misery and humiliation." The

terrorists know that the outcome will leave them emboldened or defeated. So

they are waging a campaign of murder and destruction. And there is no limit to

the innocent lives they are willing to take. When the history of this period is

written, the liberation of Afghanistan and the liberation of Iraq will be

remembered as great turning points in the story of freedom."[57] Because it seems

on all accounts that the U.S. is a long way from liberating Iraq and Afghanistan,

two countries included in the war on terror, the above speech by President Bush

does not make a good impression in the mind of the listener. It is not

particularly pro-active in nature, and it reminds people what actually is at stake

if we are to lose the battle in both of these countries.

Before the Defense Department's strategic communications roadmap was

put in place, former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was disappointed in the

way his agency was getting America's message out to counter the terrorists'

highly effective use of media outlets. During a visit to the Army War College in

March of 2006, Rumsfeld said, "If I were grading, I would say we probably

deserve a D or D plus as a country as to how well we're doing in the battle of

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[57] George W. Bush, President's speech at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. (June 28, 2005)
http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/06/20050628-7.html

ideas that's taking place in the world today…We have not found the formula as a country."[58] Maybe it is not so much a formula that needs to be found, but rather a way of sharing information across agencies and with the public that needs to be investigated.

Thus far, May 1, 2003 might be remembered as one of the worst blunders in the entire history of American strategic communications. President Bush made a nationally televised speech delivered from the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, in which he stood under a banner reading "Mission Accomplished" and hailed a "job well done."[59] He said major combat operations in Iraq were over and in the battle of Iraq, the United States and its allies had prevailed. This event led to a lot of confusion and anger, because for at least the next four years combat and fatalities continued.

Now the resignation of Karen Hughes as Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy gives President Bush an opportunity to prioritize ideological warfare. Secretary Hughes was the most senior government official responsible for the battle of ideas, and considered to be the leader in U.S. engagement in the fight against the spread of the ideology of radical Islamism. It was Hughes' job

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[58] Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, speech delivered at Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, (March 27, 2006) http://defenselink.mil/speeches/2006/sp20060327-12714.html

[59] Sean Loughlin, *One year later, Bush defends Iraq speech.* CNN Washington Bureau, Friday, April 30, 2004 http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/04/30/speech.anniversary/index.html

to use public diplomacy to discourage terrorism by improving the perception and relationship of the U.S. with the Middle East. It was Hughes' mission to try and build rapport with that part of the world in order to combat terrorism worldwide.

Secretary Hughes did not do as well as expected in her role at the State Department. Polling data during her tenure shows public opinion of the United States in the Arab and Muslim world at historic lows. This decline in prestige may be more a result of unfavorable policies created by the Bush Administration than by a failure in strategic communications policies. Some critics argue that Hughes was not able to completely separate the world's critical views of the U.S. government from the conduct of American foreign policy itself. Hughes assumed the problem was that American values or foreign policy goals were misunderstood by foreigners and she seemed to focus on that. This was detrimental to her lack of understanding and addressing why other countries might not have an affinity for the United States' policies. If the measure of success was how well Karen Hughes was selling U.S. policy, she was failing and it might not have totally been her fault. In late October 2007, even Hughes' own colleagues at the State Department were refusing to be stationed in Iraq. If an overwhelming number of U.S. government employees are not willing to support the mission there, the message sent out to the world is not a positive one.

Ultimately, the problem may not be in the coordination of information and messages but in the unpopularity of the actual polices.

Whether or not the United States' information strategy is the reason for America's apparent decline in status in the world or whether it is the actual policy that leads to this decline, some policies cannot realistically be presented as favorable if much of the world and the American public is against them. It is a difficult task to promote U.S. policies that are seen in many places as being imposing or empire-driven. The U.S. government has a great stake in this war's outcome. Its engagement with the Muslim public should center on identifying Muslim extremists. This strategy could involve both overt and covert ways to support anti-Islamist political parties by becoming involved with nongovernmental organizations and political movements as they compete with radicals. There is also much more to be done and teaching the concept of public diplomacy at a much earlier age is part of the solution. Another part is providing the necessary tools to engage effectively in public diplomacy. One tool that is missing in the United States is the fact that many Americans do no not have the ability to speak a second language. Another goal would be to help prevent extremists from controlling public speech and public behavior. This calls for heavy utilization on U.S. government resources like embassies,

intelligence agencies, as well as educational and civic relationships to give anti-

Islamists the political, financial, and technological support they need.

Strategic Communication and the War in Iraq

It can be argued that the war in Iraq has made the overall terrorism problem worse. Islamist extremists consider it to be the first front of a total war against Islam.[60] It has galvanized jihadists, becoming their "cause cèlébre," and it has contributed directly to the increasing recruitment of violent Islamic terrorists.[61] Every day there is more bad news coming out of Iraq with the consistent occurrence of terrorist acts. The mainstream news media usually reports on this bad news and looks for the most dramatic visuals to display it. Combine this with conflicting reports from President Bush, who has said that the U.S. is making progress in Iraq, and the message sent to the public is a contradictory one. It is necessary that President Bush makes Americans believe he will do better in the future and not denounce critics, but have a national dialogue that involves the vital communication necessary to discuss important issues. The terrorists have not stopped planning more attacks on the West. The administration should point out as much as security will allow that it has stopped impending terrorist acts and is proactively interrupting groups from recruiting, training and acquiring weapons.

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[60] National Intelligence Estimate "The Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland" The Office of the Director of National Intelligence. July, 2007.
[61] *Ibid.*

"My country desires peace," Bush told world leaders at the U.N. on September 19, 2006. "Extremists in your midst spread propaganda claiming that the West is engaged in a war against Islam. This propaganda is false and its purpose is to confuse you and justify acts of terror. We respect Islam." Addressing Iraqis specifically, Bush said, "We will not abandon you in your struggle to build a free nation." Speaking to Iranians, Bush said, "Your rulers have chosen to deny you liberty and to use your nation's resources to fund terrorism and fuel extremism and pursue nuclear weapons."[62] While Bush has alluded to this idea in the past, he needs to make the point that the war on terror is a war on radical Islamic movements. Due to lack of clear communication, it has been mistakenly interpreted that U.S. policy encourages the belief that this is a war against Islam. But it is not enough to try and gain Muslim support. Bush went to war in Iraq without the support of many other nations and has lost credibility. If the United States would take responsibility for many of the failures in Iraq, its critics might be more supportive in its efforts to move forward. The battle that's taking place in the world today shows the terrorists are on the forefront of getting their message across. This is because Osama Bin Laden is able to reach his supporters through videos and other devices and advance his message of fear and hatred by using the world media as his stage.

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[62] President Bush's UN speech transcript. (September 19, 2006)
http://edition.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/09/19/bush.transcript/index.html

The Iraq War and the Media

In some ways, the challenges of covering the war on terror extend far beyond logistics for the media. Trying to understand the nature of Iraq's violence in a deeper, more analytical way has become almost impossible, and this difficulty has unexpected complications. When the U.S. invasion of Iraq began in 2003, there were about 750 embedded journalists according to the Pentagon. After Saddam Hussein's government was overcome by coalition forces that year, the total number dropped to roughly one-hundred, and the downward trend accelerated. In 2005, there were forty-eight embedded reporters in Iraq.[63] In 2006, twenty-six embeds remained on the ground and the current number could be as low as nine.[64] This makes it difficult for news organizations to get a clear picture of what is happening on the ground and, therefore, information from administration officials is heavily relied on.

Another issue the media faces is whether or not to air terrorist-made tapes. Terrorist organizations know that the networks will air their tapes, and they are able to reach the American audience and influence public opinion by using this forum for their messages. Journalists must decide on a case-by-case basis whether to air footage from these groups. While Al-Jazeera receives more

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[63] David Vaina. "The Vanishing Embedded Reporter in Iraq." Journalism.org. October 26, 2006
[64] *Ibid.*

terrorist-created video than any other network, there is no known formal

arrangement between the news organization and terror groups. It is evident that

media and terrorism feed off each other. The media can embolden would-be

terrorist recruits with coverage that gives the sense that terrorism is mainstream.

But the media also believe it is in the public's interest to have the information

available to them. Yet the terrorists have an agenda and want to promote their

cause.   Generally, the networks don't want to be mouthpieces for terror groups

any more than they do for the administration. Ultimately, it is the media, not the

government, which is responsible for making sure news coverage is responsible.

But it is also the government's role not to censor the media, but to get its own

message out. This message is often not clearly received. A recent State

Department report discovered that people are angry not at America but

American policies. [65]   There needs to be a greater commitment to distributing

information that is not only better but also honest and therefore effective. In fact,

encouraging American officials to appear on Al-Jazeera and other Arab media

outlets to offer a counter message may be worth trying. When a new

administration comes to power, these problems will still need to be addressed,

and a plan should be formulated by the president right from the beginning.

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[65] Dorrance Smith. Analysis: Media and Government - Smith criticism fuels debate on media's role in terrorism. (Dorrance Smith accuses media outlets of aiding terrorism). *PR Week (US)* (Nov 7, 2005): p11.

Planning for the Future

Given the enormous challenges the war on terror poses, success is possible

only if the U.S. uses all instruments of national power. Strengthening the U.S.

government's ability to understand global public opinion, and utilizing

policymaking, public diplomacy, public affairs, international broadcasting, and

military information operations for planning, coordination, and funding

purposes will lead to a sound strategic communication plan. A task force created

by the U.S. government could set up strategic communication offices at relevant

agencies to coordinate with one another on their individual war on terror efforts.

These strategic communication offices could be assigned small staffs who could

ultimately report to someone under the executive branch at the National Security

Council. These offices could serve as the point of contact in sharing appropriate

agency information and collaboration in dealing with war on terror strategic

communication initiatives. To prevent another layer of infighting, one of the

new institutional arrangement's main tasks would be to partner with other

agencies in creating plans that could use respective agencies' expertise in a

complimentary fashion. This interagency task force could propose specific areas

for agencies to work together on, therefore making the end result an efficient and

productive endeavor.   Congress should allocate funding to make certain that

these types of projects are achievable. If this ends up increasing the amount of

information sharing on agencies' war on terror preparations in any way, it will be worth the effort.

Information and analysis must be provided on a regular basis to civilian and military decision makers on issues vital to U.S. national security. This includes global public opinion, the role of culture, values, and religion in shaping human behavior, media trends and influences on audiences, information technologies, and non-departmental, non-political advice that will sharpen their judgment and provide a basis for informed choices. When studying the problems and challenges of the last few years in regards to the war on terror, it becomes clear that a comprehensive plan is needed to fully integrate strategic communication at all levels in regards to the nation's security. One way to improve integration across all agencies would be to set up an office in each agency that deals solely with coordinating strategic communication with each respective agency's public affairs staff. This would improve the chance that all messages would be in sync and that all agencies would be aware of what public affairs plans sister agencies are working on. Strategy sessions with top intelligence and national security leaders in the private and public sectors, as well as public affairs officers from all respective agencies, would meet to put together a strategic communications plan for high priority issues in the war on terror. While there are limitations and many obstacles that need to be overcome,

funding a special task force to create a new interagency and public approach to

strategic communication in regards to the war on terror is vital to America's

national security interests.

On behalf of the United States' national security, it is important to foster

new and improved strategic communication coordination practices between

national security agencies as well as in the public arena.   A proposed task force

would be made up of organizations that can address national security efforts in

developing, positioning and supporting the fight in the war on terror. It is

absolutely necessary to address the lack of coordination and communication in

fighting terrorism on a global scale. The real test comes in taking top secret

internal communication and trying to relay the mission to the public in hopes of

combating terrorism at home and abroad.

Since 9/11, the U.S. government has spent billions of dollars to improve

intelligence and first responder capabilities, but the most effective measures

taken to improve its national security in the event of terrorist attacks have

occurred from interorganizational cooperation. In a government as large and

complex as America's, encouraging interaction among different bureaucracies as

well as the trading of information and new ideas on counterterrorism efforts are

necessary in combating this threat. A primary goal of the 9/11 attackers was not

necessarily to only cripple the United States, but to create a perception of

American weakness and vulnerability among key audiences. The spectacle of the attack is as important as the destructive event itself. These attacks against Americans are tools in a contest for power and authority within Muslim extremist communities.

Studies quoted earlier demonstrate that the perceived credibility of the United States government on the global stage has never been lower. This hampers the United States ability to fight, much less to win, the "war of ideas" that plays a large part of the global war on terrorism.[66]   This is an extremely timely and crucial matter. It was addressed by a recent subcommittee hearing of the House Armed Services Committee of the U.S House of Representatives. The Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee met on November 15, 2007, to talk about strategic communications and counter ideological support for terrorism. Representatives from the State Department and the Department of Defense said that the United States' fight against terrorists and their message of violence has many different parts to it, but central to all of them is an ideological struggle. They agreed that the U.S. must strategically communicate a better message in a better way to stop the spread of extremism and new supporters. The subcommittee concluded that there is a need for a

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[66] William Rosenau, "Waging the War of Ideas." RAND Corporation, *The McGraw-Hill Homeland Security Handbook*, Chapter 72, 2006.

coordinated, comprehensive, adequately resourced strategy to confront extremist ideology through a strategic message campaign.

In April 2003, Former CIA Director James Woolsey said that the United States is engaged in World War IV, where the control of information is critical. In an address to a group of college students, Woolsey described the Cold War as the third world war and said "This fourth world war, I think, will last considerably longer than either World Wars I or II did for us…hopefully not the full four-plus decades of the Cold War."[67] Cultivating improved credibility is definitely a long-term effort, but strategic communication efforts would benefit from a streamlined body, such as a new task force, to address the way national security agencies deal with mass media, including Internet sources.[68] More must be done in shaping these forms of communication to counteract terrorists' utilization of these key influencers. This requires a coordinated approach of public affairs officers working with high level agency directors to create strategic message design, delivery, and adaptation to the given audience and media situation. There are some overlapping areas regarding specific issues that intelligence agencies form strategic communication plans around. A unified

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[67] Charles Feldman. "Ex-CIA director: U.S. faces 'World War IV'CNN. Thursday, April 3, 2003.

[68] Peter Varghese, *Islamist Terrorism: The International Context*. Director General of the Office of National Assessments to the Security in Government Conference, Canberra, May 11, 2006.

message would be beneficial because there is an urgent need to integrate findings of existing research and link those strategically to better understand the functions of credibility in modern media.

Before this can be accomplished, intelligence matters relating to national security must be coordinated at every level so the mission is clear. A task force will help leverage as well as center on addressing the integration and transformation of the following focus areas in order to better fight the war on terror. The special task force should focus on four areas. They are:

1. Create an integrated culture of collaboration within national security agencies by having their own strategic communications offices whose sole purpose it to coordinate interagency activity and share pertinent information

2. Produce internal and external strategic communication initiatives that make the mission clear in fighting the war on terror and coordinate with respective public affairs offices

3. Develop pre-emptive strategies in addressing imminent concerns when dealing with new terrorist threats and make plans know to other agencies

4. Build momentum for sharing information and working with the

public to be pro-active in security matters so that all parties can be

involved on a strategic scale from the beginning

Each area addresses the urgency for change and the initiatives associated

with introducing that change. Once each objective is conceived and developed,

this will increase integration and facilitate collaboration. At its root, this task

force effort's success will depend on increased transparency and collaboration

between top analysts, public affairs specialists, and the American citizen. The

ultimate objective is to hold meetings between these parties and come up with

deliverables to strengthen strategic communication skills in the fight against

terrorism. This special task force will clearly define specific roles and

responsibilities and propose appropriate revisions and guidance on the

development, implementation, and evaluation of public and private strategies in

creating these individual strategic communication offices.

<u>Conclusion</u>

The complexity of strategic communication problems calls for balanced coordination of efforts between the private sector and the public sector to be able to include the most benefits. Independent analysis is required in a wide range of fields: cultures and values, international intellectual engagement, communications studies, and technological innovation. Teamwork among civilian agencies and military services will be necessary. In order for the U.S. government's strategic communication efforts to make an impact on public interest, the structure and funding of new Strategic Communication offices must be deemed appropriate by executive branch and congressional authorities respectively.

One of the groups that could be directly involved with this task force is federal public affairs officers in national security agencies. They would work with their new strategic communications office to try and restore the United States' credibility and its efficiency in the global war on terrorism by fine tuning better strategic communications and interagency cooperation in fighting the war on terror. Three groups that could provide support and outside expertise in consulting the task force because of the nature of their mission and resources are the following; The Intelligence and National Security Alliance (INSA), Public

Affairs Council, and a think tank like the Center for Strategic and International

Studies.

Intelligence and National Security Alliance (INSA) would be a good

resource for this in-depth study. INSA was formerly headed by the Director of

National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, and INSA is known to provide the

leadership needed to solicit collaborative solutions that draw on the experience

of public and private sector experts.[69] With consulting help from an agency

director like Mike McConnell, this can only benefit the task force by leveraging

the experience and expertise of government and their industry member network.

They can provide unparalleled insight into the national security needs of the U.S

as well as look into exactly what is needed to support a strategic communication

office in certain agencies.

The two other organizations that could also serve well for consulting

purposes are the Public Affairs Council and a think tank like the Center for

Strategic and International Studies. The Public Affairs Council is the leading

association for public affairs professionals. It provides information, training and

other resources to its members to support their effective participation in

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[69] Intelligence and National Security Alliance. Home page. http://www.insaonline.org/

government, community and public relations activities at all levels.[70] The second

organization could be a think tank like the Center for Strategic and International

Studies, which seeks to advance global security and prosperity in an era of

economic and political transformation by providing strategic insights and

practical policy solutions to decision makers.[71] CSIS could serve as a strategic

planning partner for the government by conducting research and analysis and

developing policy initiatives that look into the future and anticipate change in

cooperation with the new strategic communication offices.

Funding from Congress is necessary in order to obtain collaborative

recommendations on the ability to effectively use critical strategic

communication skills in fighting the war on terror. Also, with assistance from

the above organizations, this task force could set up plenary meetings and

timelines to address these needs to most effectively address emerging strategic

communication policy priorities and challenges. In 2006, the Iraq Study Group

made 79 recommendations and had a budget of $1 million that was approved by

Congress.[72] This new task force for interagency and public approach to strategic

communication and the war on terror could have a similar structure in terms of

its recommendation process, but would most likely need a much higher budget.

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[70] Public Affairs Council. Home page. Aug. 2007. http://www.pac.org/
[71] Center for Strategic International Studies. Aug. 2007. http://www.csis.org/about/
[72] United States Institute of Peace. "Iraq Study Group." http://www.usip.org/isg/

What will also differ is the actors involved will be a larger group composed of a representative from every U.S. intelligence and defense agency, as well as the top public affairs and public information officers at these agencies. It will be their mission to come up with strategies on how the strategic communication office should coordinate internal messages as well as public ones on the terrorism threat that the U.S. faces today. Ultimately, it will be Congress that has to allocate the money that would be shared among all participating and relevant agencies. The battle for funding between agencies might be solved by financially rewarding the agencies who seek to coordinate the most with one another.

Once there is congressional approval of new funding to meet the full cost of addressing the current strategic communication challenges, all involved could conduct a forward-looking assessment of the current and prospective situation for assessing the nation's communicative vulnerabilities. The strategic communication offices will take the lead in evaluating vulnerabilities and coordinating with other federal, state, local, and private entities to ensure the most effective response. The collection, protection, evaluation and dissemination of information to the American public, state and local governments and the private sector is central to this task. This information sharing must be accomplished both horizontally and vertically and can be documented in final reports so that sister agencies know the protocol.

It is of utmost necessity that this task force be a mix of public affairs officers, intelligence analysts, and consultants for each government agency, as well as diplomats from sensitive areas of the world. To address the area of using new media, new research and media strategy should be looked at by the task force in figuring out the effectiveness of messages delivered through the Internet from government and non-government sources. New media is of special interest in the global war on terrorism and a study of this would be pertinent to future endeavors. Extremist terrorist groups have invested heavily in new media technology as an ideological and recruitment tool. To be able to address the misinformation generated by terrorists' websites, a new strategic communication office web site would be very useful. Accurate and culturally specific information on an agency website could change the balance of power online for national security agencies. The task force should also explore why the United States has such low credibility abroad and undertake the long term effort that will be necessary to improve it. This will require all agencies to work together in order to combine existing research and extending it to other strategic cultural contexts such as new media.

It seems that the understanding of U.S. strategic vision and intent is commonly misconstrued. In fact, an active misinformation campaign is commonly practiced by terrorist organizations. Winning the global war on terror

will require the coordinated use of many different elements to counter ineffective use of information on a long term scale. The competing communication functions and goals of various U.S. government departments and agencies must find leadership and focus at the national level. There seems to currently be no focused communications strategy to achieve the specified end of winning the war of ideas. To solve these shortcomings, an effective strategic communications strategy must counter bad ideology through their interagency offices. The planning, coordination and execution of a strategic communications campaign must be employed as a central first step to support this strategy. Based on the task force's findings, proposals can be developed that utilize all aspects of America's national power. By laying out plans for a strategic communications office to communicate with all other public affairs offices in the government, a more streamlined approach could be realized.

Each agency might handle communications with the public differently in terms of what they see as central to the war on terrorism and, more generally, to the promotion of U.S. interests. Yet all agencies should still portray broad messages to the public on similar issues. As it stands right now, there is a large discrepancy between the sophistication of agencies' websites and their use of new media. Terrorists' increasingly savvy use of videos and the Internet to recruit followers and shape world opinion has given added urgency to this

endeavor. It is imperative that each agency focuses on a particular form of strategic communication to better target their efforts. This task force could create a culture that understands strategic communication is not just public affairs, information operations, legislative affairs or public diplomacy, but it is the totality that must work to be effective. A strategic communications integration office in each agency will decide how to handle those issues, arbitrate policy disputes, and make certain that no government agencies are blindsided by others' activities. If agencies cannot agree or compromise on certain issues, a position in the National Security Council of the executive branch could make the final policy decision.

By leveraging the experience and expertise of research and analysis on policy issues and selected intelligence topics, this task-force would cultivate an in-depth exchange of ideas on strategic intelligence issues that will lead to more thorough and effective policy efforts in putting together these Strategic Communication offices. Certain types of intelligence in terms of national security capabilities are not uniform across the board. Through this initiative more collaboration would enable timely and practical solutions to key policy, industry, and implementation issues affecting U.S. intelligence and national security. Improving intelligence and enhancing the nation's security through strategic communication is the main goal. National security agency department

heads, as well as deputy public affairs officers, should participate in roundtables to discuss the current tactics used for disseminating information in their respective agencies. This will lead to better coordination and new and improved recommendations for the new strategic communication offices. The end goal will be for these offices to coordinate with other agencies in fighting the war on terror through strategic communication.

U.S. strategic communication must be transformed. America's negative image in world opinion and diminished ability of persuasion are consequences of many factors. In order to coordinate all activities associated with support for public diplomacy and provide adequate staff for strategic policy advice, program direction, and evaluation, a strategic communication office dealing with the war on terror in each relevant agency is needed. There are few easy choices in the war on terrorism, and interagency coordination is one of several measures that will help the United States better posture itself against terrorist groups for the long-term as well as for the near future. So far, the United States has not fully embraced the range of measures necessary for security. In addition, the U.S. must avoid a false sense of complacency. Declarations of victory, even after impressive counterterrorism successes, will only make Americans surprised rather than resolved during the many trials to come. Unfortunately, this is a war

that the U.S. will be fighting for a long time, and the centrality of strategic

communication will remain a top priority.   In the end, if the U.S. government

does not stick to clear and consistent messaging and a sustainable strategic

communication plan, it could end up providing its enemies with unintentional

assistance in the war on terror.

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