

# Background

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## Russian Anti-Americanism: A Priority Target for U.S. Public Diplomacy

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**Abstract:** *The Kremlin is using anti-Americanism as a strategic tool for pursuing domestic and foreign policy goals. Through media controlled or owned by the state, the Russian government is deliberately spreading poisonous anti-U.S. propaganda at home and abroad, blaming many of Russia's problems on the West, particularly the United States. The partial success of this policy exposes a number of serious failures in U.S. public diplomacy, which has been in decline since the end of the Cold War. To counter Russian information warfare and to consolidate democracy and freedom in Eastern and Central Europe, the U.S. needs to reinvigorate its public diplomacy efforts, using both traditional TV and radio broadcasting and new media to reach the peoples of the former Soviet satellites and post-Soviet states.*

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Russian anti-Americanism remains an entrenched and politically expedient phenomenon among the country's governing elites. This may seem puzzling, given the rapprochement between Russia's political leadership and the Obama Administration. Yet the idea of "resetting" the relationship between the two, as conceived by President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, rests on the profound fallacy that the current Russian leadership and the United States share common values.

From the Kremlin's perspective, anti-Americanism is a strategic tool for pursuing domestic and foreign policy goals. It has remained this way for almost the past 100 years. After World War II,

### Talking Points

- The Kremlin is actively fostering anti-Americanism at home and abroad as a means to achieve its domestic and foreign policy goals. This serves to limit American influence domestically and to hold together an anti-American coalition to check U.S. influence globally.
- Under President Vladimir Putin, the Russian government has steadily expanded and tightened its control over Russian media to the point that few independent voices remain.
- Public diplomacy functions most effectively when it has a receptive audience, a clear message, and a thought-out strategy.
- Reduced budgets and the declining dollar have led to programming and personnel cuts in U.S. international broadcasting. Pressure from the Russian government has forced most Russian radio stations to drop RFE/RL programming.
- The U.S. should focus its most intense public diplomacy efforts on the former Soviet satellites in Eastern and Central Europe to prevent them from sliding back into Russia's sphere of influence.

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Joseph Stalin denounced American “imperialism” as the enemy at the gate. In 1956, Nikita Khrushchev infamously threatened the United States: “We will bury you!” Since then, Soviet and Russian anti-Americanism has become a part of the Russian national psyche. Anti-Americanism is not confined to Russia alone. Russia is deliberately spreading this poisonous propaganda to neighboring countries through the Russian mass media, briefings, and conferences. This anti-Americanism also provides the glue that keeps together Russia’s de facto anti-American coalition with countries such as Iran and Venezuela.

Some dismiss the constant flood of anti-Western and anti-American words and images as rhetoric for internal consumption. Yet just as their czarist and Soviet predecessors, contemporary Russian leaders view external propaganda as a full-fledged instrument in their foreign policy and national security toolbox. This has far-reaching implications for U.S.–Russian relations and the U.S. global image and cannot be dismissed lightly.

To oppose Russia’s strategic information campaigns, the Obama Administration and Congress should:

- **Use public diplomacy strategically to counter the flood of anti-American propaganda from the highest levels of the Russian government.** U.S. public diplomacy should focus on reaching ordinary Russians. These efforts should include international broadcasting, Internet campaigns, the launch of a new Russian satellite channel, Web 2.0 social networking, print media, and revamped academic, student, and business exchange programs.
- **Launch a comprehensive audit of Russian information operations in the United States.** The U.S. needs to evaluate the extent and effectiveness of the Russian campaign in the U.S. media, understand its strategic implications, and counter disinformation where it exists. This research could ideally be performed by a new federally funded research and development center, a Corporation for Foreign Public Opinion Analysis, working with existing agencies, such as the CIA and the FBI.

- **Remain committed to funding programs to consolidate the strategic gains made for freedom and democracy.** The U.S. needs to support new U.S. allies in Central and Eastern Europe as well as Georgia and Ukraine to ensure that they remain solidly anchored in the West and do not slide back into Russia’s sphere of influence, which is a real and present danger.

### Respite, Then the Return of History

Anti-Americanism in Russia took a brief holiday after the fall of the Soviet Union. During the Yeltsin administration (1992–1999), the United States and other developed countries provided immense financial and technical assistance to Russia to facilitate its transition to free markets and democracy. The results were mixed. Hyperinflation eroded people’s savings, and the population perceived privatization as theft.

While never a full-fledged democracy or free market economy, Russia in the 1990s was by all measures a more pluralist and open country than it is today. In some segments of the population, this surge of freedom was accompanied by an embrace of Western ideals and values. Regrettably, Russia at that time was also much poorer than today. Exports of natural resources, including gas and oil, were neither transparent nor fully institutionalized, and commodities prices were low. During these transition years, especially after the 1998 Asian financial crisis, ex-Communists, hard-liners, and ultranationalists deliberately resuscitated the Soviet conspiratorial view that the West was trying to steal Russia blind, dismember it, and deny it a sphere of influence.

Russian public sentiment was largely pro-American as Communism collapsed, yet shame, blame, and nostalgia soon set in. Toward the end of his term, Yeltsin’s popularity plunged to single digits and with it the positive view that many Russians held of Russia’s relationship with the United States. Many Russians felt plundered and deceived by economic reforms, and corrupt and incompetent officials blamed the problems on bad advice from American experts paid by the U.S. government and the World Bank.<sup>1</sup> Others blamed the dissolution of the Soviet Union on the CIA and its “agents of influence”—Mikhail Gorbachev and Alexander

Yakovlev, Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee for Ideology—as the ideological fathers of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring).<sup>2</sup>

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**According to this narrative of victimization, Western-inspired economic reforms and loans from Western financial institutions were forced on Russia in a deliberate attempt to weaken the country and to gain access to its natural resources.**

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This perspective gained much traction after the rise to power of Vladimir Putin, Boris Yeltsin's hand-picked successor. According to this narrative of victimization, Western-inspired economic reforms and loans from international financial institutions were forced on Russia in a deliberate attempt to weaken the country and to gain access to its natural resources.

### NATO, Kosovo, Iraq, and Georgia

The Kremlin escalated its anti-American rhetoric as NATO expanded to Central Europe and the Baltics. The Russian leadership fiercely opposed both rounds of NATO enlargement (1999 and 2004). The Kremlin also vehemently objected to the U.S. use of force to contain Soviet/Russian protégé Saddam Hussein in 1998 and in 2003. In 1999, NATO conducted a bombing campaign against Serbia—a close friend with strong Slavic and Orthodox ties to Russia—to end Serbian ethnic cleansing of Kosovo. The Russian leadership perceived these campaigns as violations of the U.N.

standard for the use of force and as actions that blatantly ignored Russia's objections.

Statements by Russian leaders from Putin on down demonstrated that the leadership increasingly views the United States as Russia's *glavny protivnik* (principal adversary). This was the case even after Islamist terrorist attacks in Russia. For example, after the horrific 2004 terrorist attack on a Beslan school, Putin stated:

Some want to cut off a juicy morsel from us while others are helping them.

They are helping because they believe that, as one of the world's major nuclear powers, Russia is still posing a threat to someone, and therefore this threat must be removed.

And terrorism is, of course, only a tool for achieving these goals.<sup>3</sup>

Putin and his surrogates later clarified that he blamed the West, led by the United States.<sup>4</sup>

The war in Georgia in August 2008 took anti-Americanism to a new level as the possibility of direct conflict between the United States and Russia seemed imminent—at least if one was reading the Russian newspapers. There were even allegations that the United States, in particular Vice President Richard Cheney and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, had encouraged Georgia to attack Russia—a claim that is the opposite of reality.<sup>5</sup>

### Information Manipulation: From Rhetoric to Policy

On the Russian domestic front, the United States as “the enemy” is used as a scapegoat for unsuccess-

1. Oleg Maslov, “Etapi rosta antiamerikanizma v postsovetsoi Rossii” (Growth stages of anti-Americanism in post-Soviet Russia), *Russian Pereplet*, August 18, 2009, at <http://www.pereplet.ru/text/maslov01aug09.html> (November 23, 2009).
2. Andrei Cherkasov, “About Ex-KBG General Oleg Kalugin, and Not Only,” *Pravda*, April 4, 2002, at <http://english.pravda.ru/print/russia/36353-0> (November 23, 2009), and Oleg Platonov, “How the Illuminati Took Back Russia (I),” *Henrymakow.com*, November 15, 2009, at [http://www.henrymakow.com/summary\\_of\\_oleg\\_platonovs\\_free.html](http://www.henrymakow.com/summary_of_oleg_platonovs_free.html) (November 23, 2009).
3. BBC News, “Excerpts from Putin's Address,” September 4, 2004, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3627878.stm> (October 30, 2009).
4. Chris Stephen, “Putin Accuses ‘Complicit’ West of Harboring Chechen Terrorists,” *The Scotsman*, September 18, 2004, at <http://thescotsmen.scotsmen.com/beslanschoolsiege/Putin-accuses-complicit-West-of.2565158.jp> (October 30, 2009).
5. Maslov, “Etapi rosta antiamerikanizma v postsovetsoi Rossii.”

ful policies and to lend legitimacy to Putin's leadership. For example, the Kremlin has blamed the current economic crisis, which has hit Russia harder than many other countries, on perfidious American policies. Likewise, in foreign policy, anti-Americanism is used to unite countries against the common enemy and to promote a multipolar world vision in which Russia, China, India, and authoritarian states, such as Iran and Venezuela, would check U.S. influence.

This concept of a multipolar world was formulated almost two decades ago by Yevgeny M. Primakov, leader of the Eurasianist school of foreign policy and Boris Yeltsin's spy chief, foreign minister, and prime minister.<sup>6</sup>

Both Russian domestic and foreign media policies incorporate anti-American rhetoric. This became readily apparent after Putin's February 2007 speech at the Munich Security Conference. He stated, "We are seeing a greater and greater disdain for the basic principles of international law... One state and, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way."<sup>7</sup> This speech set the tone for what would become the constant refrain of many approved commentators and Kremlin mouthpieces in the media.

After the eruption of the global financial crisis, the Russian national leadership began to blame the calamity on the United States. For example, President Dmitry Medvedev said the crisis was caused by the financial "egotism" of some parties and that the crisis is a harbinger of the end of America's global economic leadership.<sup>8</sup> The Russian media soon echoed this view.

As prominent media analyst Daniel Kimmage has noted, if one watches Russian television regularly, a

viewer could easily believe that the United States is the root cause of the financial crisis. This message is easy to disseminate because Russian television is under tight government control, similar to the media controls imposed in many Arab countries.<sup>9</sup> According to Kimmage, the Internet in Russia is subject to the greatest manipulation.<sup>10</sup> On the Internet, conspiracy theories about the United States proliferate, especially about the U.S. role in causing the financial crisis to hurt a rising and more economically prosperous Russia.

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After eight years of Putin's presidency and a year of his premiership, little independent media remains in Russia. Russia's three main television networks—state-owned Channel One, Rossiya, and Gazprom-owned NTV—have a "black list" of Kremlin opponents who are barred from appearing on television. Moreover, the heads of the television channels hold weekly meetings with Kremlin ideological managers to determine what will make the news and how it will be reported, and what will not. Recently, it was reported that the news programming of REN TV and St. Petersburg's Fifth Channel, the two remaining independent channels, will fall under state control.<sup>11</sup>

## Public Opinion

Public opinion polls show that unfavorable views of the United States promulgated by the Russian leadership and the difficulties of the 1990s

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6. Ariel Cohen, "The 'Primakov Doctrine': Russia's Zero-Sum Game with the United States," Heritage Foundation *F.Y.I.* No. 167, December 15, 1997.

7. Vladimir Putin, speech at the Munich Conference on Politics and Security, Pravaya.ru, February, 12, 2007, at <http://www.pravaya.ru/govern/585/10985> (November 23, 2009).

8. Andrew E. Kramer, "Moscow Says U.S. Leadership Era Is Ending," *The New York Times*, October 2, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/03/world/europe/03russia.html> (November 23, 2009).

9. Kimmage, quoted in Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Debating Russian Coverage of the Financial Crisis," May 1, 2009, at [http://www.rferl.org/content/Debating\\_Russian\\_Coverage\\_of\\_the\\_Financial\\_Crisis/1620039.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Debating_Russian_Coverage_of_the_Financial_Crisis/1620039.html) (November 23, 2009).

10. *Ibid.*

transition period have taken their toll. According to a Pew Foundation 2009 public opinion poll, 62 percent of Russians regard the influence of the United States as bad, compared to 15 percent who regard it as good.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, a BBC poll found that 65 percent of Russians have a negative opinion of the United States, 7 percent have a positive opinion, and 28 percent remain undecided.

### Ideology and Its Tools

In addition to the state-run and state-controlled media, Russian top-down anti-Americanism is disseminated through a number of tools, including Kremlin-supported youth organizations, think tanks with international reach, documentaries and movies, and the Internet. Particularly effective are Washington-bashing, state-promoted “talking heads,” who are in ample supply. Many are nationalists and Eurasianists (a political movement that incorporates an imperial agenda with nostalgia for the Soviet Union).

The Russian leadership uses these propagandists to create an anti-American media environment at home and abroad. Occasionally, it draws in marginal figures, such as Lyndon LaRouche and Noam Chomsky, to do their bidding on national television. Russian notables who are regularly engaged in anti-American propaganda include ultranationalist Dmitry Rogozin, Russia’s ambassador to NATO, and Alexandr Dugin, an imperialist advocate and a formerly obscure philosopher, who is closely associated with the Russian military and nationalist politicians. Since becoming an influential geopolitical guru, he has received a professorship at Moscow State University and has his own talk show on state-

run television. Dugin seems to receive ample funding from state coffers. He professes a deep distaste for democracy and considers the manipulation of information by the secret services as an acceptable tool in rebuilding the Russian empire.<sup>13</sup>

Other Kremlin-connected propagandists include Igor Panarin, an ex-KGB analyst and the current dean of the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Foreign Ministry. Panarin is the author of the infamous anti-American theory that the United States is on an inexorable course to civil war in 2010 and will fracture into separate, feuding states.<sup>14</sup> Other propagandists include “political technologist” Gleb Pavlovsky, writer Aleksandr Prokhanov, and journalist and former “democrat” Mikhail Leontiev. Their job is to discredit the political opposition and to promote negative images of the United States and the West.

### Anti-Americanism as Entertainment

Anti-Americanism sanctioned by the government also infests other Russian social institutions. For instance, an elaborate anti-American movie genre has emerged in Russia, in which Americans make handy villains and American society has become a mere caricature. It is a powerful narrative, which reinforces the image of an immoral, foreign threat to Russian society. For example, *Brother 2*, an action adventure blockbuster of 1990s, demonstrated the superiority of Russian moral values over American, while depicting the United States as degraded. The movie *Aliens* contrasts a group of highly immoral American doctors—including homosexuals, pedophiles, and an unfaithful wife—with courageous Russian sappers working in a Mid-

11. Luke Harding, “Dissenting Voices to Be Silenced as Liberal Russian TV Channels Come Under State Control,” *Guardian.co.uk*, October 16, 2009, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/oct/16/liberal-russian-channels-state-control> (November 23, 2009).
12. Andrew Kohut, Richard Wike, Juliana Menasce Horowitz, and Jacob Poushter, *The Pulse of Europe 2009: 20 Years After the Fall of the Berlin Wall: End of Communism Cheered But Now with More Reservations*, Pew Research Center, 2009, p. 62, at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/267.pdf> (November 23, 2009).
13. Yigal Liverant, “The Prophet of the New Russian Empire,” *Azure*, No. 35 (Winter 2009), at <http://www.azure.org.il/article.php?id=483&page=all> (November 23, 2009), and John B. Dunlop, “Aleksandr Dugin’s Foundations of Geopolitics,” Princeton University, Lichtenstein Institute on Self-Determination *Working Paper*, August 2003, p. 13, at [http://www.princeton.edu/~lisd/publications/wp\\_russiaseries\\_dunlop.pdf](http://www.princeton.edu/~lisd/publications/wp_russiaseries_dunlop.pdf) (February 3, 2010).
14. Andrew Osborn, “As If Things Weren’t Bad Enough, Russian Professor Predicts End of U.S.,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 29, 2008, at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123051100709638419.html> (November 23, 2009).

dle Eastern country. According to Russian experts, the movie was commissioned by the government.<sup>15</sup>

Russian cinematography also features slanted historical documentaries. For example, *Lev Trotsky: The Mystery of the World Revolution* seeks to establish that the White House and Wall Street, as opposed to the Imperial German General Staff, were involved in fomenting and funding the Bolshevik Revolution.

Even the Russian Orthodox Church is a participant, releasing the documentary *The Fall of an Empire: The Lesson of Byzantium*<sup>16</sup> in January 2008. The movie artfully compares the declining Byzantium to Russia during the 1990s. It warns against “Western” political reforms, which decentralized power, led to the rise of “oligarchs” in Byzantium, and caused its undoing.

### Youth Movements

Borrowing a page from the Communist political manual, the Kremlin launched a number of political youth organizations and movements, including Nashi (Ours), Marching Together, and Young Guard youth movement of United Russia, the ruling political party headed by Putin. These youth organizations are loudly and violently pro-regime and often cultivate strong anti-American sentiments. One Nashi member declared, “Our idea is to stop Russia from becoming a subsidiary of the USA and supplier of raw materials.”<sup>17</sup>

Regrettably, the Russian leadership is using technological advancements, which are often thought to facilitate greater openness and communication, to advance top-down authoritarianism and nationalism. Information manipulation on the Internet and through other media acts as a force multiplier for

anti-Americanism. This is especially true with the tech savvy youth, a group that is often mistakenly seen as inherently liberal and sympathetic toward the West. This is patently not the case with youth organized by the Kremlin or ultranationalists around a xenophobic agenda.

### Advancing the Russian Agenda in the West

The Russian leadership’s public diplomacy campaigns against the West are highly sophisticated and proactive. Russia Today (RT), a television channel in English, Spanish, and Arabic, has become a highly effective public diplomacy tool. It regularly features Kremlin-supported commentators, who attack the political opposition in Russia and depict American policy in a negative light.

Another significant instrument of the state is *Russia Beyond the Headlines*,<sup>18</sup> which produces a number of advertising supplements in American, European, and British newspapers and is affiliated with state-controlled media organizations RIA-Novosti and *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*. Notably, its product appears in *The Washington Post* every other week as an advertising supplement.<sup>19</sup>

The Moscow-based Institute for Democracy and Cooperation, another institution targeted at the West, recently opened. This Kremlin-financed think tank has several foreign branches and claims to “study the Western socio-political system and offer recommendations for its improvement.”<sup>20</sup> *Orange Webs*, its first publication, reveals the character of this institution. The book accuses the West of planning and financing revolutions in post-Soviet countries.<sup>21</sup> The think tank’s position is on the fringe of the debate, but it is an anti-American resource for the Russian media.

15. Victoria Nikiforova, “Goszakaz na obraz vruga” (State orders the image of the enemy), OpenSpace.ru, November 12, 2008, at <http://www.openspace.ru/cinema/events/details/5813> (November 23, 2009).

16. Tikhon Shevkunov, *The Fall of an Empire: The Lesson of Byzantium*, documentary film, 2008, at <http://vizantia.info/docs/73.htm> (November 23, 2009).

17. BBC Monitoring, “Russia: New Pro-Kremlin Youth Movement Based on Anti-Americanism,” March 3, 2005.

18. *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, Web site, at <http://rbth.ru> (February 3, 2010).

19. See “Russia Now,” paid supplement, *The Washington Post*, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-adv/advertisers/russia> (February 3, 2010).

20. The Other Russia, “Russian NGO to Monitor US Democracy,” January 26, 2008, at <http://www.theotherrussia.org/2008/01/26/russian-ngo-to-monitor-us-democracy> (November 23, 2009).

## The Role of U.S. Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy functions most effectively when it has a receptive audience, a clear message, and a thought-out strategy. The U.S. government's public diplomacy toward Russia cannot be characterized in these terms. A comprehensive U.S. public diplomacy strategy should not only take stock of U.S. assets, but also evaluate what can realistically be achieved by cooperating with the private and nonprofit sectors. The Obama Administration's policy of pursuing a closer relationship with the Russian government will complicate any effort by the White House or State Department to formulate an aggressive public diplomacy strategy.

The Russian leadership today views the United States as the greatest threat to their national security, and there is strong support among ordinary Russians for their country's aggressive foreign policy, especially around the country's periphery. Yet pockets of opposition to Russia's authoritarian direction under the Putin/Medvedev leadership do exist and need to be supported. Such an investment in American public diplomacy must be long-term, as it was during the Cold War.

Of immediate importance is the need to cement relations with America's allies in Central and Eastern Europe, in contrast to the Obama Administration's policy of relegating their security concerns to

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the second tier as the Administration prioritizes the U.S. relationship with Russia. These European allies and key European powers, such as Germany and Italy, are currently under significant pressure from Moscow, which is using European energy dependence on Russia and carefully calibrated access to Russian markets to achieve its desired policy out-

comes. Furthermore, faith in democracy and free market institutions has plummeted across Central and Eastern Europe, except in Poland and the Czech Republic, in part due to the current economic downturn. Clearly, the United States needs to demonstrate its commitment to its NATO allies in Central and Eastern Europe. This would signal to their leaders and to Russia's leaders that the United States is not in a global retreat.

## U.S. International Broadcasting, from Success to Hard Times

U.S. international broadcasting remains one of the most important public diplomacy tools. U.S. public diplomacy played a vital role in ending the Cold War. The leadership and direction given by President Ronald Reagan and United States Information Agency (USIA) Director Charles Wick were critical in achieving this success.<sup>22</sup> During the Reagan Administration, the USIA reached its maximum influence behind the Iron Curtain, particularly through Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Voice of America (VOA), BBC World Service, and other Western broadcasters. Their support for the Solidarity trade union movement and cooperation with the Catholic Church under Pope John Paul II were critical. During the Cold War, the contrast of ideas and ideologies between Western democracy and totalitarian Communism was clear and poignant.

Broadcasts were penetrating Soviet airwaves even before President Mikhail Gorbachev decided to end Soviet jamming in 1988 as part of his *glasnost* campaign. Radio broadcasts played a critical role during the attempted Soviet coup in August 1991, during which Radio Liberty's Russian service was widely regarded as the only reliable public source of information. President Yeltsin later told Radio Liberty, "It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of your contribution to the Russian people."<sup>23</sup>

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21. Russia Today, "Did Western Spider Spin Orange Web?" April 18, 2008, at [http://www.russiatoday.ru/Art\\_and\\_Fun/2008-04-18/Did\\_Western\\_spider\\_spin\\_Orange\\_Web.html](http://www.russiatoday.ru/Art_and_Fun/2008-04-18/Did_Western_spider_spin_Orange_Web.html) (November 23, 2009).
22. Carnes Lord and Helle C. Dale, "Public Diplomacy and the Cold War: Lessons Learned," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 2070, September 18, 2007, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/bg2070.cfm>.
23. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "RFE/RL's Russian Service," at <http://www.rferl.org/info/Russia/192.html> (February 3, 2010).

However, U.S. broadcasting into Russia has fallen on hard times. The strategic direction that made it so effective during the Cold War has disappeared, and deep budget cuts have proven detrimental to U.S. national interests. VOA broadcasts to

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Russia were greatly curtailed in 2008. The timing was inauspicious, coinciding with the Russian invasion of Georgia. The Georgian and Ukrainian services of Voice of America were also cut.

As the Kremlin has tightened the screws on independent media within Russia, most affiliates that were rebroadcasting VOA and RFE/RL programming were forced to drop Western programming. In July 2008, VOA's FM service was curtailed. The VOA maintains a presence in Russia today via Internet, through podcasts and video on the VOA Web page, and on one FM station in Moscow.<sup>24</sup>

RFE/RL broadcasts into Russia have survived, but just barely. RFE/RL remains the leading international broadcaster into Russia, broadcasting 24 hours a day. Today, RFE/RL has only seven local affiliates, compared with 27 three years ago.<sup>25</sup> The drop is largely due to the Russian government's pressure on local media. In this unfriendly environment, U.S. broadcasters' continued dedication to ideas and the free flow of information is critical, even if it is sometimes poorly appreciated in Washington.

U.S. public diplomacy efforts and international broadcasting need to address those segments of the Russian population that remain faithful to the ideals of liberal democracy and individual freedom. There-

fore, international broadcasting to Russia and Eurasia remains an important investment, and Congress should support it. While President Obama's budget would increase the international broadcasting budget for the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) from \$715 million in 2009 to \$745 million in 2010, this is still a woefully small amount compared to the 1989 budget, and the declining dollar has forced deep budget and personnel cuts in entities housed overseas, including RFE/RL in Prague. At VOA, budgetary constraints and an increased focus on broadcasting to the Middle East have forced the BBG to cut critically important language services and to reduce the hours of VOA English broadcasting.

## Russia and Public Diplomacy 2.0

While Voice of America broadcasts to Russia have been largely silenced, VOA maintains a presence in Russia via the Internet, including a thriving blogging operation.<sup>26</sup> The VOA Web site is one of the most popular news Web sites in the world, ranking as the 53th most popular news site—ahead of the *Guardian*, the *International Herald Tribune*, Sky News, and the Associated Press. The BBC ranked 46th. VOA is also far ahead of America.gov, the State Department's primary public diplomacy Web site, which ranked 5,439th in worldwide popularity. The Web site for Voice of Russia, VOA's Russian counterpart, ranked 100,460th, suggesting serious credibility problems with users.<sup>27</sup>

The high rates of Internet penetration growth in Russia and the high literacy level of the Russian population suggest that public diplomacy 2.0 is an important strategy to pursue vis-à-vis Russia.

## Russian Students and Exchanges in the United States

One of the most persistently successful tools of public diplomacy continues to be the student and

24. VOA News, "Podkasti" (Podcasts), at <http://www1.voanews.com/russian/podcasts> (February 3, 2010).

25. Jeffrey Gedmin, testimony before the Subcommittee on Europe, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, July 23, 2009, at <http://www.internationalrelations.house.gov/111/ged072309.pdf> (February 3, 2010).

26. Ariel Cohen, one of the authors of this paper, blogs for the VOA Russian service.

27. Alvin Snyder, "Part Two: Clocking Government Internet Traffic: Let the Races Begin," Public Diplomacy Blog, February 18, 2009, at [http://uscpublicdiplomacy.com/index.php/newsroom/pdblog\\_detail/part\\_two\\_clocking\\_government\\_internet\\_traffic\\_let\\_the\\_races\\_begin](http://uscpublicdiplomacy.com/index.php/newsroom/pdblog_detail/part_two_clocking_government_internet_traffic_let_the_races_begin) (February 3, 2010).



business exchange programs, which directly expose individuals to the American way of life. However, there is a great deal of room for improvement. For the 2008–2009 academic year, Russia ranked 24th in the number of students in the United States with a total of 4,908 students, far behind other major countries, such as China and France.<sup>28</sup>

In 1999, Jim Billington, the Librarian of Congress and a prominent scholar of Russia, initiated Open World, a program of exchanges with the former Soviet republics.<sup>29</sup> Initially, the program focused on Russian officials and business leaders, but it was expanded in 2003 to include other countries in the post-Soviet space and to include cultural and juridical exchanges. However, as with other exchange programs, these are long-term investments in advancing the understanding of American society and political culture. They are in no way a remedy for official Russian top-down anti-Americanism.

### Sister City Programs and Government-to-Government Cooperation

A number of traditional U.S. public diplomacy programs remain on the books, but they are having minimal impact in Russia's political climate. These include the Municipal Partnership Exchange Program, the Community Connections Exchange program, the Civil Society Development in Southern Russia, and the U.S.–Russian sister city partnerships, which were launched by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1956 with the rather ambitious purpose of fostering “world peace.”<sup>30</sup> The U.S. Peace Corps began working in Russia in 1992 in what was initially hailed as a new beginning for U.S.–Russian relations. However, in 2002, the Russian government shut down the Peace Corps program in Russia, charging that it was a “spying organization.”<sup>31</sup>

### What the U.S. Should Do

To oppose Russia's strategic information campaigns, the Obama Administration and Congress should:

- **Develop a global communications strategy through the National Security Council.** The U.S. needs to work strategically to counter the flood of anti-American propaganda originating from the highest levels of the Russian government. U.S. public diplomacy should focus on reaching both ordinary Russians and the elites. These platforms should include satellite television broadcasting, FM and AM broadcasting, and Web 2.0 social networking. Particular focus should be given to restoring the importance of U.S. international broadcasting. The U.S. should also develop Russian-language satellite television channels aimed at the Russian-speaking world of the former Soviet Union. The U.S. should also evaluate and improve student and business exchange programs and support for independent print media.
- **Launch a comprehensive audit of Russian information operations in the United States.** The U.S. needs to evaluate the extent and effectiveness of the Russian campaign in the U.S. media. Ideally, Congress should fund a new research and development organization, a Corporation for Foreign Public Opinion Analysis, that would conduct this research in cooperation with the CIA, FBI, and other relevant federal agencies.
- **Remain committed to funding programs to consolidate the strategic gains made for freedom and democracy.** The U.S. needs to provide support to its new allies in Central and Eastern Europe through the National Endowment for Democracy and the State Department. This sup-

28. Institute of International Education, “Open Doors 2009 Country Fact Sheet: Russia,” November 16, 2009, at [http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/file\\_depot/0-10000000/0-10000/3390/folder/89904/Russia+Fact+Sheet++Open+Doors+2009.doc](http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/file_depot/0-10000000/0-10000/3390/folder/89904/Russia+Fact+Sheet++Open+Doors+2009.doc) (February 3, 2010).

29. Open World, “About,” at <http://www.openworld.gov/about> (February 3, 2010).

30. Chicago Sister Cities International, “About Chicago Sister Cities,” at <http://www.chicagosistercities.com/about.php> (February 3, 2010).

31. Michael Polman, “We Need a Public Diplomacy Strategy for Russia,” Public Diplomacy Blog, August 20, 2007, at [http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/index.php/newsroom/pdblog\\_detail/we\\_need\\_a\\_public\\_diplomacy\\_strategy\\_for\\_russia](http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/index.php/newsroom/pdblog_detail/we_need_a_public_diplomacy_strategy_for_russia) (February 3, 2010).

port is needed to ensure that they remain solidly anchored in the West and do not slide back into Russia's sphere of influence.

## Conclusion

U.S. public diplomacy faces major challenges in dealing with the growing and systemic anti-Americanism within and from Russia. While there is still a need for outreach to democratically minded Russian citizens through civil society programs, this may be more relevant to long-term objectives than to the present. Realistically, the U.S. should focus its most intense public diplomacy efforts on the former Soviet satellites in Eastern and Central Europe. Their freedom, thriving civil society, and integration in the Euro-Atlantic sphere continues to send a powerful message to the Russian leadership and people alike.

Finally, the U.S. government should pressure the Russian government to cease its strategic uses of official anti-Americanism and to allow Russian rebroadcasters to access VOA and RFE/RL. Basic human rights dictate that Russian citizens, not their government, should decide the kinds of information that they listen to.

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