

# BACKGROUND

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## Challenging America: How Russia, China, and Other Countries Use Public Diplomacy to Compete with the U.S.

Helle C. Dale, Ariel Cohen, PhD, and Janice A. Smith

### Abstract

*Competing aggressively with the United States for the “hearts and minds” of people around the world, many state and non-state actors are funneling significant resources into their public diplomacy strategies. The Chinese government announced in 2009 that it would spend almost \$7 billion on a “global media drive” to improve its image. The Russian government allocated \$1.4 billion for international propaganda in 2010. Meanwhile, in the U.S., a confluence of issues, tightening budgets, and changing foreign policy directions compound the challenges that Americans face. The purpose and priorities for U.S. public diplomacy are being pulled in many directions. The result of this misalignment is that today, more people around the world believe the global balance of power is shifting away from the United States.*

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The Heritage Foundation  
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
(202) 546-4400 | heritage.org

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The circumstances that surrounded President Barack Obama’s nomination last November of yet another Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy were symptomatic of a problem that has plagued America’s efforts to explain itself to the world since the end of the Cold War. The nomination came after the position had been vacant for four months, and it would take another six before the nominee, Tara Sonenshine, was sworn in.

In all, the position has been vacant 30 percent of the time since President George W. Bush created it. Sonenshine has assumed a mission marred by confusion since Secretary of State Madeleine Albright closed the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) in 1999 and folded its resources and personnel into other parts of the State Department.

That reorganization in the late 1990s was misguided. It failed to consider the potential challenges to America in a world that is far more complex than it was during the Cold War ideological battle between supporters of liberty and the totalitarians. For example, though the threat to Europe from the Soviet Union had dissipated, all 22 officers who had covered European nations for the USIA were assigned to the

### TALKING POINTS

- The U.S. government is showing signs of fatigue and disinterest in public diplomacy—a development that must be reversed if the United States is to maintain a global leadership position.
- Today, more people around the world believe the “global balance of power” is shifting away from the United States.
- Many state and non-state actors are competing aggressively with the U.S. for the “hearts and minds” of people around the world. Russia and China have launched expensive and sophisticated media campaigns to fill the ideological void.
- Most Americans do not have access to the public diplomacy programs broadcast by their own government, which is perhaps one of the reasons they often find it hard to explain U.S. policies.
- What is needed in Washington is more focused commitment to public diplomacy, prioritization of programs, better organization of instruments, better trained and experienced personnel, and stricter oversight of resources.

State Department's bureau overseeing European affairs. According to a former State Department official, the bureau responsible for U.S. policies at the United Nations and other international organizations received not even one USIA official.

The result of this misalignment is that today, more people around the world believe the "global balance of power" is shifting away from the United States. In over two-thirds of the countries surveyed in 2011 by the Pew Research Center, either a majority or a plurality of people said that China would replace, or already has replaced, the U.S. as the leading superpower. That response was widespread in countries where the U.S. is popular as well as in those where anti-Americanism runs high.<sup>1</sup> This holds true despite the fact that the U.S. has spent well over \$15 billion on public diplomacy since 1999.<sup>2</sup>

Even more challenging is the fact that many state and non-state actors are competing aggressively with the U.S. for the "hearts and minds" of people around the world. Seeking greater influence and access, they are funneling significant resources into their own public diplomacy strategies. The Chinese government, for instance, announced in 2009 that it would spend almost \$7 billion on a "global media drive" to improve China's image in the world.<sup>3</sup> The

Russian government allocated \$1.4 billion for international propaganda in 2010.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, in the U.S., a confluence of issues and changing priorities compound the challenges presented by tightening budgets and entrenched anti-Americanism. The purpose and priorities for public diplomacy are being pulled in many directions with U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan winding down, a "pivot" away from the Middle East and toward Asia, an intentional downgrading of concerns over terrorism, and a "reset" of relations with Russia, to name a few.

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**THE GROWING EMPHASIS ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY BY COUNTRIES THAT DISAGREE WITH AMERICA'S VALUES AND POLICIES PRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE, BUT SIMPLY FUNNELING MORE MONEY TO PUBLIC DIPLOMACY BUDGETS IS NOT THE ANSWER.**

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The independent Institute for Government in the United Kingdom explained the challenges for public diplomacy in its "2011 Global Ranking of Soft Power":

International politics are undergoing a fundamental shift, driven

by power diffusion, technological advances, networks, and an empowered global public. The sum total of these changes means that addressing the world's major foreign policy challenges...will require soft power approaches. Driving international affairs in the 21st century will rest on shaping narratives, setting international norms, mobilising trans-national networks, and winning the battle for global public opinion. This is not to say that soft power alone will always win the day, but its relative strategic importance compared to hard power will continue to grow...at a time when the world's established powers are chipping away at their own capacity to operate under the changing conditions of international politics. Taken in this context, the results of [this] index beg the question: how long will historical trends sustain the soft power hegemony of traditional Western powers?<sup>5</sup>

One need not agree with this assessment of the role of soft power to understand that, in an age of increasing interconnectedness and new media, the ability to make a persuasive case for its values, policies, and goals improves the likelihood that a nation can secure its interests.

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1. Pew Research Center, Global Attitudes Project, *China Seen Overtaking U.S. as Global Superpower*, July 13, 2011, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/07/13/chapter-1-the-global-balance-of-power/> (accessed May 21, 2012).
  2. U.S. Office of Management and Budget, *Budget of the United States Government* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, Fiscal Year 1996–Fiscal Year 2012), <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collection.action?collectionCode=BUDGET&browsePath=Fiscal+Year+2012&searchPath=Fiscal+Year+2012&leafLevelBrowse=false&isCollapsed=false&isOpen=true&packageid=BUDGET-2012-TAB&ycord=1018> (accessed May 21, 2012).
  3. Vivian Wu and Adam Chen, "Beijing in 45b Yuan Global Media Drive," *Morning China*, January 13, 2009, <http://www.wsichina.org/morningchina/article.asp?id=3962> (accessed May 23, 2012).
  4. Luke Harding, "Russia Today Launches First UK Ad Blitz," *The Guardian*, December 18, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/dec/18/russia-today-propaganda-ad-blitz> (accessed May 23, 2012).
  5. Jonathan McClory, "The New Persuaders II: A 2011 Global Ranking of Soft Power," Institute for Government, December 1, 2011, p. 24, <http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publications/new-persuaders-ii> (accessed May 22, 2012).

That is U.S. public diplomacy's essential task.

The growing emphasis on public diplomacy by countries that disagree with America's values and policies presents a significant challenge, but simply funneling more money to public diplomacy budgets is not the answer.

Today, there is too little coordination of public diplomacy efforts among U.S. agencies. Too often, operational decisions are constrained by bureaucratic misinterpretations of the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act (known as the Smith-Mundt Act), a post-World War II measure aimed at preventing the party that holds the White House from using the State Department to "propagandize" Americans. The State Department, for instance, posts neither its own published public diplomacy materials nor links to its international broadcasting programs on its website, effectively preventing most Americans from ever seeing them.

At the same time, Americans *do* have ready access on the Internet to Chinese and Russian public diplomacy programming that is heavily critical of U.S. policy. Technology has changed, and online access to the materials that the U.S. distributes abroad could help Americans better understand and evaluate their government's foreign policies, allow better oversight, and make public diplomacy spending more accountable.

What is needed in Washington is more focused commitment to public diplomacy, prioritization of programs, better organization of instruments, better trained and experienced personnel, and stricter oversight of resources. Primary

responsibility for public diplomacy lies with the White House, the State Department, and the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), but the Department of Defense also plays a key, though sometimes controversial, role. Engaging foreign publics wherever the U.S. military is deployed is a matter of necessity: Informing civilians about the U.S. mission can gain support and lessen the threat of violence. Yet the objectives of the military's strategic communications and psychological operations ("psyops")—now called military information support operations (MISO)—are generally more narrowly defined than the public diplomacy goals of the State Department.

To harness the tools of public diplomacy when American leadership, values, and policies face mounting competition abroad, the U.S. needs a coordinated strategy that: increases awareness by decision makers in Washington of how countries such as China and Russia are employing public diplomacy to compete with the U.S.; establishes best practices; prioritizes objectives and consolidates lines of authority across the government; removes outdated restrictions and expands the capabilities of U.S. officials to explain American policies; and increases oversight of public diplomacy spending.

### **The State of U.S. Public Diplomacy**

As defined by law, public diplomacy is a tool of U.S. foreign policy employed primarily by the Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors, though many other U.S. government agencies, including the Department

of Defense, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Education, and Labor, also reach out to foreign publics.

Section 2732 of the U.S. Code lays out the two purposes of public diplomacy: first, increasing foreign publics' knowledge of the United States and its foreign policy and, second, articulating the values and principles upon which the United States government and its foreign policies are founded. By law, any U.S. public diplomacy strategy must target

developed and developing countries and select and general audiences, using appropriate media to properly explain the foreign policy of the United States to the governments and populations of such countries, with the objectives of increasing support for United States policies and providing news and information. The Secretary [of State] shall, through the most effective mechanisms, counter misinformation and propaganda concerning the United States. The Secretary shall continue to articulate the importance of freedom, democracy, and human rights as fundamental principles underlying United States foreign policy goals.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1980s, the U.S. public diplomacy machine under President Ronald Reagan and USIA Director Charles Wick helped win the Cold War battle of ideas. After the Soviet Union fell, the "peace dividend" that caused declining military spending also led to stagnant and declining

6. U.S. Code, § 2732, <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/22/2732> (accessed May 23, 2012).

public diplomacy and international broadcasting budgets.<sup>7</sup> In 1999, the USIA was absorbed by the State Department as part of the bureaucratic reorganization brokered by Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) and Secretary Albright.

The transfer of public diplomacy functions to the State Department was both a curse and a blessing. The USIA had been a small, generally well managed, independent government organization with a clear mission and efficient finance and personnel systems. When it was broken up and folded into the State Department's much larger and less efficient bureaucracy, USIA staff did not disappear entirely. Area officers were sent to the department's geographic bureaus, thereby losing their independent budgets and reporting channels. The department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research incorporated the USIA's media reaction and opinion analysis division. The department's Public Affairs Bureau absorbed the USIA's television production facilities as well as the Foreign Press Centers in Washington, New York, and Los Angeles. The USIA's Office of Strategic Communication—an important message-coordinating entity—was abolished.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, the U.S. international broadcasting complex, with the Voice of America at its center, became a stand-alone agency under the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, little attention was paid to functions that were considered relics of the Cold War, including public diplomacy. When al-Qaeda terrorists attacked America on 9/11, the U.S. government was forced to become

deeply engaged in the Arab world without the institutional capacity to mount a response to the ideological challenges posed by al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other radical Islamists.

The White House established an Office of Global Communications to formulate and coordinate messages about U.S. operations in Afghanistan and, later, in Iraq. After four years, its functions were taken over by the State Department. The Department of Defense tried to merge public affairs and information warfare capabilities, but its Office of Public Diplomacy Support was eventually closed under Secretary Robert Gates and its resources sent to the State Department. The Pentagon's public diplomacy functions have not ceased altogether; indeed, they cannot. However, under President Obama, the State Department plays the dominant role.

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From the outset, the Obama Administration sought to advance U.S. standing overseas. In a number of strategy documents, it outlined a focus on “smart power,” the combination of hard power and the soft-power instruments of diplomacy, public diplomacy, and foreign aid. In a series of ambitious yet controversial policy speeches in Prague, Ghana, Cairo, and Oslo during his first year in office, President Obama emphasized his message of a more humble, even apologetic, America. An elaborate public engagement campaign involving

embassies, websites, and mobile technologies accompanied each speech.

Yet, despite the ambitious beginning, the Administration did not follow through on its promises of engagement. Institutional changes in the public diplomacy machinery were neglected. Various strategy documents were issued, indicating a good deal of thinking on the subject. These include the State Department's “Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review” and its framework document titled “Public Diplomacy: Strengthening U.S. Engagement with the World: A Strategic Approach for the 21st Century”; the National Security Council's “Public Diplomacy Strategy”; and the Pentagon's “Strategic Communications Strategy.” But they provoked little practical change. Although the Administration added six Deputy Assistant Secretaries of State for public diplomacy and created a Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communication, no major reorganization has taken place.

The President's budget request for public diplomacy for fiscal year (FY) 2012, at \$536 million, includes funding for the State Department's public diplomacy offices in the regional and functional bureaus as well as the work of the Office of International Information Programs. President Obama requested additional funding for related programs, such as Educational and Cultural Exchanges, the National Endowment for Democracy, the East-West Center, and other exchange programs, at \$766 million. These figures do not represent the totality of U.S. public diplomacy activities, as numerous

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7. Carnes Lord, *Losing Hearts and Minds? Public Diplomacy and Strategic Influence in the Age of Terror* (London: Praeger Security International, 2006), p. 2.

8. Kenton Keith, “Troubled Takeover: The Demise of USIA,” *Foreign Service Journal*, September 27, 1999.

government departments interact with the publics of foreign countries through educational, programmatic, or informational activities.

The work of the State Department's Bureau of Public Diplomacy is described in "Public Diplomacy: Strengthening U.S. Engagement with the World." Though highly anticipated, this report, released in March 2010, was received with some disappointment by the public diplomacy community. The so-called strategic priorities that it lays out are not new: (1) shaping the narrative, (2) expanding people-to-people relationships, (3) combating violent extremism, (4) informing policymaking about foreign attitudes and opinions, and (5) strengthening internal State Department structures—that is, completing the integration of the USIA.

One of the Administration's more successful interagency endeavors is related to the third strategic priority: the opening of the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communication in late 2010. The center has subsumed the State Department's digital outreach team and is now focused on countering al-Qaeda propaganda.

Closely related to the objectives for public diplomacy within the State Department are the activities of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which oversees U.S. international broadcasting (USIB). The President requested \$754 million for this function in FY 2012. The BBG manages U.S. broadcasts in 59 languages to 100 countries, reaching a global audience of 166 million people.

The broadcasting complex, which represents the U.S. government's single largest investment in public diplomacy, includes the flagship Voice of America, whose purpose is to give foreign audiences an American point of view on the news and information about American life and policies. It also includes "surrogate" broadcasters Radio and TV Marti, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and Radio Free Asia, as well as Al Hurra television and Radio Sawa, operated with a BBG grant by the nonprofit Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Inc.

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**RADIO AND TV MARTI, RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, AND RADIO FREE ASIA, AS WELL AS AL HURRA TELEVISION AND RADIO SAWA, BROADCAST LOCAL AND DOMESTIC NEWS TO COUNTRIES WHERE A FREE PRESS DOES NOT EXIST. APPROPRIATIONS FOR THESE SURROGATES TODAY, HOWEVER, ARE BUT A FRACTION OF WHAT THEY RECEIVED DURING THE COLD WAR.**

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Currently, these surrogates have the mandate of broadcasting local and domestic news to countries where a free press does not exist. Appropriations for these surrogates today, however, are but a fraction of what they received during the Cold War.

These funding levels are aspirational as Congress, in its efforts to curb the ballooning U.S. budget deficit, is proposing cuts in the

President's request. An appropriations bill that the Senate passed in September 2011 included an 8 percent cut for State Department and foreign operations. The House version amounted to an 18 percent cut.<sup>9</sup> These funding levels also do not reflect the across-the-board cuts mandated in the Budget Control Act of 2011.

While such budget trimming may indeed be necessary for reducing redundancy and waste, it is clear that traditional public diplomacy programs and international broadcasting will not be alone in facing major challenges in adjusting to the new budgetary realities. Given that many of America's most aggressive competitors for international influence are boosting their public diplomacy spending, the challenge to explain America's values and policies to foreigners will become even greater.

### **China's Bold Public Diplomacy Agenda**

During a 2009 hearing before the U.S.–China Economic and Security Review Commission, Nicholas Cull, professor of public diplomacy at the University of Southern California, defined public diplomacy as "the process by which an international actor conducts foreign policy by engaging a foreign public." He listed five components: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting. He argued that Beijing tries to "buy friends" by cultivating influential figures in developing countries in the hope of displacing Western influence and values.<sup>10</sup> China is demonstrating

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9. Walter Pincus, "State Dept. Reeling from Budget Cuts," *The Washington Post*, October 1, 2011.

10. Testimony of Nicholas J. Cull, hearing, *China's Propaganda and Influence Operations, Its Intelligence Activities that Target the United States, and the Resulting Impacts on U.S. National Security*, U.S.–China Economic and Security Review Commission, 111th Cong., 1st Sess., April 30, 2009, p. 10, [http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/transcripts/09\\_04\\_30\\_trans/09\\_04\\_30\\_trans.pdf](http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/transcripts/09_04_30_trans/09_04_30_trans.pdf) (accessed May 23, 2012).

a growing sophistication and determination in this endeavor.

A recent survey by the Pew Research Center found that a growing number of Americans view China as the power most likely to rival the U.S. for global leadership. The number of those who believe that China will replace or already has replaced the United States as the dominant global power went up from 40 percent in 2009 to 47 percent in 2011.<sup>11</sup> To China's leaders in Beijing, this is no doubt seen as a sign that their concerted public diplomacy efforts are paying off.

China has long been challenged by low image ratings. In 2008, a Pew poll found that majorities in only seven of the 23 countries surveyed expressed favorable views of China.<sup>12</sup> While it still lags far behind the United States in favorable ratings, China's media campaigns and recent public diplomacy extravaganzas such as hosting the Olympics in Beijing and the Shanghai Expo have contributed to its changing image. China is gaining respect if not approval: Its favorability ratings in the 2011 Pew Global Attitudes survey showed improvement over 2010 in half of the countries surveyed. The U.S., by comparison, saw its favorability ratings improve in only one-sixth of the countries.<sup>13</sup>

China uses an ambitious global agenda to promote its model of governance. It has invested

heavily in increasing its influence both in the region and globally. But as Stefan Halper points out in *The Beijing Consensus: How China's Authoritarian Model Will Dominate the Twenty-First Century*, China's brand of capitalism and its conception of "international community" are not only substantially different from those of the West, but also significantly opposed to them. That difference is the biggest challenge to be overcome in China's drive to gain global influence.<sup>14</sup>

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In order to compete more actively with American values and policies, Communist Party propaganda chief Li Chang-Chun recently explained Beijing's evolving strategy to China Central Television executives this way: "Whichever nation's communications capacity is strongest, it is that nation whose culture will spread far and wide ... with the most power to influence the world."<sup>15</sup> Public diplomacy is thus Chinese "smart power" strategically deployed. Portraying the Western economic model as

flawed enables China to promote its form of state capitalism, known as the Beijing Consensus, as the way of the future. And its message, delivered without a lecture about democratic reforms or privatization, is resonating in Africa, Latin America, and Asia in countries that are seeking China's investment and trade.

**Broadcasting.** The reach of China's media is a key element of this global strategy and thus a growing challenge to Western media dominance. The Chinese have long argued for a new world information order, including a United Nations body to govern Internet and media policy. The head of the Xinhua news agency, Li Congjun, wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* last year that:

The rules governing the international media order lag behind the times, especially compared to changes in politics and economics. The gap is seen, first and foremost, in the extremely uneven pattern of international communication. The flow of information is basically one-way: from West to East, North to South, and from developed to developing countries.<sup>16</sup>

But the Chinese have a problem: A free society can produce as much media as the market can sustain, but a planned economy will produce only as much media as the state will fund.

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11. Richard Wike, "From Hyperpower to Declining Power: Changing Global Perceptions of the U.S. in the Post-Sept. 11 Era," Pew Research Center, Global Attitudes Project, September 7, 2011, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/09/07/from-hyperpower-to-declining-power/> (accessed May 23, 2012).
  12. Peter Ford, "Beijing Launching a 'Chinese CNN' to Burnish Image Abroad," *Christian Science Monitor*, February 5, 2009, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2009/0205/p01s01-woap.html> (accessed March 30, 2010).
  13. Pew Research Center, *China Seen Overtaking U.S. as Global Superpower*.
  14. Stefan Halper, *The Beijing Consensus: How China's Authoritarian Model Will Dominate the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), p. 11.
  15. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
  16. Li Congjun, "Toward a New World Media Order," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 1, 2011, [http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704816604576335563624853594.html?mod=ITP\\_opinion\\_0statement%20in%20the%20Wall%20Street%20Journal](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704816604576335563624853594.html?mod=ITP_opinion_0statement%20in%20the%20Wall%20Street%20Journal) (accessed May 23, 2012).
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In 2009, the *South China Morning Post* reported that Beijing pledged \$6.8 billion annually for a new “global media drive” and the creation of a network of overseas bureaus that would show the face of modern China to the world.<sup>17</sup> The United States is a key market for this media drive.

Several initiatives are part of this global media drive. A new global news service produced by the China Network Corporation (CNC) will be available via satellite, cable, Internet, and cell phone; its content will include news, business, and life-style programming. According to its president, it will offer “an alternative source of information for a global audience and aims to promote peace and development by interpreting the world in a global perspective.” The service has reportedly been picked up by over 700 broadcasters around the world.<sup>18</sup> In August 2011, it added two channels in Virginia, gaining access to the most influential U.S. market of opinion makers in Washington, D.C.

China is also acquiring radio stations along the U.S.–Mexico border with the intent to broadcast Spanish-language programs to Mexico. Additionally, China’s decade-old, government-run English-language channel, CCTV-9, has received a

face-lift and is now known as CCTV News. Already broadcasting in English, Russian, Arabic, Chinese, French, and Spanish, it boasts 83.8 million viewers in 137 nations.<sup>19</sup>

Shortwave radio is particularly useful for reaching the developing world, especially in Africa and less-developed parts of China where there is little access to television, computers, or cell phones. China Radio International has steadily increased its shortwave frequencies even as those of U.S. broadcasting entities have declined. In 2000, China had 152 shortwave frequencies; the United States had 263. By 2009, the number of Chinese frequencies had grown to 293, while the number in the United States had declined to 205.<sup>20</sup> Continental Electronics, the only U.S. firm that still produces shortwave transmitters, reports that its major customers are abroad, among them the governments of Malaysia, pre-conflict Libya, and China—all of which are investing heavily in digital shortwave technology.<sup>21</sup>

**Print Media.** The Chinese media offensive extends beyond the airwaves. Xinhua, the Chinese news agency, is expanding globally in an attempt to rival Western news media. Xinhua takes orders from the

Communist Party’s publicity department and is one of China’s long-standing state media assets. The closeness of the relationship between Xinhua and the Communist Party is demonstrated by the fact that its offices in Hong Kong served as a de facto Chinese embassy before the British return of Hong Kong to China in 1997. Xinhua’s new office space in New York’s Times Square is the most visible symbol of China’s determination to enter the U.S. media market.<sup>22</sup>

The goal of the *China Global Times*, one of China’s main newspapers, is to “better convey a good image of China to the world.”<sup>23</sup> Launched in 1993 in English and Chinese, the *Times* has a circulation of more than 1 million worldwide.

Even larger is the *Chinese People’s Daily*, which began publishing in 1948; it has a circulation of 3 million and publishes in seven languages. The *Daily* launched an online edition in 1997 and made it available in English in 1998. The *Chinese People’s Daily* publishes 10 other newspapers under its umbrella—*People’s Daily Overseas Edition*, *East China News*, *South China News*, *Market Daily*, *International Financial Daily*, *Jiangnan Times*, *Global Times*, *Securities Times*, *Health Times*, *Satire and Humor*—and monthly magazines

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17. Stefan Halper, “Red Capitalism: Perceived American Decline Has Encouraged China’s Aggressive Posture in the Region,” University of Sydney, United States Studies Centre, *American Review*, December 2011, <http://americanreviewmag.com/stories/Red-capitalism> (accessed May 23, 2012).
  18. “CCTV Launches International Video News Service,” *China Daily*, May 25, 2011, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-05/25/content\\_12579937.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-05/25/content_12579937.htm) (accessed May 23, 2012).
  19. Wu and Chen, “Beijing in 45b Yuan Global Media Drive.”
  20. Helle Dale, “China Takes a Page from U.S. Playbook,” The Heritage Foundation, The Foundry, September 24, 2011, <http://blog.heritage.org/2010/09/24/china-takes-a-page-from-u-s-playbook/>.
  21. Huchen Zhang, Dan Dickey, and David S. Jackson, “Radio Silence in China: VOA Abandons the Airwaves,” Heritage Foundation Lecture No. 1195, September 8, 2011, <http://www.heritage.org/research/lecture/2011/09/radio-silence-in-china-voa-abandons-the-airwaves>.
  22. Anton Troianovski, “China Agency Nears Times Square,” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 30, 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704334604575339281420753918.html> (accessed May 23, 2012).
  23. Gordon G. Chang, “Beijing’s Propaganda Goes Global,” *Forbes*, May 6, 2009, <http://www.forbes.com/2009/05/05/global-times-beijing-cctv-peoples-daily-opinions-columnists-xinhua.html> (accessed May 23, 2012).

that include *The Earth, News Front, Listed Companies, Times Trend, and People Forum*.

*China Daily*, published since 1981, launched a Boston edition last November and is already available in eight other markets in the United States, including New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. It has a reported U.S. circulation of 150,000. Teresa Cheong, the marketing coordinator for *Sampan*, an unrelated bimonthly Chinese- and English-language paper in Boston, called *China Daily* “a public relations tool, and part of the propaganda to promote China the way they [the Chinese government] want it.” “Most of the news they [the paper’s reporters] cover,” she explained, consists of “boasting for the Chinese government.”<sup>24</sup>

To infiltrate the U.S. market further, a Chinese investor group tried to buy *Newsweek* magazine in 2010. That bid failed, but one investor, an editor at the Chinese *Southern Weekly*, explained the bid this way: “With nine-language versions, *Newsweek*’s platform with global communication resources and influence is in line with our pursuits.”<sup>25</sup>

Central to all of these efforts is China’s policy of staffing media outlets with Chinese reporters. In 2010, the State Department granted 650 visas to journalists working

for Chinese state media outlets in the United States. Only two American journalists working for the Broadcasting Board of Governors received visas to work in China.<sup>26</sup>

**Cultural Diplomacy.** China is also escalating cultural outreach. It does so largely through Confucius Institutes, nonprofit public institutions that aim to teach and promote Chinese language and culture around the world. Confucius Institute headquarters are in Beijing.<sup>27</sup> There are over 300 Confucius Institutes and a similar number of smaller Confucius Classrooms in over 90 countries.<sup>28</sup> It is significant that 71 of these institutes are in the United States, compared with only five American Centers in all of China.<sup>29</sup>

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**THE MARKETING COORDINATOR FOR SAMPAN, A BIMONTHLY CHINESE- AND ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PAPER IN BOSTON, CALLED CHINA DAILY “A PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOL, AND PART OF THE PROPAGANDA TO PROMOTE CHINA THE WAY THEY [THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT] WANT IT.”**

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During a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing in February 2010, ranking member Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN) asked Secretary of

State Hillary Clinton about China’s ability to open Confucius Institutes or Classrooms in the United States (such as at the University of Minnesota), whereas the United States has so few centers in China to promote American culture. Clinton responded: “On the Confucius centers, the Chinese government provides each center with a million dollars to launch, plus they cover operating expenses that exceed \$200,000 per year. We don’t have that kind of money in the budget.”<sup>30</sup>

In an effort to fix the discrepancy, the U.S. Department of State on May 17 issued a guidance directive to universities that sponsor Confucius Institutes. It stated that any academics at university-based institutes who are teaching at the elementary- and secondary-school levels are violating the terms of their visas and must leave at the end of the current school term in June. The Confucius Institutes also were asked to obtain separate U.S. accreditation. These very reasonable steps were opposed both by the universities and by the Chinese government and less than two weeks later were reversed by the Department of State.<sup>31</sup>

**People-to-People Programs.**

In many respects, the Chinese have learned about the benefits of people-to-people exchanges from the United States. Like the U.S. Peace Corps, the

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24. Johnny Diaz, “Chinese Newspaper Makes a Push in Boston,” Boston.com, November 15, 2011.

25. Bill Bishop, “Chinese Investors Tried to Buy Newsweek,” *Forbes*, June 17, 2011.

26. Press release, “Rep. Rohrabacher Introduces Bill to Counter Communist Chinese State Media Advantage in the U.S.,” Office of Congressman Dana Rohrabacher, September 13, 2011, <http://rohrabacher.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=259836> (accessed May 23, 2012).

27. Confucius Institute Online, “About Us,” [http://about.chinese.cn/en/node\\_4221.htm](http://about.chinese.cn/en/node_4221.htm) (accessed May 31, 2012).

28. Confucius Institutes, “Introduction to the Confucius Institutes,” [http://college.chinese.cn/en/article/2009-08/29/content\\_22308.htm](http://college.chinese.cn/en/article/2009-08/29/content_22308.htm) (accessed June 6, 2012).

29. Report, *Another U.S. Deficit—China and America—Public Diplomacy in the Age of the Internet*, Minority Staff, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, February 15, 2011, p. 7, <http://foreign.senate.gov/download/?id=208AEC06-D0CF-4EBD-9FCB-BB3CF4AA9181> (accessed June 1, 2012).

30. Nicholas Kralev, “China 60, U.S. 0: Culture Centers in Other’s Country,” *The Washington Times*, April, 8, 2010.

31. “Confucius Institutes Welcome US Decision,” Xinhua, May 27, 2012.



China Young Volunteers Association sends young Chinese to engage in development projects in such China-friendly countries as Laos, Ethiopia, and Burma.

Some 140,000 Chinese exchange students study at American institutions of higher learning each year, while only 13,000 American students study in China.<sup>32</sup> According to a recent U.S.–China Commission report, China uses a private exchange program for retired U.S. and Chinese generals called the Sanya Initiative to influence U.S. government decisions and U.S. foreign policy and to “downplay Beijing’s large-scale military buildup.”<sup>33</sup> That report also stated that “Institutions and persons affiliated with [People’s Liberation Army] military intelligence entities play a prominent role in the Sanya Initiative,” which was launched in 2008 with support from retired Admiral Bill Owens, former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the China Association for International Friendly Contact, a Chinese military front organization.<sup>34</sup>

China’s emphasis on people-to-people diplomacy includes its own embassy staff. Whereas most U.S. embassy personnel rotate every two or three years, Chinese embassy personnel are encouraged to spend time

in and return to postings in high-priority countries, such as Cambodia or Burma, not only to fine-tune their expertise and language skills, but also to develop their networks of political and intellectual elites. When they advance to the level of ambassadorship, they are considerably more prepared than their U.S. counterparts, who are often political appointees.

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**IN THE PAST, PEOPLE LIVING THROUGHOUT ASIA HEARD ABOUT THE U.S. THROUGH BROADCASTS FROM THE VOICE OF AMERICA OR OTHER WESTERN MEDIA SOURCES WHOSE FOREIGN BUREAUS ARE NOW CLOSED DUE TO COST-CUTTING MEASURES. CHINA’S STATE MEDIA AND THEIR SUBSIDIARIES ARE EAGER TO FILL THE GAP.**

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All of this activity by Beijing presents a formidable public diplomacy challenge for the United States and indeed the West. In the past, people living throughout Asia heard about the U.S. through broadcasts from the Voice of America or other Western media sources whose foreign bureaus are now closed due to cost-cutting measures. China’s state media and

their subsidiaries are eager to fill the gap.

Several Members of Congress sought to level the playing field in 2011. Representatives Dana Rohrabacher (R–CA), Randy Forbes (R–VA), and Ted Poe (R–TX) introduced H.R. 2899, the Chinese Media Reciprocity Act of 2011,<sup>35</sup> as an amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act. H.R. 2899 would mandate that the Department of State issue only as many visas to Chinese state media workers as China issues to American journalists working for the BBG. If not, the State Department would have to revoke 648 I-visas.<sup>36</sup> The bill was an attempt to offset what Institute of World Politics founder John Lenczowski calls China’s “full spectrum diplomacy,”<sup>37</sup> but as the above examples indicate, the challenge is far greater than visa reform.

**Russia: Anti-Americanism Disguised as Public Diplomacy**

Since the end of the Soviet era, and especially after the administration of Boris Yeltsin (1991–1999), Russian leaders have viewed the purpose of soft power much as their predecessors did: to extend Russia’s influence and constrain America’s. When the Soviet Union collapsed,

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32. Report, *Another U.S. Deficit*.

33. Bill Gertz, “Chinese Communists Influence U.S. Policy through Ex-Military Officials,” *The Washington Free Beacon*, February 6, 2012.

34. *Ibid.*

35. H.R. 2899, Chinese Media Reciprocity Act of 2011, 112th Cong., 1st Sess., September 12, 2011, <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/112/hr2899/text> (accessed June 1, 2012).

36. According to Congressman Rohrabacher, “H.R. 2899 would...ensure open and free journalism access in China by enforcing the established reciprocal relationship between the number of visas issued to state media workers from each country. The bill also requires revocation of a sufficient number of I visas issued to Chinese state media workers 30 days after its enactment in order to reach parity with the number of visas issued by China for BBG employees seeking entry to China.” Press release, “Rep. Rohrabacher Introduces Bill to Counter Communist Chinese State Media Advantage in the U.S.” See also Helle Dale, “Leveling the Playing Field in the U.S.–China Media Battle,” *The Heritage Foundation, The Foundry*, September 23, 2011, <http://blog.heritage.org/2011/09/23/leveling-the-playing-field-in-the-u-s-china-media-battle/>.

37. John Lenczowski, *Full Spectrum Diplomacy and Grand Strategy: Reforming the Structure and Culture of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Lexington Books, 2011).

Russians had mostly positive feelings toward the United States and the West. In order to counter this attitude and promote Russia's resurgence against the West, the government under President Vladimir Putin began to re-establish Russia's domination of news and communication outlets. This included promoting English, Spanish, and Arabic global TV channels of RT (formerly Russia Today), as well as language and cultural foundations through the *Ruski Mir* (Russian World) foundation and the Russian Orthodox Church's Moscow Patriarchate, which is active outside of Russia.

Russia is investing heavily in soft-power tools to promote its energy and economic policies. The Russian government allocated \$1.4 billion for international propaganda in FY 2010,<sup>38</sup> increasing that budget by 33 percent from FY 2009.<sup>39</sup>

**Domestic Media Control.** With increasing control of most popular print, radio, and television outlets, the Kremlin is able not only to project a patriotic image of a unified Russia (unfortunately, one led by former KGB officers), but also to intimidate domestic opposition and neighboring states. Its priority is to denigrate America, disparage other perceived enemies of its interests such as Estonia and Georgia, and

promote the notion of a multipolar world to counterbalance U.S. dominance.

Russia's premier soft-power instrument is its global television empire led by RT, its flagship news network. RT was launched in 2005 with the stated objective to "improve Russia's image around the world." Although occasionally giving viewers a positive perspective on Russia, the vast majority of RT's content is critical of the United States, Western Europe, NATO, Israel, and the so-called Anglo-American-dominated global economic order.

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**WITH INCREASING CONTROL OF MOST POPULAR PRINT, RADIO, AND TELEVISION OUTLETS, THE KREMLIN IS ABLE NOT ONLY TO PROJECT A PATRIOTIC IMAGE OF A UNIFIED RUSSIA, BUT ALSO TO INTIMIDATE DOMESTIC OPPOSITION AND NEIGHBORING STATES.**

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Frequent RT commentators include Americans who are generally hostile to U.S. policies, such as convicted criminal Lyndon LaRouche. The newest addition to the RT lineup is WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who, despite facing a warrant for arrest, was given his own

talk show. The channel has received global condemnation for airing such controversial programming as a "documentary" alleging that the U.S. government, not al-Qaeda terrorists, orchestrated the 9/11 attacks.<sup>40</sup> RT's organization includes three separate satellite channels, available on cable networks in Washington, D.C., in English, Spanish, and Arabic; a website with live streams of these channels; a Twitter feed; and a popular YouTube channel that had received over 200 million hits by December 2010.<sup>41</sup> Virtually all of RT's content is available for free.

RT claims that it is one of the most watched global news channels in major world cities, including Washington and New York.<sup>42</sup> Its 24-hour coverage of the Moscow Domodedovo Airport terrorist attack was nominated for best documentary at the 2011 Monte Carlo TV Festival and has received worldwide acclaim.<sup>43</sup> In spite of its frequently shrill tone, RT's attempts to reach U.S. and global audiences with anti-American agenda-driven news and commentary could tarnish America's image where it previously was favorable.

The budgets of all Russian-based global news outlets have grown significantly since the early 2000s. RT's budget alone grew from \$30 million

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38. Harding, "Russia Today Launches First UK Ad Blitz."

39. Evgeny Morozov, "The Kremlin's Quest for Pravda 2.0," *Foreign Policy*, May 9, 2009, [http://neteffect.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/05/09/kremlins\\_quest\\_for\\_pravda\\_20](http://neteffect.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/05/09/kremlins_quest_for_pravda_20) (May 23, 2012).

40. "Who Was Involved in 9/11? Documentary Reveals Shocking Facts," RT, November 28, 2009, <http://rt.com/news/who-was-involved-in-911-documentary-reveals-shocking-facts/> (May 23, 2012).

41. "RT Hits 200 Million on Youtube," RT, December 23, 2010, <http://rt.com/about/pressoffice/rt-hits-200-million-youtube/> (May 24, 2012).

42. "RT Watched More than Other Major International News Channels in Major Cities," RT, January 9, 2011, <http://rt.com/about/pressoffice/rt-watched-major-international-news-channels-major-u-s-cities/> (accessed May 24, 2012).

43. "RT in Final of Monte Carlo TV Festival," RT.com, May 17, 2011, <http://rt.com/about/pressoffice/rt-in-final-of-monte-carlo-tv-festival/> (accessed March 22, 2012).

in 2005 to around \$150 million in 2008.<sup>44</sup> Experts estimate that it now exceeds \$200 million. As Russia's oil revenues increase, these and other media budgets will likely also continue to increase.

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**THE BUDGETS OF ALL RUSSIAN-BASED GLOBAL NEWS OUTLETS HAVE GROWN SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE THE EARLY 2000s.**

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The Russian counterpart to Voice of America is Voice of Russia, which has been broadcasting since 1922. It broadcasts in 39 languages, including English, Russian, French, Arabic, Spanish, German, and Chinese, in 160 countries. Its content is available in 33 languages online.

Russia also pays major American and European newspapers, such as *The Washington Post*, the U.K.'s *Daily Telegraph*, and Italy's *La Repubblica*, to include special advertising supplements with titles such as "Russia Behind the Headlines"<sup>45</sup> or "Russia Now."<sup>46</sup> The supplements closely resemble news articles, appearing to be objective journalism rather than paid pro-Russian pieces.

*The New York Times* included a similar eight-page advertising supplement in full color on February 8, 2012, titled "Russia: Beyond the Headlines." Below that title is a disclaimer in small type: "This special advertising feature is sponsored and was written by *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (Russia) and did not involve

the reporting or editing staff of *The New York Times*." *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* is the leading Russian daily paper. According to the "Russia: Beyond the Headlines" (RBTH) website:<sup>47</sup>

Rossiyskaya Gazeta ([www.rg.ru](http://www.rg.ru)) is the Russian government's paper of record and provides the official publication of all laws, decrees and official statements of state bodies. In addition to its official functions, Rossiyskaya Gazeta is also a general-interest daily newspaper offering regular coverage of news and events along with opinion and analysis.

Since 2007, Russia Beyond the Headlines has published monthly supplements about modern Russia in leading global media. Currently, supplements are published in 17 international newspapers....

These supplements include:

- "Russia Now" in *The Washington Post* (United States)
- "Russia Beyond the Headlines" in *The New York Times* (United States)
- "Russia Now" in *The Daily Telegraph* (UK)
- "La Russie d'Aujourd'hui" in *Le Figaro* (France)

- "Russia & India Business Report" in *The Economic Times* (India)
- "Gazeta Russa" in *Folha de São Paulo* (Brazil)
- "Rusia Hoy" in *La Nacion* (Argentina)
- "Russia NOW" in *The Mainichi Shimbun* (Japan)
- "Russia and Greater China" in *South China Morning Post* (China, Hong Kong SAR)

The base for much of Russia's global media content is its wire news agency, RIA Novosti. During the Soviet era, RIA Novosti often provided cover for clandestine political activities. Unlike the Associated Press or Reuters, RIA Novosti is state owned. It is the main source of news and information for Russian and international media outlets. Other Russian news agencies, such as the venerable ITAR-TASS and Interfax, are either state owned or closely connected to the government.

**Swaying the Opinions of the Russian Diaspora.** For the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian diaspora is no longer viewed as necessarily anti-Communist or hostile to the Kremlin. Moscow now actively seeks to curry favor with its emigrants and make them its emissaries. Using its embassies, government websites, and a network of establishments that promote

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44. Nikolaus von Twickel, "Russia Today Courts Viewers with Controversy," *The Moscow Times*, March 23, 2010, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-today-courts-viewers-with-controversy/401888.html> (May 24, 2012).

45. See, for example, "What Russian Papers Say: Russian Press—Behind the Headlines," RIA Novosti, May 24, 2012, <http://en.rian.ru/papers/20120524/173650192.html> (accessed May 31, 2012).

46. Inna Leonova, "Revising the Moscow in Our Minds," "Russia Now" advertising supplement, *The Washington Post*, December 16, 2011, <http://russianow.washingtonpost.com/> (accessed May 31, 2012).

47. "Russia Beyond the Headlines," Website, <http://rbth.ru/about> (accessed June 6, 2012).

Russian language and culture, its efforts to use public diplomacy to bring the Russian diaspora back into the Russian world are growing. Intelligence experts indicate, however, that since the days of the USSR, such efforts have been closely linked to Russia's intelligence activities, including talent-spotting, recruitment, and operations of human intelligence (HUMINT) assets.

Some Western analysts point out that even the Russian Orthodox Church is being used as cover for funneling extensive government funds to and garnering influence with the diaspora. Church leaders are encouraging expatriate Russians to "act" more Russian while living abroad and discouraging them from adopting the cultural mores, language, and political beliefs of their host countries.<sup>48</sup> Metropolitan Kirill, the current patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, stated in 2006 that Russians all over the world "should oppose Western civilization in its assertion of the universality of the Western tradition."<sup>49</sup> During the Soviet era, the leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church were especially active abroad and often acted as agents and officers of the First Chief Directorate, the foreign operations arm of the KGB.<sup>50</sup>

Russia is also monitoring and manipulating its domestic social media. The government leadership

understands that social networking is one of the freest modes of exchange between Russians and the outside world, and it does not want to lose control of the message that Russia is a great power. Organizations that track global Internet freedom have documented growing intimidation from Moscow of those who are critical of the Kremlin online.<sup>51</sup>

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**SOME WESTERN ANALYSTS POINT OUT THAT EVEN THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IS BEING USED AS COVER FOR FUNNELING EXTENSIVE GOVERNMENT FUNDS TO AND GARNERING INFLUENCE WITH THE RUSSIAN DIASPORA.**

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Without a strategy to counteract this increasingly aggressive campaign to win hearts and minds, the United States will continue to find its own messages poorly received by Russians and its interests undermined.

**Iran: Nothing Soft About "Soft Power"**

Meeting with Iranian diplomats on March 3, 2010, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei spoke of "powerful diplomacy." Claiming that Iran *invented* the concept of public diplomacy under Ayatollah

Khomeini, he also stated that "public diplomacy is a novelty for the Islamic Republic and should be better acknowledged."<sup>52</sup> The fact that a hostile and belligerent Iran considers public diplomacy important says a good deal about Tehran's ambitions. "As Iran sees it," journalist and senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy Mehdi Khalaji has stated, "the formation of the Islamic Republic is the first step in dominance of the entire world."<sup>53</sup>

For the Iranian regime, "public diplomacy" is a tool for securing the interests of the ruling elite and guarding against ideas that would undermine them—concepts like self-governance, individual rights, freedom of speech, and religious freedom. Iran's public diplomacy is directed both inwardly, at its own people, and outwardly, to challenge the United States while extending Iran's own influence with its Arab neighbors.<sup>54</sup>

Iranian soft power has four purposes: (1) reputation and image management; (2) economic leverage (such as threatening to cut off its oil supplies); (3) the export of revolutionary Islamism through terrorist organizations, chiefly Hezbollah; and (4) propaganda. Iran competes for hearts and minds, particularly in Iraq, through its Arabic-language news and entertainment broadcasts.<sup>55</sup>

Exactly how much Tehran spends on international broadcasting is

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48. Andis Kudors, "'Russian World'—Russia's Soft Power Approach to Compatriots Policy," *Russian Analytical Digest*, Vol. 81, No. 10 (June 16, 2010), pp. 2-3.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

50. Keith Armes, "Chekists in Cassocks: The Orthodox Church and the KGB," *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Fall 1993-1994), pp. 72-83.

51. Damir Gainutdinov and Pavel Chikov, "Threats to Internet Freedom in Russia, 2008-2011," AGORA Association, June 2011, [http://www.openinform.ru/fs/j\\_photos/openinform\\_314.pdf](http://www.openinform.ru/fs/j_photos/openinform_314.pdf) (accessed May 24, 2012).

52. Mehdi Khalaji, "State Propaganda: A Blunt Knife?" *Tehran Review*, undated post, <http://tehranreview.net/articles/1594> (accessed May 24, 2012).

53. *Ibid.*

54. Michael Eisenstadt, "The Iran Primer: The Limits of Iran's Soft Power," U.S. Institute of Peace, March 22, 2011, <http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/all/Michael%20Eisenstadt> (accessed May 24, 2012).

55. *Ibid.*

difficult to quantify. Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) is a giant enterprise whose reach is matched by its high production quality. IRIB broadcasts in 28 languages over 13 international channels reaching 45 countries, including the United States.<sup>56</sup> Where the U.S. government has one Middle Eastern news channel, Al Hurra, IRIB has four and broadcasts in English, in Arabic to Iraq and Lebanon, in most Central Asian languages to Eurasia, and in Farsi to Iranians around the world.

Yet IRIB does not appear to be changing many minds, not even in Iraq. According to Michael Eisenstadt of the U.S. Institute of Peace, since 2003 polling data “has consistently shown that Iraqis of all stripes (including Shiites) distrust Iran and do not consider its form of governance a viable model for Iraq.” Nevertheless, those results help to “explain why Tehran will continue to lean heavily on soft power, its security services, and covert action to project influence in Iraq.”<sup>57</sup> The recently released 2011 U.S. Department of State Country Report on Iran notes:

As part of its crackdown, the government increased its oppression of media and the arts, arresting and imprisoning dozens of journalists, bloggers, poets, actors, filmmakers, and

artists throughout the year. The government’s suppression and intimidation of voices of opposition continued at a rapid pace at year’s end.<sup>58</sup>

Like other authoritarian countries, Iran invests considerable resources in controlling the flow of information over the Internet. As press freedom eroded in Iran during the 1990s, the Internet became a popular outlet for young people. In order to rein in the ability of Iranians to criticize the government online, Iran’s Communication and Information Minister, Reza Taqipour Anvari, announced plans for an all-Iranian Intranet—and to shut down access to the regular Internet—in July 2011. The national Iranian search engine *Ya Haq* (“Oh, Just One,” a reference to Allah) debuted in early 2012. The purported aim is to “better manage national emails and information gathering within the country and improve security.”<sup>59</sup>

The position of the Iranian government on the Internet has evolved dramatically over the past decade. Initially, according to Freedom House’s *Freedom on the Net 2011*, Tehran regarded the Internet as a catalyst for economic and scientific development. It was first introduced by the government in the 1990s, and under President Mohammad

Khatami, the government invested heavily in Internet infrastructure, connecting cities with fiber-optic cables. By 2000, there were 625,000 Internet users in Iran. Five years later, there were several million.<sup>60</sup> Today, one-third of Iran’s 75 million population has access to the Internet, and Iran has one of the most active Internet communities in the Middle East, excelling in poetry, cultural, and literary blogs.

In 2001, Supreme Leader Khamenei and the High Council for Cultural Revolution began to monitor and restrict online content, perceiving online activism to be a political threat. After the June 2009 presidential election—which followed large pro-democracy demonstrations organized primarily through Twitter messages—Internet censorship went into high gear with the creation of the Iranian Cyber Army. The 2011 Freedom House report, in ranking Iran as “not free,” cited rampant website blocking, political censorship, and arrests of bloggers and Internet users.<sup>61</sup>

### **New Competitors: EU Public Diplomacy Targets U.S. Policies**

Despite the fact that Europeans share many American values, between 2007 and 2009, the European Union spent more than

56. Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, “About Us: IRIB at a Glance,” <http://www.irib.ir/English/AboutUs/index.php> (accessed May 24, 2012).

57. Eisenstadt, “The Iran Primer: The Limits of Iran’s Soft Power.”

58. U.S. Department of State, “Iran,” *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011*, released May 24, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/186637.pdf> (accessed June 6, 2012).

59. “Iran Tries to Exit Information Superhighway,” Voice of America, August 23, 2011, <http://www.voanews.com/policy/editorials/middle-east/Iran-Tries-To-Exit-Information-Superhighway--128288128.html> (accessed May 24, 2012).

60. “Iran,” *Freedom on the Net 2011*, Freedom House, April 11, 2011, p. 187, [http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline\\_images/Iran\\_FOTN2011.pdf](http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline_images/Iran_FOTN2011.pdf) (accessed May 24, 2012).

61. Ibid.

\$1.2 billion on public diplomacy measures in the United States.<sup>62</sup> Though much of this funding was administered by the U.S.-based World Bank and United Nations, large amounts were funneled through universities and nonprofit organizations to advance policies that the U.S. government and many Americans do not support.

Strong congressional opposition to lifting the EU ban on arms sales to China in 2005 spurred a major EU public diplomacy campaign in Washington, D.C., for instance. Since then, the EU has opened a European Parliament Liaison Office (to engage the U.S. Congress) in Washington, which complements the European Union's delegation to the United States. To explain EU positions to Americans, the EU delegation publishes two bimonthly glossy newsletters—*EU Focus* and *EU Insight*—that are inserted in popular American newspapers and journals, such as *Foreign Affairs*.<sup>63</sup>

Money from the EU does not just reach some of America's wealthiest academic institutions via multi-million-dollar research grants and contracts to promote a positive view of European integration. It also goes to American nongovernmental organizations, such as the Carter Center, to promote international controls on so-called greenhouse-gas emissions or to condemn the U.S. death penalty, among the many issues on the European political agenda. In 2009, the European Commission provided \$2.8 million to 11 U.S. public policy research institutions for projects

addressing such issues as closing the Guantanamo Bay detention facility and making climate change a priority in underprivileged U.S. communities.<sup>64</sup>

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**BETWEEN 2007 AND 2009, THE EUROPEAN UNION SPENT MORE THAN \$1.2 BILLION ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY MEASURES IN THE UNITED STATES. LARGE AMOUNTS WERE FUNNELED THROUGH UNIVERSITIES AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS TO ADVANCE POLICIES THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AND MANY AMERICANS DO NOT SUPPORT.**

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### **What the United States Should Do**

Governments around the world understand the need to manage their images abroad and present their points of view. Some are now competing directly with the United States when it comes to their strategic investment in public diplomacy, a field the U.S. officially recognized in 1942 when President Franklin Roosevelt established the Office of War Information, which later became the U.S. Information Agency.

Most notably, the common theme in the public diplomacy spending initiatives of China, Russia, Iran—and even the European Union—is to challenge American leadership and U.S. policies. This should not come as a surprise. What is surprising is that there is no component of current

U.S. public diplomacy programming that monitors and analyzes such efforts, particularly those aimed directly at American citizens, such as the growing foreign broadcasting enterprises operating in the United States. The “war of ideas” will likely continue regardless of U.S. troop withdrawals from Afghanistan or the Administration's attempts to engage hostile governments.

The BBG's new strategic plan aims to shift U.S. international broadcasting toward greater reliance on digital media and satellite TV, but language services and air time at the Voice of America and on U.S. surrogate radio stations such as Radio Free Europe and Radio Marti are being reduced. Meanwhile, America's competitors for the hearts and minds of people around the world are increasing their presence on American radio and television.

Americans can readily view programs on RT, China's CCTV, Al Jazeera, BBC America, and many other foreign channels. Yet most Americans do not have access to the public diplomacy programs broadcast by their own government, which is perhaps one of the reasons Americans often find it hard to explain U.S. policies to each other, let alone to foreigners.

The Administration and Congress should therefore work together to:

- **Create a Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC)** to collect and analyze data on the public diplomacy investments and activities

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62. Sally McNamara, “Swaying American Opinions: Congress Should Investigate EU Advocacy in the United States,” Heritage Foundation *Special Report* No. 92, May 16, 2011, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/05/swaying-american-opinions-congress-should-investigate-eu-advocacy-in-the-united-states>.

63. European Union External Action, “EU Focus and EU Insight,” <http://www.eurunion.org/eu/EU-Focus-and-EU-Insight/EU-Focus-and-EU-Insight.html> (accessed May 24, 2012).

64. European Commission, “Financial Transparency System,” [http://ec.europa.eu/beneficiaries/fts/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/beneficiaries/fts/index_en.htm) (accessed May 24, 2012).

of China, Russia, Iran, and other countries challenging U.S. policies, values, and leadership.<sup>65</sup>

- **Use the findings of this research to craft presidential policy directives on public diplomacy** modeled on the presidential counterterrorism communication directive issued in September 2011.<sup>66</sup> Such directives should outline a national strategy that coordinates the work of relevant government agencies.
- **Task the State Department to collect best public diplomacy practices** from its many embassies and from other countries for the purpose of improving U.S. public diplomacy programs.
- **Ensure visa parity for U.S. journalists and public access for U.S. broadcasters** with China and other states whose public diplomacy outreach counters U.S. policies and leadership. Condition Russia's RT access to U.S. broadcasting frequencies in America on equal access in Russia for the Voice of America and Radio Liberty.
- **Continue the expansion of the Visa Waiver Program** to strengthen U.S. friendships and alliances through people-to-people encounters, greater tourism, and trade.
- **Fill vacant public diplomacy leadership positions promptly.** The U.S. government needs

officials who are accountable for carrying out a new public diplomacy strategy. The position of Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy, filled in April after a months-long hiatus, has been vacant for long stretches of time since its creation. The Broadcasting Board of Governors is currently operating with most of its members still serving on expired terms.

- **Increase oversight of U.S. public diplomacy and broadcasting activities** to ensure consistency with U.S. foreign policies and national interests. Decisions such as the one to end broadcasting to China appear to have been made as a concession to China without U.S. interests in mind.
- **Hire only broadcasting and supervisory personnel with relevant experience and a demonstrated commitment to the purpose and mission of U.S. international broadcasting to work at the VOA, Radio Liberty, or other U.S. government broadcasters.** Stop the practice of hiring citizens of countries with hostile governments, adherents of radical ideologies, or former employees of state-run radio and TV channels to fill U.S. broadcasting management and supervisory jobs. Make U.S. citizenship, or green card status, or asylum application a requirement for all broadcasting supervisory/management jobs in U.S. taxpayer-funded international broadcasting.

- **Allow high-level officials in U.S. embassies to challenge foreign disinformation on embassy websites.** A uniform standard and rapid-response guidance are needed to ensure that those public diplomacy responses support U.S. policy. The State Department's digital rapid-response team in the Bureau of Public Diplomacy was established to serve this purpose, but it is focused more narrowly on counterterrorism communication.
- **Reform the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 (the Smith-Mundt Act)** to allow the State Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors to post public diplomacy publications and broadcasts on U.S. government websites. This would not only help to improve Americans' understanding of U.S. policy, but also enable better oversight.

## Conclusion

As the global threats facing the United States evolve—and as U.S. policies in response to those threats develop—the importance and complexity of public diplomacy grow along with them. To improve the performance of U.S. public diplomacy, especially under the constraints of tightening budgets, the U.S. government must become more nimble and better organized.

The last time the U.S. had a clear, overarching goal for public diplomacy was under President Ronald Reagan, for whom the battle for hearts and minds was second nature.

65. Helle C. Dale and Edwin J. Feulner, "Strategic Listening: How to Build Research Capacity Within the U.S. Government," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 2726, December 10, 2009, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2009/12/strategic-listening-how-to-build-research-capacity-within-the-us-government>.

66. "Executive Order 13584—Developing an Integrated Strategic Counterterrorism Communications Initiative," The White House, September 9, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/09/09/executive-order-13584-developing-integrated-strategic-counterterrorism-c> (accessed June 1, 2012).

If America is to remain the shining city on a hill for people around the world, a new era of U.S. public diplomacy must begin.

—**Helle C. Dale** is Senior Fellow in Public Diplomacy in the Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies, a division of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies; **Ariel Cohen, PhD**, is Senior Fellow for Russia and Eurasia in the Allison Center; and **Janice A. Smith** is Special Assistant and Policy Coordinator for the Vice President for Foreign and Defense Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation.