

Review Essay

Public Diplomacy during the Cold War

The Record and Its Implications

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Yale Richmond. Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003. 249 pp.

There is no single view of what ended the Cold War, only a multiplicity of sometimes contradictory explanations. As Mark Kramer noted in a previous issue of the *Journal of Cold War Studies*: “Despite the enormous significance of the Soviet collapse, Western scholars have not yet adequately explained why and how it occurred.”¹ To the extent that recent analyses have shown that Western influence on the internal evolution of the Soviet bloc was a factor, this finding may bear importantly on the new confrontation with radical elements in the Islamic world, despite the differences between this latest crisis and the Cold War.

The Cold War adversary was an ideology that had been hijacked by a state. Today’s adversary is an ideology hijacked from a religion by political and religious extremists. In both cases the United States, as the leading Western democracy, has had to face hostility enhanced by the adversary’s manipulation of other people’s cultural and ethnic differences. In *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War*, Yale Richmond shows how the United States was able to rely on public diplomacy to bridge such differences during the Cold War. This review essay begins with an assessment of Richmond’s book and then highlights the policy implications of the U.S. experience with public diplomacy during the Cold War. It then weighs the relevance of public diplomacy to the problems of today, especially to the crisis of relations with the Muslim world.

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In the introduction Richmond mentions some of the explanations that have been advanced for the demise of the Soviet Union: the U.S. military buildup

1. Mark Kramer, “The Collapse of the Soviet Union (Part 1): Introduction,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Winter 2003), p. 3.

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and “Star Wars,” economic mismanagement, the introduction of glasnost, and the impact of Western radio broadcasts. He offers his own “grain of truth” to the discussion, arguing that exposure to Western ideas was a significant factor:

that the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism were consequences of Soviet contacts and exchanges with the West, and with the United States in particular, over the thirty-five years that followed the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953. Moreover, those exchanges in culture, education, information, science and technology were conducted by the United States openly, for the most part, under agreements concluded with the Soviet government, and at a cost that was minuscule in comparison with U.S. expenditures for defense and intelligence over the same period of time. The result was an increase in Western influence among the people in Russia who count—the intelligentsia.

Richmond buttresses this argument ingeniously with profiles of some important Soviet officials during the perestroika period who had taken part in the U.S.-Soviet exchanges. For example, Aleksandr Yakovlev, a key aide to Mikhail Gorbachev in the drive for liberalization, was one of the earliest participants in the exchanges, spending a year as a graduate student at Columbia University, where he studied modern American history and politics. Richmond also traces the role of the scholarly exchanges in the other direction, through profiles of some of the American students and faculty who for more than three decades used the opportunity to become familiar with the Soviet Union at close hand. In many cases, inside and outside government, these specialists came to play significant roles in the evolution of U.S.-Soviet relations.

Richmond himself, as a retired officer of the United States Information Agency (USIA) who served in Moscow, is intimately familiar with the exchanges, many of which were administered directly by his agency. Not everyone who was on the Moscow scene shares his perspective: Jack Matlock, who served as U.S. ambassador in the years immediately prior to the Soviet collapse and later published an 836-page “autopsy” on the USSR, scants the role of foreign cultural influence.² In his lengthy book he devotes only a single sentence to the role of exchanges and information, giving exclusive weight in his analysis to the official contacts with Soviet representatives in which he and other diplomats played a salient role.³

2. Jack F. Matlock Jr., *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995).

3. *Ibid.*, p. 671.

The Exchange Agreement

The U.S.-Soviet exchanges were made possible by the “Agreement between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Exchanges in the Cultural, Technical, and Educational Fields,” signed on 27 January 1958. Richmond’s list of fields embraced by the agreement includes science and technology, agriculture, medicine and public health, radio and television, motion pictures, exhibitions, publications, government, youth, athletics, scholarly research, culture, and tourism. With periodic renewals, the agreement remained in force until the Soviet Union ceased to exist.

Opposition to the agreement existed on both sides. In the United States some worried that the Soviet government was using the program for espionage purposes. One of the first four Soviet citizens to take part in the exchanges at Columbia was Oleg Kalugin, a state security (KGB) officer who later rose to the rank of major-general and became head of the KGB’s counterintelligence operations. Richmond quotes from his interview with Roald Sagdeev, a former Soviet space scientist now at the University of Maryland (and married to Susan Eisenhower), who recalls his instructions when he attended a conference on nuclear energy: “learn a dollar’s worth of science and show a kopek’s worth in return.” (Richmond reports that on the U.S. side, by contrast, there was a high-level decision never to use the exchanges for intelligence purposes.)

In the Soviet Union officials worried about the impact of the exchanges on the public. One of their greatest concerns was a program of USIA-administered traveling exhibits that featured various aspects of American life and attracted large crowds not only in Moscow and Leningrad but in parts of the country that few Americans had ever visited, such as Irkutsk, Ufa, and Tselinograd. Each exhibit was staffed by young Russian-speaking Americans, mainly college students, who often received more attention than the exhibits themselves. The guides gave candid impromptu answers to visitors’ questions, which often touched on delicate political and social topics that had nothing to do with the theme of the exhibit. The popularity of the guides triggered countermeasures. Agents planted among the visitors asked provocative questions, and guides were subjected to unpleasant harassment when they were outside the exhibit premises. Some former exhibit guides are now senior American academics. The quid pro quo for the exhibits was American support for the staging of counterpart Soviet exhibits in U.S. cities. These displays usually failed to draw crowds comparable to those that viewed the American exhibits in the Soviet Union, but it was embarrassing for Soviet officials to complain about this.

The exhibit program reached millions of rank-and-file Soviet citizens, whereas other exchanges were narrower in focus, like the Pugwash and Dartmouth conferences aimed at averting nuclear war. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including professional groups (e.g., the American Bar Association and the American College of Cardiologists), academic associations, theaters, museums, Sister Cities International, sports associations, and other civil organizations, played an active role in exchanges within the overall framework of the bilateral agreement, with or without U.S. government support. These exchanges enabled many Soviet citizens, especially in the upper and middle reaches of society, to see the United States with their own eyes. Richmond singles out an exchange program between the American Council of Young Political Leaders (whose members were both Republicans and Democrats) and the Soviet Communist Youth League (Komsomol) as of special importance to the subsequent political development of the USSR, noting that the Komsomol “was the first official Soviet organization to be infected with the spirit of change.”

In the field of publishing there was one notable exchange that antedated the 1958 agreement and then became part of it. During World War II the U.S. and Soviet governments entered into a joint agreement for the Russian-language *Amerika*, a glossy illustrated magazine, and the English-language *Soviet Life*, of similar but less opulent format, to be distributed in the respective countries. By 1952, Richmond relates, Soviet efforts to obstruct the circulation of *Amerika* became so egregious that the U.S. government abandoned the venture. The improved climate after the death of Josif Stalin led to the resumption of *Amerika* in 1956, with the USIA as publisher. Richmond cites a newly declassified Soviet Politburo decree from 1956, which instructed officials on ways to sabotage distribution of the American publication.⁴ Despite the severe restrictions and obstacles, *Amerika* reached enough readers to make an impact, as evidenced by its high price on the black market.

Information Flow outside the Agreement

Not all of the information directed to the Soviet Union came under the bilateral exchange agreement. Richmond devotes a chapter to “Western voices,” the foreign radios that transmitted programs into the USSR in Russian and other indigenous languages, regardless of the Soviet government’s objections.

4. “O rasprostraneniі v SSSR zhurnala ‘Amerika,’” Politburo Directive Drafted by F. V. Konstantinov, head of the CPSU Central Committee Department for Agitation and Propaganda, 30 July 1956, in Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii, Fond 89, Opis’ 46, Delo 11, Listy 1–5.

At one point during the Cold War programs were beamed in from as many as twenty different countries. With a powerful transmitting network, the Voice of America (VOA) had by far the largest audience, including many young people who were attracted by the popular broadcasts of American jazz that supplemented informational and news programs. When the VOA's disk jockey Willis Conover visited Moscow, he was thronged by eager crowds, even though in the United States he was unknown to the general public. Other Western radios had smaller but significant audiences. Powerful transmitters were used by the British Broadcasting Corporation and Radio Liberty, which catered to educated urban listeners. Each was heard by some six million listeners on any given day. Germany's Deutsche Welle also developed a substantial audience. During most of the Cold War, the major broadcasters were subjected to heavy electronic jamming, which was only partly effective. Short-wave radio was the only widely-used electronic medium, although the proximity of Finland to Soviet Estonia and the similarity of the Finnish and Estonian languages made it possible for Estonians to receive and understand Finnish television broadcasts. West German television also reached sizable audiences in East Germany.

It was more difficult to penetrate the Iron Curtain with forbidden literature. Five thousand copies of the Russian-language edition of USIA's quarterly *Dialog* were distributed by the U.S. embassy in Moscow and the U.S. consulate in Leningrad without any official blessing from the Soviet authorities. According to the editor of *Dialog*, the journal was intended to address "the intellectual public" by featuring "articles that link special knowledge to wider cultural influences or pressing human needs." The contributors included distinguished names like John Kenneth Galbraith, George F. Kennan, Irving Kristol, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Robert Lowell. Richmond notes that when the Soviet government complained that *Dialog* was not covered by any agreement, U.S. officials responded that there was also no agreement for the Soviet magazine *Sputnik*, which had gained a degree of popularity in the United States in the wake of the USSR's successes in space. That settled the matter.

Richmond describes other Russian-language publications intended for readers in the Soviet Union. Some, like books published by Ardis Press and the journal *Problems of Eastern Europe*, were private initiatives. One that was not private was the "book program" devised by two employees of Radio Liberty "to communicate Western ideas to Soviet citizens by providing them with books—on politics, economics, philosophy, art, and technology—not available in the Soviet Union." The program included standard Western editions and specially published Russian translations, among them James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Pnin*, George Orwell's

Animal Farm, and Robert Conquest's *The Great Terror*. The books were given privately to Soviet diplomats and Soviet citizens who traveled to the West and to Western citizens who visited the Soviet Union (a Western academic could request any titles he wished for presentation to a Soviet colleague, without political criteria), and they were even delivered by mail in some cases. The U.S. embassy in Moscow kept a stock of the books for presentation to people locally. Over the years the program claimed to have placed a million books in the hands of Soviet citizens. The bill for this, more than a million dollars a year, was footed clandestinely by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

There were other examples of covert government action. The "surrogate" broadcaster Radio Liberty and its sister station Radio Free Europe had large audiences in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe respectively. For years they were funded clandestinely by the CIA until Congress came to its senses in the 1970s and created an open funding mechanism, something that should have been done at the very beginning.

One rationale for clandestine funding was the State Department's fear that open U.S. support of such activities would compromise foreign-policy goals. Another unspoken motivation was that "leftist" targets of congressional anti-Communist forays could be employed in clandestine operations, where they were generally safe from the kind of harassment that Senator Joseph McCarthy and his ilk inflicted on employees of the Foreign Service and the VOA. McCarthy and other demagogues were reluctant to take on the CIA. But the covert funding could not remain covert forever. In the 1960s it was disclosed in the press. The unfortunate consequence of the CIA's role was that it compromised innocent information programs by placing them under the same roof with controversial and sometimes unsavory intelligence operations.

One of the most interesting examples of covert funding, beyond the scope of Richmond's book, was the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), which in its heyday engaged the participation of leading American and European intellectuals.⁵ Originally supported by the Ford Foundation, the CCF turned reluctantly to the CIA when its private foundation sources dried up. (It is worth noting that most members of the CCF were unaware of the CIA's behind-the-scenes role.) The CCF focused on the value of culture in a democratic society rather than political activism. To this end, it sponsored conferences of intellectuals and the publication of highbrow journals, including the English-language *Encounter*, the German-language *Der Monat*, the French-language *Preuves*, the Italian-language *Tempo Presente*, the German-language

5. For a polemical and tendentious attack on the CCF, see Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 2001). A much more even-handed assessment can be found in Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

Forum (distributed in Austria), and the Spanish-language *Cuadernos*. Concerned mainly with intellectuals in Western Europe, the CCF did not directly target the Soviet bloc, except through its sponsorship of the Polish-language journal *Kultura* published in Paris. Nonetheless, the ideas it helped to keep alive spilled over into the Communist countries. The CCF came to an untimely and scandalous end in the 1960s when word of its CIA affiliation leaked into the public record. Its legacy was the lesson that such activities, to the extent that they need and deserve public support, should be assisted by overt agencies of the government, not by the intelligence agencies.

Cold War Themes and Approaches

The objectives of government-sponsored programs pertaining to the Soviet Union were twofold. One aim was to give people in the Soviet Union a better understanding of the United States, a country that was continually vilified in the Soviet media. The other goal was to influence trends within Soviet society by encouraging people to consider ideas for positive change.

Informing people about the United States was the principal responsibility of USIA. In the early days of the Cold War U.S. officials often jumped to the conclusion that Madison Avenue techniques—in this case propaganda—could be adopted to “sell” America with the same effectiveness as the advertising of retail goods. The propaganda often took a rather crude form, such as gloating over U.S. workers’ higher standards of living compared to those of Soviet workers. A campaign to popularize “people’s capitalism,” the idea that in the United States workers owned the economy through ownership of stocks, ran its course quickly. It soon became evident that audiences at best were unimpressed and at worst offended by such techniques. Moreover, years of exposure to the slanted media within the USSR had made them suspicious of anything that smacked of propaganda. The distinguished CBS correspondent Edward R. Murrow, who was appointed by President John Kennedy to head USIA, reformulated the agency’s objective as one of telling “America’s story to the world, warts and all.”

In principle, the American media had a great potential advantage over their Soviet counterparts in that they were free to tell the unvarnished truth. In practice, dealing with the “warts” was more complicated. Senator McCarthy’s crusades against alleged “Communists” in USIA kept it on the defensive and intimidated its staff. Even members of Congress (and journalists) who were more responsible did not resist opportunities to get publicity by taking negative comments out of context and branding them as “anti-American.” This is a continuing problem for VOA and other publicly funded media, al-

though over the years it has been generally accepted that they are free to report major stories carried by domestic media even when they are awkward. Soviet listeners to VOA reported being impressed by the station's thorough coverage of Watergate. Stories of American strikes, demonstrations, and other conflicts are now considered not only legitimate but helpful in establishing credibility. It has become accepted practice for VOA to repeat the opposition party's criticisms of the administration in power. This does not rule out the possibility that officials of one administration or another will exercise subtle forms of pressure to soft-pedal "negatives," but it does generally ensure a greater degree of evenhandedness than one might expect.

From the start, American information programs for the Soviet bloc sought to encourage internal change. The Eisenhower administration's early call for "liberation" and "rollback" of Communism set the stage for hard-hitting propaganda aimed at the overthrow of the regimes. Anti-Communist refugees from the target areas who staffed the programs were often eager to go along. In time, greater caution prevailed, if only because of the realization that such propaganda actually underscored the West's inability to act against the dictatorships. The more strident propaganda also posed the risk that it would be interpreted by audiences as calling on them to rise up violently against repression. The Hungarian uprising of 1956 was a watershed. It seems likely that many Hungarians who listened to RFE broadcasts believed that they were being promised U.S. military assistance if they fought against the Soviet troops.⁶ This led to an unknown number of deaths and an international scandal.

Even before the Hungarian debacle, some of those involved in information programs were questioning whether the hardline approach would actually achieve results or would merely antagonize members of the audience. One of the most articulate of the skeptics was Radio Liberation's policy adviser, Boris Shub, an American lawyer whose parents were from Russia. Programs for the Soviet Union faced a particular challenge compared to those for Eastern Europe because their audiences had lived so long in isolation from the outside world. Moreover, many Soviet citizens were still inspired by patriotic memories of their defeat of foreign invaders. Shub argued that it was folly to try to achieve quick propaganda results and that the most promising course was to stimulate the long-term evolution of Soviet public opinion. He pointed out that prerevolutionary Russian thinkers had espoused values that were close to Western ideas of freedom and democracy. Under his tutelage the radio broadcast a regular series of programs on "Russia's democratic heritage."

6. See László Borhi, "Rollback, Liberation, Containment, or Inaction? U.S. Policy and Eastern Europe in the 1950s," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Fall 1999), pp. 67–110.

Another series broadcast portions of Russian literature that had been suppressed by the Soviet censors.⁷ Partly because of Shub's influence, the station's name was changed to the less aggressive "Radio Liberty," and it developed a policy manual that specifically banned inflammatory messages in its programs. In time, RL became identified with the dissident movement through its regular airing of samizdat documents smuggled from the Soviet Union, but the ban on calls to action remained in force.⁸

Through the decades of the Cold War American broadcasts to Soviet audiences developed a considerable degree of sophistication compared to the clumsy efforts of the 1950s. One of the themes was the "cross-reporting" of reforms in the more liberal Soviet-bloc countries like Hungary and Poland or in the programs of "Eurocommunist" parties in Western Europe. The reasoning was that the American models touted by early Cold Warriors had slim chance of acceptance by Soviet officials but that reforms that were legitimately "Communist" could have a positive influence on the evolution of the USSR. With hindsight it seems clear that East European examples, including Czechoslovakia in 1968, played an important part in perestroika.

By the 1960s and 1970s it had become clear that "propaganda" in the sense of disinformation or manipulation was not a suitable tool for a democracy and that slanted news, especially if presented with truculence and bombast, would not gain credibility. This was especially true when it came to reaching the better-educated members of the audience, who were viewed as the most likely to influence the course of events. But it soon became apparent that in addressing mass audiences as well, programmers needed to show respect and a certain humility if their message was to have any hope of acceptance. In 1974–1975 the more mature approach to foreign publics was embodied in the report of a panel conducted under the auspices of Georgetown University to review the work of USIA and the State Department's cultural exchange program. In calling for a "new style of leadership," the report contained one of the earliest uses of the term *public diplomacy* (PD) to describe efforts on behalf of a government to reach foreign audiences without going through the governments of the foreign countries. "Public diplomacy" was meant to be a repudiation of ideas of "propaganda."⁹ Today PD is defined rather narrowly by the State Department as "engaging, informing, and influencing key international audiences."

7. See James Critchlow, *Radio Hole-in-the-Head: An Insider's Story of Cold War Broadcasting* (Washington DC: American University Press, 1995).

8. See James Critchlow, "Review Essay: Western Cold War Broadcasting," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Fall 1999), pp. 168–175.

9. *International Information, Education, and Cultural Relations: Recommendations for the Future* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1975).

End of the Cold War and Its Aftermath

The wave of euphoria created by the fall of Communism in the Soviet bloc, as symbolized by dramatic images of the opening of the Berlin Wall, was accompanied by a decline of support for government activities directed overseas. In the absence of a perceived external threat high levels of expenditure for defense seemed an anachronism to weary taxpayers, and there was enthusiastic talk of a “peace dividend.” In particular, public diplomacy became a target of budget-cutting zeal. Programs were eliminated or severely truncated. The Islamic world, no longer seen as vulnerable to Soviet penetration, was among the victims. Funding for public diplomacy in Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country, was cut in half in the 1990s. From 1995 to 2001, academic and cultural exchanges fell from 45,000 to 29,000.¹⁰

USIA, the chief instrument of American public diplomacy, was put out of existence in 1999 through integration into the State Department structure, despite an effort by conservative and liberal defenders to preserve it. The presidentially-appointed board that oversaw U.S. foreign broadcasts, the Board for International Broadcasting, was taken from under USIA’s aegis and cast adrift as an independent agency.

Within the State Department bureaucracy the remnants of USIA have not fared well. The organization of public diplomacy has been dispersed among different offices, with a resulting loss of influence on policy. PD regional heads, who at USIA had considerable status, have been submerged among officials with other functions. There is no longer a specialized corps of officials trained and experienced in information techniques. Any State Department official can now be assigned to public diplomacy. At American embassies abroad, public affairs officers have lost their independent channel of communication with the public diplomacy hierarchy in Washington. The former USIA research office, which specialized in public opinion and media studies, most of them unclassified, has been swallowed into the Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research, making it a part of the larger intelligence community. It is a truism that effective public diplomacy must listen as well as talk, and this has been a major setback.

In the long term, perhaps the greatest threat to PD as part of the State Department is its vulnerability to the tendency of professional diplomats to be wary of activities that bypass the foreign governments to which they are accredited. This tendency is implicit in the book by Ambassador Matlock cited above. It is summed up by a former British diplomat:

10. See Stephen Johnson and Helle Dale, “How to Reinvigorate Public Diplomacy,” Heritage Foundation Backgrounder No. 1645. Data on exchanges are from the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy.

The realist school of diplomacy disregards both the internal working of other states and the importance of values in international relations. . . . There is no space here for the engagement of foreign publics, or even policy elites, in genuine debate. . . . Foreign policy is decided and implemented within the hermetically sealed world of diplomatic professionals.¹¹

If the main body of U.S. public diplomacy is now being stifled by too much bureaucracy, international broadcasting is the exception. The nine-member body now designated as the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) operates with near-total independence. There are no established qualifications for membership, except that one seat is reserved *ex officio* for the Secretary of State, who in practice plays little role in the Board's deliberations. Once members are appointed by the White House and confirmed by the Senate, they are free to go their own way, subject only to the annual need to get appropriations from Congress to fund their activities. The members tend to be drawn from American domestic media or business, people with good political connections and little or no international experience. The radio and television outlets that they control are inclined to follow American commercial models. The members of the Board assert that their independence provides a "firewall" to protect them from accusations that they are a government propaganda outlet. It also tends to isolate them from the mainstream of public diplomacy.

The Latest Shocks

As the ashes settled over the World Trade Center site in September 2001, Americans were reminded that in the post-Cold War era they still had enemies abroad. Many observers called for a revival of public diplomacy, and legislation was introduced in Congress to that end. When President George W. Bush vowed to retaliate for the hijackings, he insisted that the United States would not conduct a war against Islam, adding some respectful comments about the Islamic faith that evoked a positive response in some quarters of the Muslim world.

Other U.S. responses were less successful. Public diplomacy by that point was the province of the State Department's under secretary for public diplomacy and public affairs. The incumbent, Charlotte Beers, had been recruited after a successful career in the advertising world, where she had been the chief executive officer of two leading agencies. A campaign that she hastily mounted for the Arab world on "Shared Values" invoked the Madison Avenue approach to public diplomacy, an approach that more than fifty years earlier

11. Shaun Riordan, *The New Diplomacy* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 2003).

had been tried and rejected. The campaign featured video clips of Arab-Americans living happily in the United States amid tolerant neighbors. There was little in the America-centered campaign that related to the concerns of Arabs living in their own countries, and efforts to have it broadcast on television stations there largely failed. This project, like others directed since then to Arab audiences, was farmed out to private contractors, unlike the more successful products of the Cold War that were usually the work of government specialists.

On the broadcasting front the BBG's principal response was the liquidation of the VOA's traditional Arabic service, which they replaced with a new entity, Radio Sawa. Sawa's programs consisted of American and Arabic pop music punctuated by occasional one- or two-line news items garnished with dramatic sound effects, in the style of similar American commercial stations. Sawa's avowed purpose was to build an audience among young people, who make up a sizable majority of Arab populations. Critics of the radio charged that this format slighted older, more educated listeners who wielded more influence, especially in patriarchal Muslim societies. The radio's supporters retorted that in some places Sawa already led the BBC World Service in audience size. The BBC, which rarely airs music, reaches 150 million people worldwide. One question to be resolved is whether it is more desirable to reach a larger audience of pop music fans than a smaller one of people who are interested in the kind of serious news and commentary purveyed by the BBC.

Despite the efforts of public diplomacy, a poll of twenty foreign countries some twenty months after the September 2001 attacks reflected a general increase in anti-Americanism, partly as a result of the U.S. invasion of Iraq:

In most countries, opinions of the U.S. are markedly lower than they were a year ago. The war has widened the rift between Americans and Western Europeans, further inflamed the Muslim world, softened support for the war on terrorism, and significantly weakened global public support for the pillars of the post-World War II era—the U.N. and the North Atlantic alliance.¹²

Important as these handicaps were, a larger poll of forty-four foreign countries suggested opportunities for public diplomacy if it were properly conducted:

[The survey] shows wide support for the fundamental economic and political values that the U.S. has long promoted. Globalization, the free market model and democratic ideals are accepted in all corners of the world. Most notably the 44-national survey found strong democratic aspirations in most of the Muslim

12. Pew Research Center, "Views of a Changing World 2003," 3 June 2003; available from: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID5185>.

publics surveyed. *The postwar update confirms that these aspirations remain intact despite the war and its attendant controversies.*¹³

Outlook for Public Diplomacy

From the standpoint of public diplomacy there are inherent problems in the role of the United States as the world's dominant power. Foreign audiences are sensitive to any U.S. statements or actions that appear to trade on this status. They are apt to resent policies that put the United States at variance with other countries and to be suspicious of American leaders who want to deal forcefully with an "axis of evil." Inequality and authoritarianism breed resentment of U.S. affluence and freedom. Even when local rulers are not U.S. allies or friends, the presumption is often made that the United States must be supporting them. For people in the Middle East and elsewhere, U.S. backing of Israel is controversial. Public diplomacy officials might advise their principals on how to soften the impact of steps the country has taken, but it is in the nature of PD that it must accommodate the established policies. At a minimum, public diplomacy can present U.S. policies and events truthfully to counteract the distortions voiced by Islamic fundamentalists and even by some West European leaders.

Other factors may also hinder attempts to replicate the successes of Cold War-era PD. Scholarly and other elite exchanges of the kind described by Yale Richmond are hampered by security concerns in the wake of the September 2001 terrorist attacks that have caused a sharp tightening of visa regulations and, particularly in the case of visitors from Muslim countries, a sense of discomfort. Moreover, during the Cold War one of the U.S. government's assets was a sizable cadre of well-trained Russian linguists (like Richmond) who were produced in part by the exchanges and played a key role in facilitating relations at many levels. No similar body of linguists is available for Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, and numerous other languages spoken in Islamic countries. If PD today is to match its Cold War successes, the U.S. government will have to undertake a major deployment of personnel, resources, and skills for a sustained period to overcome these obstacles.

Training of Americans in relevant foreign languages can be facilitated, as it was during the Cold War, by giving higher priority to exchanges. Moreover, a revival of the exchange program—this time with key Islamic countries—would enable important categories of people from those countries to spend a year or more in the United States. Of particular relevance would be

13. *Ibid.* (emphasis added).

high school students, whose worldviews would not yet have been fully shaped and hardened by Islamic fundamentalist propaganda. Exchanges also could encompass undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students; young leaders in professional fields; and, higher up on the age spectrum, senior scholars and senior professionals. As during the Cold War, university-to-university linkages, which could develop into long-term cooperative relationships, would play a key organizational role. An effective exchange program will depend on the involvement of some entity, probably a non-governmental body with public funding, to carry out rigorous screening, to monitor the exchanges, and to head off any difficulties that could cause tensions.

With regard to the dissemination of information, surveys like the Pew study cited above suggest that, in the area of values, public diplomacy can constructively promote a broader long-range goal by reminding foreign audiences of core American values such as the importance of democracy and freedom, concern for human rights at home and abroad, and the vibrancy of a free-market economy. PD would not overlook the “warts,” but it would show how a pluralistic society attacks its shortcomings and seeks to resolve its conflicts. Moreover, PD can seek to elicit positive elements in the heritage of other peoples that give them common ground with the United States.

In the particular case of Muslim audiences, programs can hark back to earlier decades when intellectual freedom and tolerance prevailed and to earlier centuries when Islamic civilization was at the forefront of world science and when Muslims lived in peace with members of other faiths. It is vital for the U.S. media to publicize the efforts of Muslim reformers to restore these values. There is a precedent for this from the Cold War, when Western broadcasters quoted from underground samizdat materials that reminded Russians of the good things in their heritage that had been suppressed by Soviet rule. Another Cold War analogy reflects opportunities for programs: the technique of “cross-reporting” between different Islamic countries to stress those that have developed democratic systems. Secular democracy may be rejected by Muslims if seen as an “infidel” import, but its acceptance, no matter how imperfect, in lands with large Muslim populations like Turkey or post-Suharto Indonesia helps to legitimize it.¹⁴ At least some women in countries like Saudi Arabia, which deny many basic rights to females, will be interested in the relative freedom of Turkish women. These approaches imply that PD will go well

14. India, too, has a vast Muslim population (more than 125 million, the third largest in the world after Indonesia and Pakistan), but the Muslims there, being only a small minority in a country of well over a billion people, feel themselves to be in a much more precarious situation (despite India's general adherence to a democratic system) than do Muslims in neighboring Bangladesh and Pakistan, where Muslims form the overwhelming majority.

beyond “telling America’s story,” but if handled correctly they can help to inculcate an appreciation of American values.

In 2003 the Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs in the State Department began preparing a “public diplomacy strategy” that would aid in the war against terrorism. The BBG issued a strategic plan called “Marrying the Mission to the Market,” which stresses mass audiences and downplays the importance of reaching elites, describing the Cold War approach as “outmoded.” The BBG also announced plans to create a television network to reach the Middle East, with \$30 million in funding to be provided by Congress. Initially, however, discussions of PD focused mainly on institutional arrangements and facilities, with relatively little attention to specifics of the content of programs. This led Senator Richard G. Lugar, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to call for more focus on “exchange of ideas.”

The problems facing public diplomacy will require long-term solutions. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice predicted that a “generational commitment” would be required to introduce democracy to the Middle East. Coping with this challenge can be aided by reference to historical memory. The valuable contribution of Richmond’s book and other Cold War histories that deal with aspects of public diplomacy is that they remind us of the experience of programs and activities that are on their way to being forgotten as the players leave the scene. By providing a meticulous record of successes and failures, they can help the U.S. government emulate the achievements and avoid the mistakes of the past.