

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

WINNING THE "WAR OF IDEAS" IN  
THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

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## ABSTRACT

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Winning the "War of Ideas" is vital to the success of the GWOT, not only in gaining and maintaining allies, but also in convincing the population of the World of the worthiness of US policy. At present, neither aspect is being conducted in any meaningful and coordinated fashion with the result being a gradual decline in support of American policies. This anti Americanism can be seen both in the Muslim World and amongst western allies, where American foreign policy is often viewed as being hypocritical and incoherent. This erosion of "soft power" can take years to redress and the reliance on "hard power" can lead to greater long term consequences. This paper addresses the American Question, "Why do they hate us?," from the perspectives of both friends and foes. It details the attitude of Osama Bin Laden towards the US to attempt to comprehend his motives and examines the attitudes of other nations towards the US. It looks at the existing apparatus for waging the Information Campaign and then makes recommendations for its improvement. The paper concludes that a strategic level organization is required to formulate and coordinate a coherent information campaign in order to fully utilize this key element of national power. It requires the support of a Center for Strategic Communications to promote "best practices" from across all areas of society, in order to ensure that a credible and coherent message is put out by all government departments. In a world where perception is often more important than reality, winning the "War of Ideas" may well determine the outcome of the entire War and be a less costly option in the long run.



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## WINNING THE "WAR OF IDEAS" IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

Strategic communication is vital to US national security and foreign policy. We are engaged in a global struggle of ideas similar in magnitude to what we faced throughout half of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

In response to the attacks of 9/11, the United States National Security Strategy (NSS) formulated the Grand Strategy for the fight against global terrorism. This became known as the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and was further developed in the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (NSCT), which established the 4D approach to the problem: Defeat, Deny, Diminish and Defend. The "Diminish" element is a crucial part of the campaign against terrorism, but one that is seldom fully understood and rarely implemented in a coordinated manner. Central to the Diminish element is winning the so-called "War of Ideas," not only with the domestic audience, but also with international friends and allies, and the wider Muslim world. If coalitions of the willing are to be built and maintained, and the hearts and minds of the ambivalent or hostile Muslim world won over, then winning the War of Ideas is of vital importance to the US. In this paper, I will briefly examine the NSS and NSCT, focusing on the "Diminish" line of operation. I will then establish some of the main underlying causes of terrorism and address the American question "Why do they hate us?" Finally, I will assess the effectiveness of the current policy and make recommendations for its improvement. In this paper I will only examine the War of Ideas from the perspective of friends, foes and neutrals; I will not examine the important aspect of obtaining and maintaining support from the domestic audience.<sup>2</sup>

### **NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY (NSS)**

The NSS is the pivotal document that states the values and ideals of the US and serves as a touchstone to the visions of the Founding Fathers. It espouses the values of freedom, democracy and free enterprise, and professes the rights of free speech, worship, justice, liberty and equality. The NSS also has an evangelical emphasis on spreading democratic values :

...the United States will use this moment of opportunity to extend the benefits of freedom across the globe. We will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets, and free trade to every corner of the world."<sup>3</sup> There is also the recognition of natural rights and the statement that "Freedom is the non-negotiable demand of human dignity; the birthright of every person – in every civilization."<sup>4</sup>

The strategy that the NSS lays out is encapsulated in the bullets below:

- Champion aspirations for human dignity.
- Strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism and work to prevent attacks against us and our friends.
- Work with others to defuse regional conflicts.
- Prevent our enemies from threatening us, our allies, and our friends with weapons of mass destruction.
- Ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade.
- Expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy.
- Develop agendas for cooperative actions with the other main centers of global power.
- Transform America's National Security Institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century.<sup>5</sup>

The NSS lays out a broad strategy for dealing with this enemy by “using all elements of national and international power.”<sup>6</sup> Diplomatically, coalitions will be used for global and regional action against terrorism whilst nations will be encouraged or compelled to act internally against such groups. Diplomacy will assist in the resolution of wars, provide for humanitarian relief, and help build the organs of democracy around the world. The recognition of the information campaign, or War of Ideas, is deemed critical and it is emphasized that “the war on terrorism is not a clash of civilizations” but “the clash within a civilization, a battle for the future of the Muslim world.”<sup>7</sup> A resolution of the Palestinian issue is considered essential and a campaign must be waged to win the hearts and minds of the Muslim world, or at least promote an understanding of American values and goals. Economic growth is one method of attacking an underlying cause of terrorism: “It allows people to lift their lives out of poverty, spurs economic and legal reform, and the fight against corruption, and it reinforces the habits of liberty.”<sup>8</sup> There is also the Military aspect of national power, which has tended to be the most widely used in recent years, which has its own informational elements. This disproportionate emphasis on the Military element has often been at the expense of the other elements, particularly the Information component. What is crucial is that all of the elements of national power should be fully utilized in a coordinated strategy, thus not only creating a coherent approach, but also synergy from the separate elements. Used in conjunction with each other, with varying degrees of emphasis, these elements of national power should harness all the combined means available to the US.

## **NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR COMBATING TERRORISM (NSCT)**

The NSCT states that “We must fight terrorist networks ... using every instrument of national power – diplomatic, economic, law enforcement, financial, information, intelligence, and military.”<sup>9</sup> It details the nature of the terrorist threat and then establishes the goals and objectives of the “4D strategy” (Defeat Terrorists and Their Organizations; Deny Sponsorship, Support, and Sanctuary to Terrorists; Diminish the Underlying Conditions that Terrorists Seek to Exploit; Defend US Citizens and Interests at Home and Abroad). Within the Diminish element, it is stated that: “We will win the war of ideas and diminish the underlying conditions that promote the despair and the destructive visions of political change that lead people to embrace, rather than shun, terrorism”.<sup>10</sup> It cites regional disputes, economic, social and political development, good governance and the rule of law as underlying conditions that need to be addressed to diminish the rise of terrorism. It also recognizes that “Finding a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a crucial component to winning the war of ideas”.<sup>11</sup> As tangible proposals, the NSCT directs that “combatant commands will address civil-military relations and humanitarian assistance in their Theater Security Cooperation Plans”,<sup>12</sup> and develop bi-lateral and multi-lateral arrangements. The aim is to “de-legitimize” terrorism and place it in the same light as slavery, piracy and genocide. Assurance of the Muslim world is also imperative to convince Muslims that “American values are not at odds with Islam.”<sup>13</sup>

## **UNDERLYING CAUSES OF TERRORISM**

The NSS and NSCT detail a number of underlying causes of terrorism: poverty, inequality, corruption, lack of education, injustice, as well as religious and territorial grievances, all of which nurture terrorism. It has also been emphasized that the GWOT is not a war with Islam, but rather a symptom of a war *within* Islam; it is not a clash of civilizations but a clash *within* a civilization. The Muslim world is facing huge modernization, brought about through globalization, and is finding its entire way of life and culture under threat. This has led to a backlash against the outside “western” world, characterized by America. Having a “common enemy” can serve to unite people behind a cause, but the US is not completely exonerated on some of the charges raised. The US is militarily, economically, politically and culturally the only superpower in a uni-polar world. This, in itself, is not necessarily a threat to other nations and cultures provided that this power is not abused and is handled responsibly and sensitively. Similarly, perception is often more important than reality, and the message that the US is emanating is fundamental to US national security and foreign policy. Unfortunately, the information campaign is not working, as evidenced by the reaction of friends, neutrals and foes alike to some aspects of US foreign

policy. If the US cannot convince its closest allies of the wisdom and worthiness of its cause, what chance is there of convincing an already partial Muslim audience? Why, then, does there appear to be such a backlash against America, not only from within the Muslim world, but also from western allies and other nations?

### **WHY DO THEY HATE US?**

In an address to Congress President Bush raised this issue: "Americans are asking, why do they hate us?" He then went on to answer the question: "They hate what we see right here in this chamber - a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms - our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other."<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, President Bush did not ask the right people that question and assumed the knowledge to answer it himself or from within the context of his administration. This instantly revealed one of the fundamental problems of the War of Ideas: the error of adopting an ethnocentric view of the World. This was further evident when the GWOT was referred to at various times as a "crusade," a highly emotive term in the Muslim world. A better and more obvious way of answering this question, but one that appears to be seldom used, would be to ask the main perpetrator of the 9/11 attack, Osama Bin Laden. In his "Letter to America" he gave the following reasons for "Why we are fighting and opposing you?," which are summarized below.

- You attacked us in Palestine.
- You attacked us in Somalia ... Chechnya ... Kashmir ... Lebanon.
- Under your supervision, consent and orders, the governments of our countries, which act as your agents, attack us on a daily basis.
- You steal our wealth and oil at paltry prices because of your international influence and military threats.
- Your forces occupy our countries; you spread your military bases throughout them; you corrupt our lands ...
- You have starved the Muslims of Iraq, where children die every day.
- You have supported the Jews ...

He went on to answer "What are we calling you to do, and what do we want from you?"

- The first thing that we are calling you to is Islam... And it is the religion of unity and obedience to Allah, and total equality between all people, without regarding their color, sex, or language.

- The second thing we call you to, is to stop your oppression, lies, immorality and debauchery that has spread among you... We call you to be a people of manners, principles, honor, and purity; to reject immoral acts of fornication, homosexuality, intoxicants, gambling and trading with interest... It is saddening to tell you that you are the worst civilization witnessed by the history of mankind ...
  - You have destroyed nature ...
  - Your law is the law of the rich and wealthy ...
  - ... your hypocrisy in manners and principles ...
  - The freedom and democracy that you call to is for yourselves and for white race only ...
  - Your policy on prohibiting and forcibly removing WMD to ensure world peace ... only applies to those countries which you do not permit to possess such weapons.
  - You are the last ones to respect the resolutions and policies of International Law.
  - As for the war criminals which you censure and form criminal courts for – you shamelessly ask that your own are granted immunity.
  - What happens in Guantanamo ... you hypocrites ...
- What we call you to thirdly is to take an honest stance with yourselves ...
- We also advise you to stop supporting Israel ...
- We also advise you to pack your bags and get out of our lands.
- Sixthly, we call upon you to end your support of the corrupt leaders in our countries.
- We also call you to deal with us and interact with us on the basis of mutual interests and benefits ...<sup>15</sup>

In a more recent statement, released just prior to the US Presidential election, Bin Laden addressed the American people to advise them how to “avoid another Manhattan, about the war, its causes and results.”<sup>16</sup> In this statement he made the following comments.

- We fought you because we are free and do not accept injustice. We want to restore freedom to our nation.
- ... we saw the injustice of the US-Israeli alliance against our people in Palestine and Lebanon ...
- While I was looking at those destroyed towers in Lebanon [1982], it occurred to me to punish the unjust one in a similar manner by destroying towers in the United States so

that it would feel some of what we felt and to be deterred from killing our children and women ...

He calls for "jihad" (struggle) to defend the faith and for an "intifada" (shaking off) illegitimate rule.<sup>17</sup> From these transcripts, a great deal can be learned about the enemy's goals and leadership which can influence the US approach to conducting the GWOT. It is imperative to understand your enemy in order to defeat him and equally important to understand the attitudes, aspirations and culture of the people both sides are seeking to win over. Regrettably, opinion surveys conducted by numerous organizations have produced consistent results that reveal widespread and intensifying animosity towards the US. The US is viewed unfavorably in the vast majority of Muslim nations, such as Egypt (98%), Saudi Arabia (94%), Morocco (88%), and Jordan (78%).<sup>18</sup> The root cause for this feeling stems back to the same issue: US support for Israel. Associated with this is the apparent disconnect between the rhetoric and the reality of US foreign policy which gives rise to accusations of hypocrisy. For instance, whilst espousing the values of freedom and democracy, the US simultaneously supports corrupt and undemocratic governments in the Middle East; whilst condemning and fighting terrorism, the US condones Israeli actions in the occupied territories; whilst pushing for non proliferation to Iran and North Korea, the Israeli nuclear program is ignored.

This inconsistency of US foreign policy is at the core of the current War of Ideas and has been made much worse since the Iraq War. Not only is Operation Iraqi Freedom seen as "illegal" by most nations but it has also created the specter of American troops killing Muslims with the inevitable casualties amongst women and children, and homes destroyed. The Arab press is now full of images coming out of Iraq and Israel, both showing "repressed" Muslims fighting high tech tanks and attack helicopters, confirming the suspicions of US-Israeli compliance and appealing to the strong bond of Arab brotherhood. The message that images of children throwing stones at tanks create in America is that "they are only children;" the message in the Muslim World is that "even the children are angry"<sup>19</sup>. (Parallels of David and Goliath are also made).

It has frequently been asserted that despite these negative attitudes towards the US, most of the people actually polled in these surveys would do anything to live in America. That is also part of the ethnocentric view that many Americans have: "they hate us because they are jealous of us; they actually want to be part of us". Globalization (which can be interpreted as Westernization or Americanization) has given most parts of the World access to American culture and products. McDonalds, Starbucks, Coca-cola, Levis, Nike, Hollywood and such like have become symbols of America which have swept the World. Many people aspire to own US

products and the images of some of the subsequent incongruities have been widely seen, such as women in burkas drinking coca cola, gunmen wearing US pop T shirts and running shoes. However, although this exposure might have created an amount of emulation it has conversely created animosity. People do not now need to go to America to experience some of its trappings, and at a time when obtaining a visa to do so is even more difficult. Similarly, the image projected about American society has fascinated but also repelled many Muslim audiences: portrayals of pornography, crime, violence, drugs, the family and even evangelical Christianity have deepened the divide felt by many in the Muslim world. "America's image problem ... is linked to perceptions of the US as arrogant, hypocritical, and self indulgent."<sup>20</sup> Defense of their own culture, fear of change as well as a deep rooted antithesis towards what they see confront the Muslim audience. These feelings have been exploited by Bin Laden, but he is speaking to an already receptive audience.

The first Islamist to declare a cultural war against the US and Western civilization was the Egyptian scholar Sayyid Qutb. After living in the US for many years, he declared that the worst form of colonialism was "intellectual and spiritual colonialism"<sup>21</sup> He advocated that Muslims should conduct their own personal jihad in their minds to purify themselves first before conducting the external jihad against the West. The feeling of conspiracy against Islam stems back to the Crusades but is close to the surface in the Muslim World and can serve as a lightning rod for a culture that is facing its own modernization and change. When President Bush commented "This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while"<sup>22</sup> it had major repercussions throughout the Muslim World. One scholar observed that "Those words have remained a defining moment in the Arab world's reading of the character and intentions of George W Bush – and by extension the United States."<sup>23</sup> It also enabled "the Muslim terrorists [to] rework these historic religious symbols to fit present day conditions as a vehicle to inspire political action and revolutionary violence against its enemies."<sup>24</sup>

There is also suspicion over the motives of the US and the regimes/people they support. "The US government wants us to reform ourselves. There is no doubt, however, that a US-envisaged reform will only serve US championed interests.... They want us to embrace a culture that is not ours so that you have a Muslim man who dresses in a traditional gown but underneath the gown he is no longer an Arab ... reforms must come from within ... A final condition is the need for gradualism while implementing reforms."<sup>25</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, the US supports countries like Saudi Arabia who are viewed, even from within the Muslim world, as "the first Islamic fundamentalist state in the modern Middle East."<sup>26</sup> Saudi Arabia officially adheres to Wahhabiyyah that advocates "purifying religion from all 'satanic'

influences, including most facets of modernity ..."<sup>27</sup> The US support for Saudi Arabia remains a source of contention to many groups.

What is equally noticeable, but less explicable and possibly more worrying, is the anti Americanism felt by many of the non Muslim nations, particularly Western allies. In the aftermath of 9/11 the US enjoyed widespread support from its allies. This support offered a window of opportunity that lasted through Afghanistan, where a direct link to terrorism was evident, but waned over Iraq.

Hearts and minds have to be won in friendly states as well as in hostile ones. Since the Western alliance consists of popular democracies, domestic opinion in each member state must be persuaded not only as to the justness of the war on terrorism as a whole, but to the rightness of each action within it.<sup>28</sup>

Polls conducted across the World reveal a similar and growing dissatisfaction towards America.

One such poll<sup>29</sup> found the following average of attitudes when taken across the USA, Canada,

UK, Australia, France, Russia, Jordan, Korea, Israel, Indonesia and Brazil. Positive scores

indicate agreement with the statement; negative scores indicate disagreement.

- America is a force for good across the world -6%
- America is a beacon of hope and opportunity +5%
- America now feels it is the only superpower and they can do what they like +23%
- The world looks at America and they see money and sex +29%
- America is reaping the thorns planted by its rulers in the world +30%
- Desire to live in America -79%

(96% of Americans assumed foreigners would like to live in the US).

- Favorable results were obtained for Hollywood movies and US clothes.
- Unfavorable results were obtained for US television, food, drinks, web sites and economic policy.
- Most countries considered themselves to be more cultured than the US (even Australia!).
- America was considered in a similar vein as North Korea, Iran and Syria regarding danger to world peace.

Another poll found that

... in Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Japan, Spain and South Korea a majority of voters share a rejection of the Iraq invasion, contempt for the Bush administration, a growing hostility to the US ... But they all make a clear distinction between this kind of anti Americanism and expressing a dislike of American people. On average 68% of those

polled say they have a favorable opinion of American people. The 10-country poll suggests that rarely has an American administration faced such isolation and lack of public support amongst its closest allies.<sup>30</sup>

There is clearly an amount of jealousy and envy from weaker western nations and the fear of change from culturally and religiously different nations. But, what is common to both sides, is the dislike of American Foreign Policy over: the need for an even-handed approach to the Palestinian issue; the respect for international bodies such as the UN; compliance with international agreements (landmines, Kyoto accord, ABM); and respect for international law (ICC, Guantanamo Bay). It is vital to portray America as the benevolent, not the bully. The US may be the only "sheriff on the block," but he must respect and uphold the laws of the community and cannot place himself above them, even if he has the power to do so and is convinced of the righteousness of his cause.

### **HOW DOES THE US COMMUNICATE TO THE WORLD?**

America is failing to articulate its views to the World in a positive light. The problem is that the US does not speak with one coherent voice, sends out mixed messages, and is misunderstood by many of its friends and enemies alike. The assistance to Muslims in places like Bosnia and Kosovo goes unrecognized and even the tsunami relief operations will have to be portrayed sensitively to receive any credit. It has not only failed to win the hearts and minds of the non violent Muslim world, it has fostered their natural tendency to side with the radical extremists. Part of this is due to US policy in Iraq itself, which is not under scrutiny here, but how the message is conveyed is certainly open to examination.

Within the US Government, the Department of State is responsible for promoting international understanding and has the mandate to "increase understanding for American values, policies, and initiatives to create a receptive international environment."<sup>31</sup> The Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs is primarily responsible for this area and has the Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) to conduct the operation. Further, the US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy is a bi-partisan panel created by Congress to provide oversight of government activities intended to understand, inform, and influence foreign publics.

In June 2002 the Office of Global Communications (OGC) was established by the White House to coordinate interagency strategic communications to foreign audiences. Despite funding, huge resources and complete authority it failed in this task and, according to the Defense Science Board (DSB), "evolved into a second tier organization devoted principally to

tactical public affairs coordination. The OGC does not engage in strategic direction, coordination and evaluation.<sup>162</sup> Communicating to the domestic audience on partisan party issues in the run up to a Presidential election became the main focus for the OGC at what was a critical time in the War of Ideas over Iraq. In September 2002 the Strategic Communication Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) was established by Condoleeza Rice to develop and ensure a coherent strategic communications message from across all government agencies and to ensure that the President's message was conveyed effectively across the globe. The PCC has rarely met in practice and, at the time of the DSB report, had not met for over a year. The DSB concluded that

...the White House Office of Global Communications and the NSC's Strategic Communication PCC have overlapping authorities. Both entities have been ineffectual in carrying out intended responsibilities relating to strategic communication planning, coordination, and evaluation.<sup>33</sup>

With little coherent output from official channels, the method by which most people get their information regarding American policy is through the media. This is through a variety of mediums from print, radio, television, satellite and the internet. Globalization has led to an era of instant news where commercial networks are frequently faster at reporting a story than the military. This has led to the recognized requirement by the military and civilian leadership to enhance their own responsiveness and to engage in a proactive and constructive relationship with the press. The days of "no comment," have long since passed. Technology has enabled anyone with a digital camera to become a reporter and mobile/satellite communications have enabled the story to be transmitted in near real time. Control of the media is not possible in this age and, as we have seen, embedded media or even your own soldiers with digital cameras can cause strategic level incidents. The adverse affect that Abu Graib and the killing of a wounded insurgent in a mosque in Falluja has had on winning the hearts and minds of the Muslim world can only be imagined; both are classic examples of tactical actions having strategic consequences.

Linked to this extensive and immediate coverage being transmitted to a worldwide audience, is the pure amount of the material available. There is now an abundance of information which has led to a greater superficiality of the viewer; even the 10 second sound bite has less of an impact than a single powerful image. A powerful image in this day and age is worth far more than a thousand words: the image will be transmitted across the television, internet and newsprint; it will remain imprinted in the mind for a long time, and is accessible to every audience, regardless of literacy, education, religion, or culture. On the other hand, the

story behind the image may never even be read or understood, regardless of its accuracy or importance. The key now is how to gain and maintain the *attention* of your audience and to ensure that, once this has happened, the messages that are conveyed are credible.

#### **HOW SHOULD THE US COMMUNICATE TO THE WORLD?**

The most fundamental aspect of the GWOT is to understand the nature of the problem. The term "GWOT" is misleading in the first instance. The campaign was originally meant to be against terrorists with global reach, particularly those with ambitions of obtaining WMD; it later migrated to include all international, regional and national terrorist groups. The use of the word "war" has also been debated and has been compared to the war on drugs, poverty, illiteracy and so on; analogies to the "Cold War," which was prolonged and complex, may be more appropriate. Finally, there is the question as to how you fight "terrorism" - a technique, not an organization or group or ideology. The danger of conflating the threat inevitably leads to a lack of resolution and clarity in a hugely complex environment.<sup>34</sup> In Iraq alone, regarding the opposition as terrorists or even as a homogenous insurgency, would be overly simplistic and inaccurate when the opposition is comprised of Sunnis, Shias, foreign fighters, criminals, former regime loyalists and so on. Understanding the nature of the problem is crucial to then finding the effective counter. What then is the nature of the problem?

The US is involved in a generational and global struggle of ideas. It is not a clash of civilizations with the Muslim World but a clash within the Muslim World. The Muslim World is facing modernization and change at a rate that is causing its people grave concern. It feels attracted to but threatened by globalization and is trying to come to terms with reorganizing its own form of government. However, such reforms must come from within and cannot be imposed by America from the outside. The form of democracy may not be identical to that of America, but America must not judge – democracy took centuries to evolve in America and is not a uniquely American domain. The Koran advocates consultative government and the Arab world have a different perspective on time to that of the West – in both instances a culturally aware and non ethno centric approach is required. US values are not necessarily shared, are not necessarily the best, and are not uniquely American. The US must adopt an open minded approach to other cultures and listen to them in order to form an understanding.

Once the US has gained an understanding of the problem and has a clear national policy to follow, it must then look at the target audience to determine who should be and can be affected. For example, in the Muslim world it is imperative to win the hearts and minds of the non violent majority. The radical, violent elements are probably beyond reach, but the battle for

popular support is pivotal. Within this large, amorphous mass further discrimination is required into regional, national, religious, ethnic, political and tribal groupings. There are educated and illiterate groups; professionals and manual workers; young and old; employed and unemployed. This is an enormous task, purely identifying the target audience with any fidelity, but a necessary process. The difference in approach between winning the war of ideas with an unemployed, poor, illiterate Shia youth in Basra compared to, say, an educated, rich, professional Sunni in Saudi Arabia is vast. However, both need convincing to support (or at least not oppose) US policy in the region. In addition to the bid to attract such audiences towards the American camp, work is also required to repel them away from the extremist camp, thus depriving the extremists of their support base, denying them the "sea in which to swim."

Once the audiences have been identified with sufficient resolution, the themes that need to be conveyed must be articulated. "The US government must define what the message is, what it stands for,"<sup>35</sup> before it can expect to effectively convey that message to any audience, allied or hostile. These must be coordinated from the very top and be emanated by all organs of the administration. There can be no disconnect between agencies or personalities, and the messages that are subsequently developed must be coherent and credible. This requires an American foreign policy that is even-handed and not hypocritical; one that is seen to be transparent and fair. Ways to put out these messages then need to be addressed and their effectiveness measured.

To organize this effort a Strategic Communications Committee is required with the necessary mandate and authority to operate effectively. Its role would be to coordinate a coherent and credible information campaign across all elements of US Government, especially the Departments of State and Defense, to support US policies. The Committee should be a-political and should transcend party politics. Political appointees should be avoided and consideration could be given to the UK system of having Permanent Under Secretaries from the Civil Service to provide corporate knowledge and continuity, and serve as a counter balance to pendulum politics. It should be resourced properly in recognition of its importance, which might save billions compared to "putting out the fire" at a later date. These funds would most likely come out of the Defense budget or a fresh appropriation as the Department of State is not resourced sufficiently for this area. This might create internal opposition but then it is for the politicians to determine: "Political leaders need to determine whether a military budget 400 times greater than a strategic communication budget is adequate to US national security strategy and to a global war on terrorism viewed as a struggle of ideas."<sup>36</sup>

To support such a Committee, a Federally-funded research and development center or “think-tank” is also required to conduct in-depth research, consultation and analysis. Such a center should bring together the best creative thinkers and brains from across a wide variety of professions. The private sector, entertainment, business, Hollywood, advertising consultants, polling organizations, the media, academics, diplomats, economists, lawyers, financiers, historians, artists, NGOs, IOs and such like, as well as the military, all have an important part to play in such an organization. It should be culturally aware, imaginative, open-minded and focused on providing impartial advice to the Strategic Communications Committee. Only if coordinated at the highest level, supported by first class researchers and advisors, can the Information element of national power be exercised effectively. This was summarized in the DSB report that stated:

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 seek to persuade within news cycles, weeks and months. It will engage in a respectful dialogue of ideas that begins with listening and assumes decades of sustained effort. Just as importantly, through evaluation and feedback, it will enable political leaders and policy makers to make informed decisions on changes in strategy, policies, messages, and choices among instruments of statecraft.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, a whole new apparatus needs to be established for “outreach” to the World. Educational exchanges, scholarships, work opportunities, satellite television, radio, the internet, books, journals and magazines, all need to target a variety of audiences to further America’s standing in the World and counter that of the radicals, such as through Madrassas. “The US should rebuild the scholarship, exchange, and library programs that reach out to young people and offer them knowledge and hope.”<sup>38</sup> Muslims should be employed to ensure that this outreach is not misinterpreted and does not backfire, being seen as propaganda of the US, and it should therefore be part of a coherent and credible campaign.

## **CONCLUSION**

The War of Ideas is vital to the success of the GWOT, not only in gaining and maintaining allies, but also in convincing the population of the World of the worthiness of US policy. At present, neither aspect is being conducted in any meaningful and coordinated fashion with the result being a gradual decline in support of American policies. This erosion of “soft power” can

take years to redress and the reliance on “hard power” can lead to greater long term consequences. A strategic level organization is required to formulate and coordinate a coherent information campaign in order to fully utilize this key element of national power. It requires the support of a Center or Institution for Strategic Communications to promote “best practice” from across all areas of society to ensure that a credible and coherent message is put out by all government departments. In a world where perception is often more important than reality, winning the War of Ideas may well determine the outcome of the entire War and be a lot less costly option in the long run.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Defense Science Board (DSB), *Final Report of the Defense Science Board (DSB) Task Force on Strategic Communication*, (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, September 2004), iii.

<sup>2</sup> Chaim Kaufmann, "Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of Ideas: The Selling of the Iraq War," *International Security*, vol 29, no. 1 (Summer 2004).

<sup>3</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, September 2002), Introduction.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Introduction.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>9</sup> *National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, February 2003), 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>14</sup> George W. Bush, "Address to Joint Session of Congress and the American People," 21 November 2001; available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>; Internet; accessed 21 November 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Osama Bin Laden, "Letter to America", 24 November 2002; available from <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/worldview/story/0,11581,845725,00.html>; Internet; accessed 29 October 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Osama Bin Laden, Untitled transcript of videotape; available from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/3966817.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3966817.stm); Internet; accessed 5 January 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Michael G. Knapp, "The Concept and Practice of Islam," *Parameters* (Spring 2003), 1.

<sup>18</sup> DSB, 15.

<sup>19</sup> Philip Kennicott, "In the Media," *Zogby International*; available from <http://www.zogby.com/soundbites/ReadClips.dbm?ID=9099>; Internet; accessed 5 January 2005.

<sup>20</sup> DSB, 16.

<sup>21</sup> Paz Reuven, "Islamists and Anti Americanism," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* volume 7, no.4 (December 2003); available from <<http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2003/issue4/jv7n4a5.html>>; accessed 29 October 2004.

<sup>22</sup> Kennicott, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Russel D. Howard, ed., *Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, (Connecticut: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 129.

<sup>25</sup> Al Qaradawi, "Reform According to Islam;" available from <http://English.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres>; Internet; accessed 21 October 2004.

<sup>26</sup> AbuKhali, *Bin Laden, Islam and America's New War on Terrorism*, (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), 63.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas R. Mochaitis, *Winning Hearts and Minds in the War on Terrorism, Grand Strategy in the War Against Terrorism* (Oregon: Frank Cass 2003), 34.

<sup>29</sup> ABC, "What the World Thinks of America;" available from <http://www.abc.net.au/America/results/results2.htm>; Internet; accessed 29 October 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Alan Travis, "Poll Reveals World Anger at Bush," *The Guardian*; available from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uselections2004/viewsofamerica/story/0,15221,1327568,00.htm>; Internet; accessed 29 October 2004.

<sup>31</sup> US Department of State and USAID, *Strategic Plan FY 2004 – 2009, Promote International Understanding*; available from <http://www.state.gov/m/rm/rls/dosstrat/2004/23506.htm>; Internet; accessed 21 October 2004.

<sup>32</sup> DSB, 25

<sup>33</sup> DSB, 26.

<sup>34</sup> Jeffrey Record, "Bounding the Global War on Terrorism," *Strategic Studies Institute* (December 2003).

<sup>35</sup> National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the US, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 2004), 376.

<sup>36</sup> DSB, 28.

<sup>37</sup> DSB, 29.

<sup>38</sup> 9/11 Commission, 377.

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