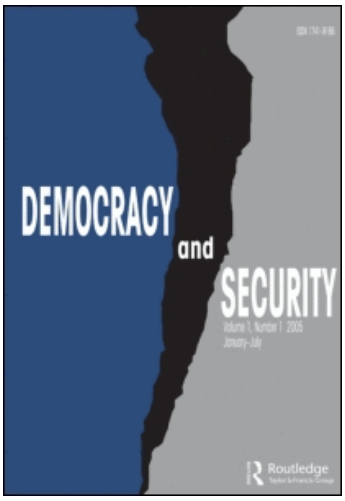

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The Democratic Disadvantage in the Strategic Communications Battlespace

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This article explores the struggle for influence taking place online between liberal democracies and extremists. It begins by describing the various online forms of strategic communication used by terrorist organizations to achieve their objectives. Particular attention is focused on how members of the global salafi jihadist network use the Internet to provide motivational/ideological and operational information to potential recruits and supporters. The discussion then examines the current public diplomacy effort of the U.S., and identifies an important disadvantage in our approach. In an age of universal access to the means of providing information online, citizens of a liberal democracy like ours have the power to undermine our strategic communications and public diplomacy efforts, largely through ignorance and irresponsibility. This problem is particularly acute when communicating with many corners of the Muslim world, where there is no frame of reference for understanding the implications of a free and open press, or a society that enjoys the legal protection of free speech. Thus, whether the messenger is Condoleeza Rice, Howard Stern, Pat Robertson, or the 14 year-old web blogger down the street, messages put forward online are often given equal credence in terms of representing American policy, culture, and ideas. This analysis concludes that an effective public diplomacy agenda requires a commitment to educating our own citizens for world comprehension and responsible communication, as well as motivating a grassroots campaign to develop and disseminate an effective anti-jihad message.

INTRODUCTION

On November 7, 2005, the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), a propaganda creation and dissemination unit that customarily releases productions touting Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's group al-Qaida in Iraq and the broader al-Qaida organization, announced a new website design contest. The message, posted

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on the militant website al-Firdaws.org, invited viewers to design a website for Jaysh al-Ta'ifa al-Mansura,[1] a Sunni militant group believed to be led by former military officers who served under Saddam Hussein. Two rewards were offered for the winning design:

1. "The blessings of God for this job that is in the service of the jihad and mujahideen;" and
2. "The winner of the contest [gets] to launch three long-range rockets against an American military base in Iraq . . . the pressing of a button by blessed hand, wherever he is, by using a method and a technology that has been improvised by the mujahideen."

The message continued to describe how they have developed the capability of launching these missiles via remote control, from virtually anywhere in the world. Thus, a new way to participate in the Iraqi insurgency was now possible from the comfort of one's own home.

In January 2006, terrorism expert Stephen Ulph brought attention to a series of documents found on the Internet which indicated a growing jihadist interest in targeting U.S. economic assets.[2] Some of these documents are quite explicit and detailed, giving indications of specific pipelines and facilities to attack—not only in the Gulf, but wherever in the world such assets can be targeted. His report describes a message posted the previous month to several jihadi forums, including al-Safinat,[3] in which al-Qaida strategist Ayman al-Zawahiri calls upon mujahideen "to focus their attacks on the oil wells stolen from the Muslims, because most of the revenues of this oil go to the enemies of Islam."[4] A month earlier, a lengthy document authored by respected jihadist thinker Abu Musab al-Najdi, entitled "Al-Qaida's Battle is an Economic Battle, Not a Military One," was posted to the forum Minbar Suriya al-Islami,[5] while a similar text was posted to the Al-Safinat forum,[6] in which the author ("Abu Yusuf 911") examines the potential vulnerabilities of Western economies in the Middle East and around the world. Entitled "Targets for Jihad: A Response to the Words of Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri," the latter document describes how the mujahideen can most effectively strike America's economic centers of gravity.[7]

Also in January, a posting on another website purportedly affiliated with al-Qaida urges attacks against the trans-Alaska oil pipeline and Port of Valdez, calling on jihadists to either shower the pipeline with bullets or hide and detonate explosives along its length. According to Rita Katz, director of the SITE Institute—a Washington, D.C., nonprofit organization that tracks international terrorists, and which discovered and translated this message from Arabic—the 10-page posting is unusual and alarming in its length and detail, which includes numerous links to websites providing maps and other basic information about the pipeline.[8] Meanwhile, the SITE Institute has also

recently uncovered a manual posted to a jihadist forum providing instructions for the cultivation and use of three strains of plague—bubonic, septicemic, and pneumonic—from the Yersinia Pestis microbe, as a biological weapon.[9]

Islamic extremists and their communiqués have become increasingly sophisticated and ubiquitous on the Internet. From videos produced by al-Zarqawi and his supporters in Iraq, to full-length online books written by al-Zawahiri, to sophisticated video games produced by Hizballah, the Internet has fast become a central hub of communications between terrorist organizations and their chosen target audiences (including supporters, potential recruits, and enemy regimes). According to General John Abizaid, Commander of U.S. Central Command, "The only safe haven that remains for al-Qaida is the virtual realm. It is one that we all should be worried about."[10] Mike Sheuer, former head of the CIA's bin Laden unit, agrees: "The current state of al-Qaida and the health of al-Qaida is largely due to its ability to manipulate the Internet."[11]

In today's global security environment, the mind is a battlespace where the ideas of religious extremism and jihad are engaged in combat against the ideas of liberal democracy. A report on strategic communications released by the U.S. Defense Science Board in September 2004 notes that "we must understand that the United States is engaged in a generational and global struggle about ideas."[12] As Georgetown University professor Daniel Byman has observed, "more spies and better defenses do little to defeat a hostile ideology. The United States needs to go beyond traditional tools and develop a long-term strategy for defeating the ideological movement we face."[13] This ideological movement, it can be argued, has come to capitalize on the power of the Internet in a way never before seen in previous global movements. Clearly, decentralized global information networks are playing an increasingly prominent role in modern terrorist organizations' ability to communicate with various target audiences. The mass media function of the Internet allows anyone to become a powerful communicator, providing an open forum for the exchange of words, sounds, and images which can influence our thinking and behavior. Further, when many voices communicate the same message, in ways that complement and reinforce this message, the result is a more powerful and pervasive form of influence. The Internet also allows terrorists to identify members of a select audience (for example, by our e-mail addresses or IP addresses, they can determine the country from which we are accessing the Internet). With this knowledge, they can tailor the information provided in ways they feel will be most effective in influencing an individual's views.

The global community of liberal democracies is thus engaged in an epic struggle—not by our own choice, but by the choice of our adversaries who are framing their fight against us in these terms. Influencing hearts and minds is a long-term process; it cannot be "won" by any number of military successes in traditional warfare, counterterrorism actions, or other such Department of

Defense-oriented areas of expertise. As the 2003 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism indicates, the U.S. must "win the war of ideas," "support democratic values" and "promote economic freedom"—goals which frame a public diplomacy effort recently launched by our government, an effort focused primarily on communicating to the same audiences that the authors of the websites described above are seeking to influence. Karen Hughes, the Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and the person most responsible for directing this effort, has referred to public diplomacy as "a dialogue, as much about listening as it is about speaking," and she describes the overall mission of the U.S. public diplomacy agenda as "a long-term strategy to ensure that our ideas prevail."[14] This agenda is organized around three primary objectives:

1. offering a positive vision of hope and freedom;
2. isolating and marginalizing extremists, and undermining their attempt to appropriate religion; and
3. fostering a sense of common interests and common values between Americans and people of different countries, cultures and faiths.

This public diplomacy effort involves a range of government agencies and capabilities. Indeed, according to Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice: "Public diplomacy is not just the job of public diplomacy professionals, even though it is absolutely critical, it is the job of everybody who is interested in and concerned about American foreign policy."[15] This article goes a step further, by describing how our nation's success in the strategic communications battlespace will depend on our ability to educate and motivate Americans to be more responsible communicators with the rest of the world. In an age of information, ignorant and irresponsible members of a free an open society can all too easily undermine the goals of their government in the realm of public diplomacy. For example, while our nation's public diplomacy efforts struggle to gain traction in the Muslim World, a small group of Americans last year posted a video to the Internet showing them shooting at, driving over, and urinating on a Koran. While the video did not garner much media attention in the U.S., and was eventually taken offline by its authors, it was rapidly duplicated and posted on other websites—many of them jihadist websites, where the video was offered as evidence of how Americans truly feel about Islam. In a similar vein, a prominent evangelical leader was recently quoted in the mainstream news media referring to Islam as an "evil religion." Such videos and statements are unhelpful to the U.S. public diplomacy effort and ultimately makes Americans less safe.

This discussion examines how violent extremists use the Internet to achieve their strategic objectives, and then describes recent developments in the nation's public diplomacy effort. Then, the article examines the role of

Internet publishing and the information age in constraining or diluting the effectiveness of a democratic nation's public diplomacy efforts, a problem rooted in the age-old dilemma of maintaining security while ensuring democratic freedoms. Finally, the discussion concludes by calling for a massive public education effort within the U.S., through which all Americans come to recognize the responsibilities associated with the freedoms we enjoy. Education in an age of global communications is particularly important when considering how ignorance and irresponsibility can undermine our nation's efforts to defeat global terrorist organizations.

A BRIEF DEFINITION OF TERMS

Before launching into a discussion of these issues, it is first necessary to define a few key terms. First, while terrorists of all kinds engage in some form of strategic communications, this article concentrates on those groups and individuals who threaten the United States with terrorism. In particular, this discussion focuses on violent extremist networks who cloak their political objectives beneath the banner of Islam. Here, members without any real religious credentials have issued fatwas and calls for violent jihad against the U.S. and its allies in order to bring about significant political change in the countries and communities that matter to them.

The "global war on terror" is a term in declining use, while policymakers and scholars have called upon us all to update our discussion of the threat to indicate that we are currently engaged in a struggle against violent extremist organizations, networks and individuals, as well as the state and non-state entities that support them. Others have referred to this as a global insurgency or a worldwide social movement with a shared ideology. The spread of this ideology by respected Muslim clerics, veterans of the Afghan and Chechen mujahideen, and now fighters in the Iraq insurgency is of great concern. But of even greater concern is the growing number of web-savvy youth, like those competing in the website design contest described above, who are also helping to spread the ideology to the farthest reaches of the globe. In essence, they act as a "force multiplier" for the global insurgency, and present daunting challenges for public diplomacy and counterterrorism policy. Enabling and inspiring them is part of al-Qaida's communications strategy.

Two other terms warrant a brief definition as well: "public diplomacy" and "strategic communications." According to a recent report produced by the Princeton Project on National Security, the goal of public diplomacy is "to understand, inform, and influence foreign publics in promotion of U.S. national interests and to broaden dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions and their counterparts abroad."[16] According to most professionals in the field, public diplomacy requires a long-term commitment to building relationships, rooted in trust and consistency. It is very much a human-to-human endeavor.

In the United States, the broad nature of public diplomacy transcends the purview of any single agency or department, and the public diplomacy landscape remains a patchwork of players with overlapping duties.[17] Several entities share responsibility for waging the "battle for ideas," including the White House, State Department, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), USAID, and the Department of Defense (DOD). According to the official website of the Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy, this office is responsible for helping "ensure that public diplomacy (engaging, informing, and influencing key international audiences) is practiced in harmony with public affairs (outreach to Americans) and traditional diplomacy to advance U.S. interests and security and to provide the moral basis for U.S. leadership in the world."[18] More on U.S. public diplomacy is provided later in this discussion.

Finally, what is meant by the term "strategic communications"? The strategic communications battlespace referred to throughout this discussion can be defined as the contested terrain upon which all types of information from competing sources seeks to influence our thoughts and actions for or against a particular set of objectives. According to a 2004 Defense Science Board report:

> U.S. strategic communication must be transformed . . . Strategic communication requires a sophisticated method that maps perceptions and influence networks, identifies policy priorities, formulates objectives, focuses on 'doable tasks,' develops themes and messages, employs relevant channels, leverages new strategic and tactical dynamics, and monitors success. This approach will build on in-depth knowledge of other cultures and factors that motivate human behavior. It will adapt techniques of skillful political campaigning, even as it avoids slogans, quick fixes, and mind sets of winners and losers. It will search out credible messengers and create message authority . . . It will engage in a respectful dialogue of ideas that begins with listening and assumes decades of sustained effort.[19]

From a cursory review of resources like this, one can derive that the term "strategic communications" basically refers to communications that are driven primarily by a strategy for influencing human thought, emotion, and behavior. In the following discussion, the strategic purpose can be defined as influencing terrorist networks as well as their potential recruits and supporters. Strategic communications in the global war on terror must also encourage the support of allies or potential allies, but due to space limitations here that topic must be addressed elsewhere.

Also, it is important to remember that strategic communications is merely one element of public diplomacy, albeit one that it is critically important to get right. Joseph Nye uses the term "strategic communication" to mean one of three "dimensions" of public diplomacy: "a set of simple themes, much like what occurs in a political or advertising campaign . . . over the course of a year to brand the central themes, or to advance a particular government policy."

Nye's other two dimensions are "daily communications," which explain "the context of domestic and foreign policy decisions," and the "development of lasting relationships with key individuals over many years through scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, conferences, and access to media channels." His dimensions are distinguished by two central characteristics: time and "different relative proportions of government information and long-term cultural relationships."[20] With these definitions of key terms in mind, it is useful first to examine what modern religious terrorists are doing in the realm of strategic communications.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION: THE BAD GUYS

A video newscast, alleging to be an al-Qaida production, was broadcast over the Internet for the first time in September 2005.[21] "Welcome to your program, the week's news of a nation," begins the anchorman, who wears a black ski mask. A Koran sits to his left while a weapon secured on a tripod stands to his right. The second online newscast, which appeared roughly a month later, begins with a reading of Quranic verses urging men to fight, while pictures are displayed of al-Qaida members receiving military training in Afghanistan. This is followed by the slogan "a cry of justice in the face of wrong," accompanied by flames that melt away the slogans of western news agencies and television stations. Then an anchorman wearing a black ski mask and an explosives belt presents the "weekly review of the state of the nation" with news on suicide operations in Palestine and Iraq as well as the state of Muslims in Niger.[22]

In October 2005, a series of job advertisements were posted on the Internet, calling for supporters to help al-Qaida develop new websites and video montages. Specifically, according to the website of the London-based Asharq al-Awsat news organization, al-Qaida was seeking to fill "vacant positions" for video production and editing statements, footage and international media coverage about militants in Iraq, the Palestinian territories, Chechnya and other conflict zones where militants are active.[23] The announcement said that the Global Islamic Media Front, an al-Qaida-linked organization, would "follow up with members interested in joining and contact them via email."

Over the past two decades, terrorist networks have learned to use the Internet in increasingly sophisticated ways to support their strategic objectives. The Internet facilitates a range of operational capabilities for terrorist groups, including recruitment, coordination and fundraising. Among these, perhaps the most important is the communication of certain information to potential recruits—specifically, two kinds of information: *motivational* (most often of an ideological nature), and *operational* (that which provides strategic and tactical capabilities).[24] In several cases, they have even provided these

information resources in multiple languages, to ensure their ability to reach a broader audience.

Motivational/ideological information usually addresses the central question of *why* an individual or group seeks to use violent means to achieve political, social, and/or religious goals, while operational information addresses the question of *how* to most effectively use violent means for achieving these goals. Motivational information is typically disseminated in oral, print, and online formats, and largely deals with the realms of psychological, social, cultural, intellectual and emotional development. Providing this information is seen as vital to developing an individual's *will to kill*. However, it can be argued that operational information—a much more action-oriented realm of learning—arguably presents the greatest current danger to the civilized world. Motivation without operational capability is far less harmful than operational ability (with or without motivation). In other words, operational knowledge—*the skill to kill*—can be considered the primary key to any terrorist's ability to achieve his or her objectives.

The globalization of access to information technology has had a dramatic impact on how terrorist groups are providing these two forms of information to potential supporters and recruiters. A cursory search of the Internet today reveals a variety of information resources on how to organize terror cells, how to communicate covertly between and among an organization's members, and how to get and exchange funds. Information is freely available on how to conduct target identification, surveillance, reconnaissance, and vulnerability assessment. As Jamestown Foundation's Stephen Ulph has observed, the Internet plays an important role in following the instructions provided in an al-Qaida training manual recovered in Afghanistan: "Using public sources openly and without resorting to illegal means, it is possible to gather at least 80% of all information required about the enemy."[25] An aspiring terrorist can also learn how to forge documents; how and where to launder money; how to successfully conduct a kidnapping; how and where to build camouflage-covered trenches; and how to mount rocket launchers in the beds of pickup trucks. Additional information is available for learning how to acquire, use, maintain and repair handguns, machineguns, and rocket-propelled grenade launchers, as well as how to acquire and assemble bombs from the plastic explosive C4.[26]

The Internet also facilitates operational coordination, fundraising, and the electronic transfer of assets. A terrorist cell can gather information on a variety of targets, from location maps and satellite images to details on personnel, activities, etc. In some cases, architectural drawings and schematics are available online. Sophisticated hackers can determine the computer systems and networks which provide the communications infrastructure used by the target. In addition, today's technology enables organizational learning on a scale never before seen. As the organization of al-Qaida evolves into a global

insurgency movement, the aspect of documenting lessons learned and sharing these with other members of the movement is enabled via the Internet in a way we have never seen in any prior social movement. The Internet can mediate former obstacles of language, distance, formal membership, and other aspects of previous movements, while at the same time liberal democracies find themselves unable to offer new obstacles to the evolving sophistication of this global movement and its members.

In sum, there is much that can be learned via the Internet about conducting terrorism. In years past, an individual would typically acquire motivational and operational information through remote training camps around the world, sponsored by any number of terrorist organizations—including al-Qaida, Hizballah, and Jemaah Islamiyah. However, with the closing of the training camps in Afghanistan and elsewhere—a direct result of the post-9/11 global security environment—seekers and providers of this information have been increasingly turning to the Internet. During the past few decades, Carlos Marighella's landmark "Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla" was widely translated and employed by Latin American and European terrorists, and it is now available online.[27] Other prominent sources of information include *The Anarchist Cookbook* and *The Mujahideen Poisons Handbook*. The latter was written by Abdel Aziz in 1996 and "published" on the official Hamas website, detailing in 23 pages how to prepare various homemade poisons, poisonous gases, and other deadly materials for use in terrorist attacks.[28] The *Terrorist's Handbook*, published by "Chaos Industries and Gunzenbombz Pyro Technologies," offers 98 pages of step-by-step operational knowledge.[29] And the website of the French Anonymous Society (*Société Anonyme*) offers a 2-volume *Sabotage Handbook* online, educating readers on such topics as planning an assassination and anti-surveillance methods.[30]

The multi-volume *Encyclopedia of the Afghan Jihad*, written in Arabic and originally distributed on paper and on CD-ROM, is perhaps one of the most oft-cited terrorist training manuals in existence today. It contains a wealth of operational knowledge for new terrorists, covering topics such as the recruitment of new members, discharging weapons, constructing bombs and conducting attacks. Specific examples are included, such as how to put small explosive charges in a cigarette, a pipe, or lighter in order to maim a person; drawings of simple land mines that could be used to blow up a car (not unlike the improvised explosive devices seen most recently in Iraq); and radio-controlled devices that could be used to set off a whole truckload of explosives, like those used to destroy the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998. Much of the information found in the *Encyclopedia of the Afghan Jihad* volumes is now available on many websites, and in multiple languages.

Other prominent online texts include Sayyid Qutb's *Under the Umbrella of the Koran*, which underscored the importance of monotheism in Islam,[31] and his *Signposts Along the Road*, in which he damned Western and Christian

civilization and urged jihad against the enemies of Islam.[32] Qutb's teachings have had considerable influence over Osama bin Laden, and informed the writings of his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, as reflected in his online book *Knights Under the Banner of the Prophet*.[33] Another influential Islamic scholar was Sheik Abdullah Azzam, whose books on jihad include *Join the Caravan*, *Signs of Ar-Rahman in the Jihad of the Afghan, Defense of the Muslim Lands*, and *Lovers of the Paradise Maidens*—all of which can be found online. Apparently, copyright and intellectual property have not been primary concerns of these authors.

Al-Qaida's occasionally-published magazine, *Mu'askar al-Battar* (The Al Battar Training Camp), features essays on military training amid a plethora of appeals for Muslims to join the fight. Other periodicals of the global salafi network, many linked to al-Qaida, include *Voice of Jihad* (in print and online circulation since 2000) and *Tora Bora*, the May 2004 issue of which included an analysis of Pakistan's campaign in the Waziristan province and an extended article on "The Secret of Success in Battle." In Algeria, a new magazine appeared in May 2004 (Al-Jama'a, or "The Group") which noticeably imitates al-Qaida publications. Posted on the website of the *Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat* (GSPC), the first issue of this publication was large on motivational/ideological knowledge, but short on operational knowledge.[34] Another publication, the "In the Shadow of the Lances" series, first appeared after 9/11, with various issues providing motivational/ideological information as well as tactical lessons learned from the battle against U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

In addition to these online texts, a wide variety of extremist videos populate the Internet today. An increasing diversity of groups and supporters—from Zarqawi and his followers in Iraq to Chechen separatists—have for the past several years posted an increasing number of videos to the Internet, through which they communicate to a variety of audiences that are either supportive of or opposed to their stated goals and objectives. In addition, message boards and other forums (some with password security) provide safe spaces for potential new terrorist recruits to post messages like "how do I join the Jihad in Iraq?"—messages which are then answered either directly in the public forum or more privately via the individual's personal e-mail account.

Video games and other media also play an important role in influencing perceptions and actions. For example, there are a number of "first-person shooter" games—with violent graphics, depicting real-life scenarios in which the player is the central character—which can be obtained for free or low cost on the Internet.[35] The first computer game developed by a political Islamist group is called *Special Force*, and was launched in February 2003 by the Lebanese terrorist group Hizballah.[36] This game offers players a simulated experience of conducting Hizballah operations against Israeli soldiers in battles re-created from actual encounters in the south of Lebanon, and features

a training mode where players can practice their shooting skills on targets such as Israeli Prime Minister Sharon and other Israeli political and military figures. The game can be played in Arabic, English, French, and Farsi, and is available on several websites.[37] Mahmoud Rayya, a member of Hizballah, noted in an interview for the *Daily Star* that the decision to produce the game was made by leaders of Hizballah, and that "in a way, *Special Force* offers a mental and personal training for those who play it, allowing them to feel that they are in the shoes of the resistance fighters."[38]

According to NYPD terrorism analyst Madeleine Gruen, Hizballah's Central Internet Bureau developed the game in order to train children physically and mentally for military confrontation with their Israeli enemies.[39] By the end of May 2003, more than 10,000 copies of *Special Force* had been sold in the United States, Australia, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Bahrain, and United Arab Emirates. Games such as these, as Gruen notes, "are intended to dehumanize the victim and to diminish the act of killing."[40] In essence, through simulating acts of violence, these games develop the player's *will to kill* and *skill to kill*, without having to leave the comfort of their own home.

In sum, members of the global jihadist movement are populating the Internet with forms of communication which impact the global security environment in ways that support their strategic objectives. What is the U.S. doing to counter this? What are we doing to influence the environment in ways that will reduce the threat of terrorism?

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION: THE GOOD GUYS

Through various forms of information, Islamist extremist networks put forward a rather consistent and simple message encouraging their target audiences to join (or at least support) the jihad. To counter this message, the U.S. and its allies engage in a variety of public diplomacy efforts, seeking to promote understanding of U.S. values and goals, and offer alternative visions of a better future. These efforts are led by policies and personnel in the White House and Department of State, while the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of Defense and other agencies also play important roles.

Shortly after the attacks of September 11, 2001, a Defense Science Board Task Force sponsored jointly by the Department of Defense and Department of State issued a report on U.S. civilian and military information dissemination capabilities. In their report—which had been written and edited during the ten months before the attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center—the Task Force determined that the United States needed a sustained, coordinated capability to *understand* and *influence* global publics rooted in Presidential direction and the information age.[41] President Bush agreed, noting in 2003 that "We have to do a better job of telling our story."[42] As Joseph Nye

recently observed, "the current struggle is not only about whose army wins, but also whose story wins."[43] So, what is our story, how is it more compelling, how are we telling it, and to whom?

Several initiatives have been launched since 2001 to improve public diplomacy coordination, including a presidential coordinating committee, an Office of Global Communications, and a Muslim World Outreach program. Launched in 2004, this latest initiative brings together the resources of the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency and a host of other agencies in a new, concerted effort to improve America's image abroad. As part of this program, for example, USAID is now spending upwards of $10 billion annually in Muslim countries, some of it helping support Islamic schools, radio and television stations, mosques, and monuments.[44]

According to Karen Hughes, the current public diplomacy agenda is organized around three "strategic imperatives."[45] The first is to offer a positive vision of hope and opportunity to people throughout the world, a vision rooted in an enduring commitment to freedom. As Hughes stated in her November 2005 testimony before Congress, "We promote the fundamental rights of free speech and assembly, freedom to worship as one chooses, rights for women and minorities, the rule of law, limits on the power of the state not because we seek copies of American democracy—but because these are the universal human rights of all people, men and women, everywhere."[46] As President Bush stated in his 2006 State of the Union Address, "We seek the end of tyranny in our world."[47]

The second strategic imperative is to isolate and marginalize violent extremists, and undermine their efforts to exploit religion to rationalize their acts of terror. For example, while a few pundits and policymakers have referred to "the threat from radical Islam," in reality there is no such thing: there is only one religion of Islam, but it is being interpreted by a relatively small number of radical Muslims in ways that they feel would justify the use of violence in pursuing their political objectives. Our ability to articulate this clearly and consistently is an important part of an effective public diplomacy effort. And the third imperative, according to Hughes, is to foster a sense of common interests and common values between Americans and people of different countries, cultures, and faiths worldwide.

In the past several years, nearly 20 major studies on U.S. public diplomacy have issued reports and recommendations, many of which no doubt inform the current administration's views on this topic.[48] Almost all these reports have called for increased human and financial resources, along with changes in the nation's structure, policies, and strategies for public diplomacy. For example, in September 2002, the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy called for participation by Congress and the private sector in public diplomacy, a recommendation echoed by a Council on Foreign Relations report released in June 2003.[49] A Government Accountability Office report issued

September 2003 called upon the State Department to develop a way for measuring progress toward its public diplomacy goals, while a Brookings Institution report released January 2004 recommended focusing attention on the youth in the Muslim world.[50]

A RAND report published in 2004 stressed the critical importance of two-way communication, and suggested structured debates, call-in shows, and other means of engaging the public in dialogue about issues of foreign and domestic policy "through debate and discussion rather than through the typical monologic conveyance of the message."[51] The *9/11 Commission Report* observed that the United States must define its message and what it stands for, and defend the nation's ideals abroad through increased broadcasting efforts and rebuilding scholarships, exchange, and library programs that have existed for decades but have fallen on hard times since the early 1990s.[52]

Shortly after World War II, the U.S. government began sponsoring a variety of facilities—called cultural centers, libraries, information centers, or "houses"—which aided in our nation's foreign relations and public diplomacy efforts.[53] These facilities had two important purposes:

1. to provide the most current and authoritative information about official U.S. government policies, and
2. to serve as a primary source of informed commentary on the origin, growth, and development of American social, political, economic, and cultural values and institutions.[54]

Unfortunately, many of these centers and libraries were closed during the 1990s due to budget cuts or increased security concerns.[55] However, several new programs have been developed to provide similar functions to the closed centers:

1. American Presence Posts, which use a single American officer in an important region to further commercial and diplomacy goals;
2. American Corners, which provide a public diplomacy outpost—library, discussion forum, program venue, and Internet access—for local use without American personnel; and
3. Virtual Presence Posts, which use the Internet to communicate with local publics (and Americans) and may be able to handle up to 50% of a physical consulate's workload.[56]

According to Tre Evers, Commissioner of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, the State Department has dramatically increased funding for American Corners and Virtual Presence posts. As of August 2004, there were 143 American Corners in Africa, South Asia, East Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East, and plans to open another 130.[57]

Another study by the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy,[58] released in January 2005, suggested that public diplomacy should be a national security policy, and that our messages must become more strategic and responsive. This theme of being more responsive is found in many other reports, and emphasizes that public diplomacy (and even the subcomponent of strategic communications) involves much more than simply telling our story better. We need to be careful and active listeners: communicating effectively involves a symbiotic relationship between communicator and audience. In the press conference announcing her nomination, Karen Hughes remarked that "America's public diplomacy should be as much about listening and understanding as it is about speaking."[59] Thus, it is encouraging to see that "listening to foreign publics" has become one of her stated priorities.

Given Hughes' expertise in American political campaigns and public affairs, some observers have interpreted her statement to mean that we will see a proliferation of American-style polls conducted in the Muslim World. One could certainly see value in gathering public opinion in these countries about attitudes toward terrorist groups and U.S. anti-terrorist policies. Focus groups could be used to determine the acceptability of new anti-terrorist initiatives before the U.S. implements them. Polls could also help identify problems in the ideologies and strategies of al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations which the U.S. and its allies could exploit. For example, Zogby polls in six Muslim countries in 2005 found that only six percent of respondents sympathized with Bin Laden's goal of establishing a pan-Islamic caliphate.[60] However, communications expert Robert Satloff has recently warned that "In the Middle East, polls tend to distort and exaggerate; public opinion is episodic and driven by news cycles; and popular attitudes seem to have little impact on people's behavior."[61] Indeed, it must be recognized that polling is clearly not the only way to "listen." For example, we must also monitor local news reports and public debates, pay attention to the curricular debates in the schools and universities, examine the pronouncements of prominent religious and social leaders, and—of increasing importance—learn to take foreign websites, message boards, blogs, and other online information sources more seriously.

Further, as noted in several of the aforementioned reports, effective public diplomacy requires the involvement of entities far beyond the sphere of federal government agencies. For example, the June 2003 report of the Council on Foreign Relations proposed the creation of an independent not-for-profit Corporation for Public Diplomacy (CPD), which would be modeled on the existing Corporation for Public Broadcasting and would serve as the focal point for private sector involvement in public diplomacy.[62] This entity, the Council suggested, could "receive private sector grants and would attract media and personalities potentially less willing to work directly with U.S. government agencies. Its proposed structure also takes advantage of the fact that

private media often communicate American family values, religious commitments, and the merits of democracy more effectively than do government officials."[63] Compelled by a similar conviction, a private organization was launched in January 2004, called Business for Diplomatic Action, in which a group of marketing and communications professionals, academics, and political scientists seek to mobilize the private sector to promote a better understanding of the United States.[64] Ideas being pursued by this group include gathering information from their employees in overseas locations about the "mood on the street" towards America, and contributing their expertise in commercial marketing to furthering the objectives of the nation's public diplomacy effort.

These and other recent developments in the sphere of U.S. public diplomacy are promising. However, despite all these thoughtful reports, new strategies and initiatives, a comparison of the U.S. and the jihadists' efforts in strategic communications reveals a stark disadvantage which must be remedied in order to ensure our success in public diplomacy.

THE DEMOCRATIC DISADVANTAGE

In formulating, implementing, and assessing our nation's public diplomacy efforts, there are several issues we must consider beyond the goals identified above and the need to measure our achievement of them. For example, what are we not doing in the realm of public diplomacy? As a liberal democracy with the world's most advanced telecommunications and media capabilities, what are we not able to do? What is the grassroots online jihadist network doing better than we are? What might be hampering the effectiveness of government agencies responsible for public diplomacy? In terms of this latter question, a number of observers have rightly pointed out the need to mitigate the "noise" factor—that is, messages (and messengers) which undermine the validity of the public diplomacy effort. For example, to paraphrase a recent article by Georgetown University professor Daniel Byman, a few years ago Vice President Cheney condoned Israel's assassination of Palestinian officials in a television interview—a position that plays poorly in the Muslim world. While in years past, few Muslims (even in pro-U.S. countries) would have seen Cheney make such a statement because their state-run media would not have shown it, today satellite television and Internet streaming video allows them to watch and hear the Vice President's message. Similarly, the statements of U.S. evangelical leaders such as Franklin Graham, who offered the invocation at Bush's first inauguration and later decried Islam as a "wicked" religion, received considerable attention in the Muslim world as well. These kinds of "noise" make it difficult for Karen Hughes or U.S. officials stationed abroad to simultaneously push the idea that the United States respects Islam.[65]

In a democracy, however, the problem of noise runs far deeper than public officials, clergy, or others whose words are featured in mainstream press and television news sound bytes. In an information age, we are all empowered to communicate to the same audiences which our leaders in the GWOT are most concerned with. The Internet enables us all to become publishers of words, images, sounds, and videos—some of which can negatively impact our government's ability to achieve the goals of a comprehensive public diplomacy agenda. The amateur video of Americans desecrating a Koran, described earlier, is a prime example of how ignorance and irresponsibility can undermine a democracy's public diplomacy efforts. This video was circulated on jihadist websites and bulletin boards worldwide as "evidence" of how Americans truly feel about Islam. Anti-Islamic speeches and public statements made by political, religious, or social leaders can give even greater strength to the jihadist propaganda machine, as do the infamous photos of the recent Abu Ghraib incident. These types of information create a disadvantage for us in the strategic communications battlespace—a disadvantage which our enemies are keenly aware of and seek to exploit as a means of increasing recruitment and support.

In essence, the noise created in an age of globally interconnected information providers and consumers allows members of a liberal democracy to undermine their own security. Ignorance and irresponsibility are potentially dangerous in any society. For a democracy that is engaged in an ambitious public diplomacy effort, seeking to influence the hearts and minds of potential terrorist recruits, ignorance and irresponsibility in the information age are perhaps two of the most worrisome constraints we face in trying to achieve our public diplomacy objectives. And yet, among all the recent studies of public diplomacy described in this article and in all the statements about public diplomacy issued by national leaders, there has been virtually no discussion about countering this fundamental disadvantage.

In comparison to the noise generated by the proliferation of information producers in a liberal democracy, non-state terrorist groups (and even individual adherents of terrorism) have a distinct advantage over nation-states in the realm of strategic communications, an advantage that stems from the lack of constraints on what, when, and where they publish their motivational and operational information. This problem is particularly acute when examining the role of the Internet in the spread of the global salafi jihad movement influenced by the leaders of al-Qaida. Here, we find an important and potentially powerful advantage not found in liberal democracies—a single, clear message is being put forth by virtually all members of this network: join the jihad. Various rationales are offered for joining the jihad, and these are crafted in ways which appeal to a host of target audiences. As well, a complementary message—support the jihad—is provided for those who would rather provide money, information, and safe haven.

Our adversaries thus have an advantage in terms of the limited scope and complementary nature of their messages. The simple call to join or support the jihad is repeated in various ways by a growing number of voices, supported by a wide range of strategic and religious texts, videos, music, and even video games—often reflecting a sophisticated understanding of who will find these information resources compelling. The terrorists post at will, with consistent messages and a concerted, complementary effort. They have a powerful ideology wrapped in religion—the world's fastest growing religion—whereas our ideology of democratic freedoms includes a separation of church and state. They provide interpretations of selections from the Koran to support their claim of violent jihad as a duty. For example, terrorism scholar Jerrold Post recently described a message he found on an al-Qaida website urging Muslim professionals to use the Internet to serve the jihad. "If you fail to do this, you may be held into account before Allah on the day of the judgment," the message said.[66] In some cases, like the online competition described at the beginning of this discussion, incentives are provided for contributing one's voice and talents to the chorus of jihadist websites. This online grassroots activity is spreading, indicative of a social movement, the likes of which we have not seen before in scale or common mindedness.

Further, the network of information providers in the world of salafist jihad appears to be more effective at strategic communications than any government entity, regardless of how well-funded, well-equipped, well-trained and led. Why is this? At least four reasons come to mind: message simplicity, a religious dimension, a relative absence of "noise," and a lack of bureaucratic or legal constraints on messages or messengers. In the first of these, the comparison is fairly straightforward. Explaining democracy to a community in which it has never existed can be complicated and time-consuming, whereas a simple message which call adherents to perform a duty prescribed within their own religion is easier to communicate and understand. In the second facet, the jihadists can frame their struggle in a terminology of "doing God's will," while democracies are about "people's will"—governance by the people, for the people. To date, there has been a relative absence of "noise" distorting the jihadists' message, while the same cannot be said about liberal democracies. And finally, government-led communications efforts are naturally constrained by a variety of bureaucratic or legal constraints on the messages and messengers involved, constraints which do not exist in a grassroots networked organization. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the disadvantage faced by democracies in the strategic communications battlespace.

These disadvantages are made particularly acute by the Internet, which plays an increasingly central role in the struggle for influence over hearts and minds in the Muslim World. New voices—individuals with the same goals and providing the same messages—are joining this online community of information providers every day. They are encouraged to do so by terrorist leaders as a

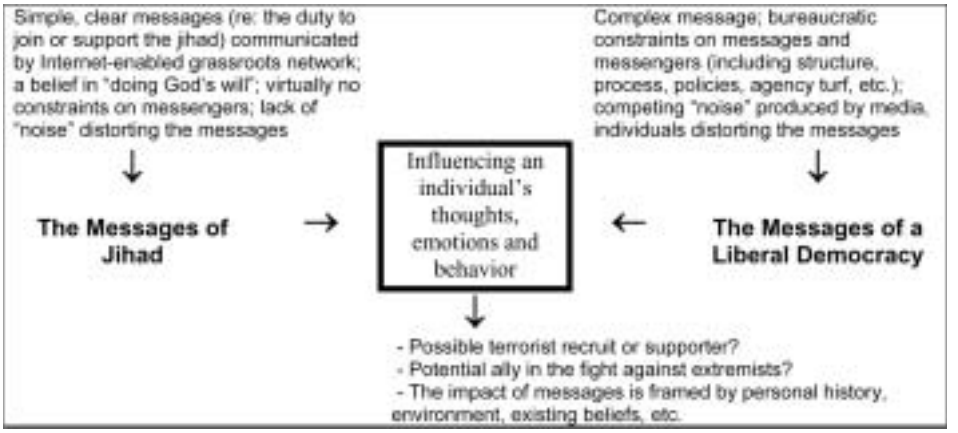

Figure 1: A Comparative Disadvantage in the Strategic Communications Battlespace.

way of supporting the jihad. Thus, radical Islamist websites are proliferating like rabbits, in large part because they are very easy to produce and maintain. The costs and technical skills required to create a website are minimal, and in many cases Internet providers will offer free website hosting on their servers in return for the ability to include pop-up banners or other forms of commercial advertising to the website's visitors. The number of these websites is reported to have grown from a dozen in the late 1990s to more than 4,500 today.[67] As described earlier, these websites both motivate and train new recruits. Governments can attempt to monitor and shut down these websites, but this is akin to an online game of "whack a mole"—seconds after authorities shut down an extremist website in London, it reappears on a server in Berlin or Bombay. No, this is clearly not a viable solution to the problem. Instead, the situation requires a long-term effort to counter the appeal of these websites, and reduce the incentives for those who produce and maintain them—an important aspect of America's public diplomacy agenda.

ADDRESSING THE DEMOCRATIC DISADVANTAGE

While we cannot eliminate our disadvantage in the strategic communications battlespace—it is part and parcel of our nature as a democracy—there are some things we can do to compensate for it by emphasizing strengths in other areas. One of these, as emphasized by Karen Hughes' description of the nation's current public diplomacy imperatives, is to amplify the nature of our message itself. Ideas must be countered with ideas. To combat the message of the jihadists, perhaps a new, simple message is needed—something like "join the global democratic community" or "join the anti-jihad; this is why, and this is how." We offer a more compelling vision of the future than the jihadists, a

future illuminated by the freedoms of speech, religion, and assembly we enjoy in all liberal democracies. Even the pursuit of religious rewards in an afterlife is more possible in a liberal democratic system than under any other form of government. Communicating this vision in an appealing way should be relatively easy—as Aristotle observed in his *Rhetoric*, "The things that are truer and better are more susceptible to reasoned argument and more persuasive, generally speaking." Clearly, the historical record supports a stronger argument for liberal democracies than can be made for radical interpretations of Islam put forward by the global salafi jihad movement. However, we must also take measures to ensure that in communicating our message to the Muslim world we reduce, not increase, existing perceptions of arrogance, opportunism, and double standards.

Our messages also need to address historical grievances in the Middle East. For example, as professor Daniel Byman recently observed, we must pronounce loud and clear that the United States seeks a Palestinian state, and that "the United States neither installed Arab autocrats nor is responsible for their continued rule. The jihadists are merely blaming us because it is more convenient than engaging in a long political struggle against autocratic, corrupt regimes."[68] As Karen Hughes recently stated:

> We must work to amplify a clear message . . . that no injustice, no wrong—no matter how legitimate—can ever justify the murder of innocents. We must stress that the victims of terrorist violence today are people of every nationality, ethnic group and religious faith, and that most of the people being targeted and killed by terrorists and insurgents in Iraq are innocent Muslims. We must contrast the society that people of good will around the world are working toward—an expanding circle of freedom and opportunity where diversity is respected and celebrated—with the kind of society the terrorists seek: a restrictive, repressive conformity.[69]

The contrast Hughes refers to is even more important if we consider that when Islamic extremists have been in positions of power, they have ruled neither effectively nor justly. Indeed, as Byman observes, "the Islamists' abysmal record in power . . . may be America's best hope for discrediting the movement."[70] In making this observation, Byman draws on recent publications by respected scholars of Islam like Olivier Roy (*The Failure of Political Islam*, 1994), Gilles Kepel (*Jihad: The Train of Political Islam*, 2000) and Graham Fuller, who observed in *The Future of Political Islam* (2003) that "nothing can make Islamism seem unappealing faster than an unsuccessful stint in power."[71]

We can also mitigate our relative disadvantage vis-à-vis the extremists by discrediting the messengers and their message, another core objective of our strategic communications strategy. For example, the world knows that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and his followers have murdered thousands of Muslims in Iraq. We might consider broadcasting photos of these "victims of Zarqawi" along with statements from their families—perhaps even creating an online

image and video memorial to them, showing the world the Muslims he is murdering in order to put a more human face on the mounting casualty figures. We need to engage the enemies on the strategic communications battlespace with the intent of enabling them to discredit themselves, empowering them with the means for their own demise.

As described earlier, information is a weapon which is proving useful to terrorists in terms of affecting the overall threat environment. What kinds of information can we identify and use to impact this environment in ways that reduce our own disadvantage? For one thing, we can create (or, more appropriately, enable others in the Muslim world to develop and disseminate) greater amounts of "noise" to distort and dilute their message. For example, one could envision a proliferation of websites and videos featuring captured terrorists confessing to murder and renouncing the leaders of the jihad as corrupt and misguided in their interpretation of the Koran. Within any movement, there are inevitably differences of opinion among key leaders and their followers with regard to strategies, goals, tactics, and ideology. We must identify the fissures in the messages and messengers of the global salafi jihad movement, and publicly and aggressively exploit these fissures and exacerbate ideological disagreements.

In sum, there are many promising avenues which our nation's public diplomacy effort can pursue. While promoting a more positive image of America to the world remains vital, a primary goal should be to highlight the brutality and poor political record of radical Islamists, and reduce their popular appeal to potential supporters and recruits. These are all important aspects of a successful counterterrorist communications strategy. However, there are additional considerations that have largely been ignored in the current debate about public diplomacy, such as educating Americans to be more responsible communicators and motivating a grassroots effort to get out the "anti-jihad" message.

Educate the Masses

To begin with, recent public controversies demonstrate that media correspondents, politicians, talk show hosts, newspaper editors, and virtually anyone else with a public bully pulpit who comments about Islam must be held responsible for educating themselves about Islam. In recent years, too many Americans have said things about Islam from a position of near total ignorance (particularly since the attacks of 9/11), and then are somehow surprised when their words inflame the Muslim world. The education of our own citizenry is thus vital to a successful public diplomacy effort. At a minimum, two kinds of education are needed—education about the public diplomacy mission and its importance to national security, and education about being responsible communicators with the rest of the world.

Combating American ignorance, particularly online, should be a priority of the nation's public diplomacy effort. One aspect of education that has already garnered some attention is in the realm of fostering a better understanding of the outside world. As Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice noted in September 2005:

> I consider public diplomacy to be so critical to our efforts; because I consider it so important that we have the opportunity to engage the rest of the world, to have exchanges with the rest of the world so that we can get to know them and they can get to know us; that we can have the ability to educate Americans and others about who we are but also about who the rest of the world is. So in many ways, Americans are too focused on who we are. We need to know more about the cultures and the languages of the world.[72]

On a similar note, Karen Hughes recently observed that "Americans must educate themselves to be better citizens of the world."[73] But in addition to education about the world, it is also vital that all Americans understand how terrorists are attempting to influence our thoughts and behavior through the information they communicate.

For many years, al-Qaida and affiliated groups have been communicating with the American public (although we haven't always listened) in an attempt to influence our thoughts and behavior. Simply fostering an understanding of strategic communications can help inform the average American's understanding of what public diplomacy is, how it is conducted, what it means for national security, and how an individual's actions can undermine it. In other words, the public must be educated about the strategic communications battlespace, and how they may be contributors (either positively or negatively) in the war of ideas. Through public diplomacy, our nation can have a positive impact on the environment within which recruitment for terrorism takes place. When we undermine these efforts, we are in effect hampering counterterrorism efforts and enabling the terrorists to gain an advantage in the battlespace of the mind. This suggests a second, equally important aspect of a public education campaign: combating irresponsibility.

Americans in all walks of life must become more responsible citizens of the nation and the world. For example, there are certain individuals who have developed a knack for posting inflammatory (and often ill-informed) statements on popular Web blogs and other forums. To them, I would send the following appeal: before posting your next essay on how "Islam is bad" or "Arabs are the enemy," please think carefully about the implications this has for our efforts to diminish the threat of Islamic extremist terrorism to our homeland. You could be doing more damage than you think.

While this discussion suggests that we work together to tone down the "noise" described earlier, the purpose here is not to advocate any type of censorship or monitoring. The space for open criticism of government policy and

its leaders is a key attribute of a healthy democracy. But as President Bush called for "responsible criticism" in his 2006 State of the Union Address,[74] so, too, must we recognize that educated, responsible American communicators can do far more in the service of the nation's public diplomacy effort than any government agency. This analysis calls for raising the American public's consciousness of public diplomacy, of the strategic communications battlespace, and of the individual's role in fighting extremism and securing the republic. A significant amount of modern day communication between the U.S. and the rest of the world is not driven by official "policy" or spokespeople. As citizens of a liberal democracy, we all have the power to represent our country, in some form, to the world, and the world learns about American values and beliefs through our daily interactions in person and online. Some of these interactions do not further our public diplomacy objectives—for example, a loud, obnoxious American tourist in a foreign land, or a one-sided, ill-informed anti-Islam essay posted on a website. In the information age, virtually any American can easily contribute to—or undermine—public diplomacy. Thus, it seems wholly unfair to demand public diplomacy success from the government, when that work can be all too easily undermined by other sources of information that are easily accessible to the target audiences.

In the battlespace of the mind, anyone—not just a public official—can be a player of strategic significance. Our nation's public diplomacy leaders must come to understand that in a globally networked information age, strategic communications are neither wholly controlled nor directed by governments. From this understanding, it should become clear that the education of all potential communicators in the U.S.—particularly education about their impact on public diplomacy and Islamic extremism, as well as more generally about their relationship with the world around them—is paramount. Further, once the general populace is more aware of the true nature of this "war of ideas," they must be empowered and encouraged to put forward an effective message to counter the online jihadist ideologues. In other words, we must motivate the masses to engage the enemy in the strategic communications battlespace.

Motivate the Masses

As described earlier, the global salafi jihadists have mobilized a grassroots movement, mostly via the Internet, to spread the simple message of "join the jihad." We need to counter this with our own grassroots effort to spread an equally simple message of "join the global democratic community" or "join the anti-jihad." Something similar to the "get out the vote" campaign is envisioned here, where average Americans and the private sector—not the federal government—play a prominent role in spreading this message. The government's ability to engage the enemy in the strategic communications battlespace is

limited by policy and legal constraints, as well as the perception of messenger credibility. In various parts of the world, there exists a common perspective—driven by a history of state-owned media—that anything appearing in the U.S. press or television is backed by the government. While members of a liberal democracy know full well that this is not the case, in places like the Arab world there is widespread suspicion about intentions and hidden messages in any government pronouncements. So, while in many countries the state-run media lacks legitimacy, the result has been the rapid rise to prominence of al-Jazeera, al Manar and other private media outlets, as well as a flood of attention toward accessing and providing information resources via the Internet, as discussed earlier. Thus, a CNN broadcast of President Bush giving a speech in the Rose Garden has limited impact in the war of ideas, while a handful of misguided country youth can post a controversial video to the Internet and unfortunately have a far greater impact.

To further complicate the issue, recent public surveys indicate that governments—particularly those of the Arab World, but increasingly the U.S. and other Western liberal democracies—are seen as corrupt, decadent, and untrustworthy, not only by Islamic extremists but by many moderates of virtually any faith, from Europe to Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Recent scandals among the highest levels of the U.S. policymaking and business communities have not helped strengthen the appeal of our message to suspicious Muslim audiences abroad. Our message needs to be as credible as the jihadists' message, and in the strategic communications battlespace, the messenger matters—messengers must be seen as credible by their target audiences. Thus, in the battlespace of the mind, an agency of the U.S. government that is "telling our story" is limited in its ability to counter the pro-jihad messages being spread throughout the Internet via the grassroots jihadist network. What is needed is greater involvement from a host of non-government messengers, in a grassroots manner similar to what we are seeing among the ideological movement described in this article.

Further, as a recent Council on Foreign Relations report observed, "private media often communicate American family values, religious commitments, and the merits of democracy more effectively than do government officials."[75] I would add that American citizens in general have a great deal of power to communicate these values and merits as well. The government should capitalize on this, particularly given that bureaucratic organizations are rarely noted for their flexibility and creative imagination, whereas in the private sector (and among individuals more generally) these traits are more common.

Thus, educated and responsible citizens of a liberal democracy can be considered a collective amplifier for communicating the positive message of democracy to the world. A struggle to influence hearts and minds can be won or lost through actions and words. We are engaged in a social movement of

global proportion, where governments play a secondary role (at best) in shaping an individual's beliefs. Over-reliance on the government for conducting public diplomacy will be our downfall. We must engage our own citizens at a grassroots level, and enlist them in this effort. The technological forces that empower individuals and non-state actors to effectively challenge states globally also empower individuals within to take a leading role in the achievement of our nation's public diplomacy objectives.

CONCLUSION

In sum, this analysis of the strategic communications battlespace reveals a troubling imbalance of capabilities. On one side of this struggle, a network of global salafi jihadists are using the Internet to their advantage, disseminating an impressive array of motivational and operational information to all corners of the world. What is perhaps most striking is that a majority of these online information resources have a single, common objective: convincing and enabling individuals to join the jihad (or at least support it, with money, safe haven, etc.).

Meanwhile, in an age of universal access to the means of providing information online, citizens of a liberal democracy like ours have the power to undermine our nation's strategic communications and public diplomacy efforts, largely through ignorance and irresponsibility. This problem is particularly acute when communicating with many corners of the Muslim world, where there is no frame of reference for understanding the implications of a free and open press, or a society that enjoys the legal protection of free speech. Thus, whether the messenger is Condoleeza Rice, Howard Stern, Pat Robertson, or the 14 year-old web blogger down the street, messages put forward online are often given equal credence in terms of representing American policy, culture, and ideas. The resulting "noise" tends to distort and detract from America's central public diplomacy effort.

This analysis concludes that an effective public diplomacy agenda requires a commitment to educating our own citizens for world comprehension and responsible communication. While our nation's leaders have recently made a renewed commitment to public diplomacy, we are not investing in public education at home about what this means to us in our daily lives. If our public diplomacy efforts are to be successful, we as citizens must recognize our potential for undermining these efforts, and act more responsibly. Things we do today can impact the security or our children and grandchildren tomorrow. A democracy in the information age requires a certain level of responsibility among its citizens, a commitment to ensuring that their words and actions do not undermine the security of the nation to which they have pledged their allegiance. Further, we must also convince and enable the general public (both in the West and the Muslim world) to "join

the anti-jihad," a grassroots movement fostering commitment to a mutually respectful and peaceful negotiation of grievances.

The discussion presented here will hopefully provoke thoughtful reflection, debate and the expansion of understanding about (and commitment to) strategic communications in the global struggle against violent extremists. By a committment to educating and motivating the American public, we can mitigate the democratic disadvantage in the strategic communications battlespace, and help ensure the success of our nation's public diplomacy effort.

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