



Georgetown University Law Center
Scholarship @ GEORGETOWN LAW

2011

Evolution of Strategic Communication and
Information Operations Since 9/11: Hearing
Before the Subcomm. on Emerging Threats &
Capabilities of the H. Comm. on Armed Services,
112th Cong., July 12, 2011 (Statement of Rosa
Ehrenreich Brooks)

Rosa Ehrenreich Brooks

CIS-No.: 2011-H201-154

This paper can be downloaded free of charge from:
<https://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cong/115>

This open-access article is brought to you by the Georgetown Law Library. Posted with permission of the author.
Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cong>

 Part of the [Dispute Resolution and Arbitration Commons](#), and the [Military, War, and Peace Commons](#)

“Ten Years On: The Evolution of Strategic Communication and Information Operations since 9/11”

**Prepared Statement of Rosa Brooks
Professor of Law, Georgetown University Law Center**

**Testimony before the
House Armed Services Sub-Committee on Evolving Threats and Capabilities**

July 12, 2011

Chairman Thornberry, members of the sub-committee and staff, I am pleased to have the opportunity to comment today on the evolution of US government strategic communication (SC) and information operations (IO) since 9/11.

I am currently a Professor of Law at Georgetown University Law Center, but I recently returned from a two year public service leave of absence to work at the Defense Department as a senior advisor to Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Michele Flournoy. I had a range of responsibilities during that time, including responsibility for advising Under Secretary Flournoy on strategic communication and information operations issues, as well as responsibility for creating a new rule of law office.

In 2010, I headed a DoD-wide Front End Assessment study that evaluated DoD strategic communication and IO policy, definitions, oversight, resources and training. The conclusions of the Front End Assessment team led Secretary Robert Gates to order significant reforms, memorialized in his memo on this topic dated January 25, 2011, a memo I believe many of you have seen. While I do not intend to focus in these prepared remarks on the DoD-specific changes we spearheaded, I would be happy to provide any details during the discussion.

I know that members of this sub-committee are deeply committed to ensuring that reform of strategic communication organizational structures and policies remains a top priority for the executive branch. I have to confess that in my former role as a Defense Department official with responsibility for a range of SC and IO issues, I was not always wholly grateful for your interest: you and your colleagues on the House Appropriations Committee put the Department through the ringer with quite a lot of different reporting requirements. As a citizen, however, I am deeply grateful to you for having kept us on our toes— and occasionally held our feet to the fire. This is a vital area, and we can't afford either to ignore it or rest on our laurels.

I would like to begin today by looking briefly at the emergence of the concept of “strategic communication” within the US government, and talk about some drawbacks to

the term itself. I'd then like to highlight some of the lessons we can draw from the decade since 9/11, and I will close by offering some thoughts on the future.

Start with some semantics. The term "strategic communication" isn't particularly new; in the corporate world, it's been used for several decades to describe the cluster of activities relating to—for lack of a better phrase—making the corporate entity "look good." For corporations, it's pretty straightforward: the corporate goal is profit maximization, and while different corporations take different routes to maximizing profits, "looking good" is supported by marketing, advertising, public relations, community relations, and so on. "Strategic communication" became the umbrella term for these various activities—activities themselves distinct from underlying questions of product quality, etc. --and in the context of the corporate world there's absolutely nothing wrong with the term.

But whoever first decided to import the term "strategic communication" into the governmental context has a lot to answer for. I'm sure the importation of the term was well-intended, but to be honest, the term has caused far more confusion than clarity. This is so for two reasons.

First, the term gets used in so many different ways that by now no one really knows *what* it's supposed to mean. In the corporate context, having a concept that lacks precise meaning is fine, and it's equally fine for different organizations to use the term in different ways. And while fraud is illegal, we don't expect corporate strategic communications to refrain from mystification and exaggeration. (Who would buy Coke if Coke ads described it simply as "sweet, fizzy brown liquid that tastes somewhat like Pepsi, except some people like it better"?) But in the government context, in which truth is a fundamental moral constraint and in which policies must be set, budgets developed and authorities defended, it can be much more of a problem to have a term that's characterized by fuzziness rather than precision.

Specifically, in the government context "strategic communication" is often confused with related terms such as "information operations," "public diplomacy" and "communications." It's important to draw some distinctions between these concepts, however, since otherwise we can start getting very muddled up, and conflate capabilities with processes, aspirations with tools for achieving those aspirations. We can start developing budget lines to support concepts that were meant to be merely explanatory, not activities unto themselves. Worse, we can end up deciding we need to create new and cumbersome bureaucratic structures to manage these supposedly new functions, without recognizing that such structures may be unnecessary, inefficient and duplicative. If importing the term "strategic communication" into government ends up meaning we create new structures that merely replicate the functions already performed by public affairs or public diplomacy organizations, we won't have gained much.

So if that's what strategic communication shouldn't mean, what *should* it mean? If the term strategic communication is going to mean anything *at all* in a government context,

it's got to mean something different from existing terms. To use another corporate term, the term "strategic communication" has to add value, or there's not much point.

So when I use the term "strategic communication," I want to make it clear that I am using the Defense Department understanding of the term, not the corporate understanding of the term. DoD defines strategic communication as "Focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power."

That's quite a mouthful, but it can actually be explained more simply. For DoD, and for me, strategic communication is a process—the exceptionally hard to achieve process of *communicating strategically*. It's not simply the conglomeration of several communication tools and capabilities. Public affairs and media relations are *tools*, capabilities that can support strategic communication. Traditional public diplomacy – cultural exchanges and radio broadcasting such as Voice of America—is also a tool that can support strategic communication. Information operations—the use of specific information-related capabilities in a military context to affect adversary decision-making – can also support strategic communication. But PA, public diplomacy and IO are not the *same* as strategic communication, and strategic communication isn't simply a matter of throwing all these tools at a particular problem.

At risk of sounding tautological, *strategic communication* is *communicating strategically*: it's the thoughtful integration of issues of stakeholder perception and response into policy-making, planning and operations at every level... and the orchestration of actions, images and words in support of our policy objectives. By its nature, strategic communication must be *receiver*-centric, rather than sender-centric. It's less about what *we* have to *say* than it is about considering what others *hear* and understand.

If you're still not sure what I'm talking about when I say 'strategic communication,' think of it the other way around: ask yourself what "*un*-strategic communication" is. I'll give a very simple example: "un-strategic" communication is what happened when the Obama Administration conveyed a significant shift in our missile defense policy to our Polish allies, a shift that involved a decision not to carry through with previous plans to base certain missile defenses on Polish soil—and we managed to announce it more or less on the 70th anniversary of the Russian invasion of Poland.

Whoops. Our intended message—that we felt our new approach to missile defense would provide Poland with even *greater* security—was drowned out, for many Poles, by the unhappy juxtaposition of our changed policy and the anniversary of the Russian invasion. We said we were moving to a 'smarter, phased, adaptive' approach to missile defense. Many Poles heard "abandonment."

What would it have taken to communicate strategically, rather than un-strategically, about our changed missile defense strategy? Assuming that the missile defense strategy itself was sound, improved strategic communication would have required not simply better speeches and press statements, but more listening, more consultation, more engagement, and better planning.

I'm sure we can all think of plenty of other examples of *un*-strategic communication. So when I say "*strategic* communication," I don't mean public affairs or public diplomacy or information operations, though each is important. What I mean is that difficult but critical process of listening, engaging, understanding perceptions, and then trying, in an orchestrated way, to align a wide range of capabilities in order to affect people's perceptions in ways that advance our national interests.

It should go without saying that strategic communication is as much about what we *do* as what we *say*: your third grade teacher probably told you that "actions speak louder than words," and she was right. If the term "strategic communication" has any value at all in a government context, this is what it must mean.

That's enough about semantics. I said that there were *two* reasons to regret the importation of the term strategic communication from the corporate world to the government world. One is the semantic confusion I just discussed. But there's another reason, too, to feel some regret over the importation of the term strategic communication from the corporate world to the government world. And that's simply that the US government isn't a corporation. The US government doesn't exist to sell a product or maximize profits. Our mission is far more complex than the mission of a corporation, and as a result, the importation of the corporate term strategic communication can cause substantial confusion, leading to inappropriate assumptions about accountability, metrics, methods and timeframes.

Think of it like this: say your company makes SpritaPepsaCola. Say you want to expand SpritaPepsaCola into Botswana. You want convince people that SpritaPepsaCola is the best soda around, so you can sell more SpritaPepsaCola to more Botswanans. You want a full-throttle strategic communication campaign to that end. Simple.

Actually, of course, it's not all that simple. To sell SpritaPepsaCola to Botswanan consumers, there are all sorts of things you need to understand first. You need to figure out how loyal Botswanans are to other brands of cola; you need to understand the source and roots of that loyalty; you need to identify local bottlers, you need to figure out distribution routes, you need marketing campaigns, and so on. It all needs to be mutually reinforcing. All that, for a simple cola!

But even so, it's a simple cola, and at the end of the day, it's not that hard to tell if your strategic communication campaign is working. Are Botswanans buying more SpritaPepsaCola? This can readily be quantified. You can make fine-looking charts showing the delta in sales over a specified time period. And if you want to understand

why Botswanans are buying or not buying SpritaPepsaCola, you can always poll them, interview them, or conduct focus groups. Did your ad campaign lead them to buy more? Would they prefer that SpritaPepsaCola be a bit less sweet? No problem: the stakes or pretty low. Everyone likes to talk about cola; no one has much incentive to lie to you about whether and why they prefer Coke.

But US foreign policy and national security objectives are not like a soda. People in other countries support or oppose our foreign policy objectives for reasons that are far more complex than the reasons they buy a particular brand of soda. Policies are nuanced; sodas are simple. Soda sales are easily quantified, and when it comes to soda sales, we can relatively easily assess the relationship between stated attitudes and behaviors. With our national security objectives, it's a whole lot harder. What attitudes should we look at? How should we measure them? How is behavior linked to attitudes and opinions? What's the relevant timeframe?

These are hard questions, and much of the time, the answer is that we really aren't sure. Our strategic communication efforts often involve throwing a whole lot of spaghetti at a whole lot of walls, and hoping some of it sticks. In this case, the spaghetti is our words, our policies and actions, posters, billboards, radio shows, exchange programs, educational and cultural programs, and on the intel side, perhaps some covert efforts to influence attitudes in specific places. It's still all spaghetti, and frequently we just don't know which of it's going to stick.

But don't be too appalled by the metaphor. The spaghetti is often pretty good spaghetti, made with care and thought. If it doesn't stick, it's not necessarily because it's badly made. Strategic communication is hard because it's *hard*. Strategic communication is, in a fundamental sense, an *aspirational* concept. We're never going to get in 100% right; there are always going to be too many variables, many of them beyond our control. But as a government, we still have to try.

To make it more concrete, take the strategic communication challenge of reducing support for the Taliban among Afghans. Compare it to the strategic communication challenge of selling our fictitious soda.

In each case, we'll certainly try to use some of the same tools: press statements, community events, television and radio, engagement with key leaders/role models. But the "product" is far harder to define in the national security context: what are *we* selling? The stakes are higher, and the link between opinion and behavior is also far more complex: "support" for the Taliban can take many forms, from volunteering to fight for them to simply refraining from actively undermining them by aiding the Coalition instead. Support for the Taliban can have many motivations: loyalty, identity, ideology, fear, economic well-being. For many Taliban "supporters," opinions and attitudes about the Taliban may be far less important than economic necessity or day to day security.

There's an issue of time horizon, too: we want to change behaviors over the long term. There are far more options than cola/not-cola, or SpritaPepsaCola versus coke versus a local brand. There are far more actors in the field, and, to top it all off, it's far harder to get anyone to talk to us. The Taliban don't usually want to sit down in focus groups.

Add in the usual problems of barriers of language and culture, and you're looking at a multifaceted, constantly evolving challenge. Can we achieve strategic communication successes in that context? Definitely, and I would be happy to discuss some of those successes during the discussion time. Can we *reliably* achieve strategic communication successes across the board? Definitely not, and if we have unrealistic expectations about the ease or rapidity with which we can succeed, we will only undermine our own efforts.

So the second problem with importing the term "strategic communication" from the corporate world to the government world is that it creates the illusion that we are dealing with something that is relatively simple and straightforward, when in fact we're not. The term strategic communication thus lends itself to false analogies. Take the much-cited complaint, for instance, usually attributed to the late and lamented Richard Holbrooke, that a "man in a cave" was "out-communicating the world's leading communication society."

The "communication society" skills Holbrooke was referring to were of course mainly those of Hollywood and Madison Avenue-- communication skills that are not irrelevant to USG strategic communication, but that are also no panacea in the far more complex national security context. Being good at selling soda— or making movies people like to watch, or winning elections, for that matter— doesn't necessarily translate into being good at changing the complex, bundled attitudes and behaviors of millions of people in foreign countries.

And the "man in the cave"? That, of course, was the equally late but entirely unlamented Osama bin Laden, about whom it's worth noting two things. First, no wonder he appeared to be out-communicating us for a while there! He had the both the home court advantage and the underdog advantage. But second, bin Laden *didn't* out-communicate anyone, in the end. The Arab Spring left him behind, and in the end his death was almost anti-climactic-- his relevance was already so greatly diminished.

Let me pause on each of those points: what gave Bin Laden his initial strategic communication "edge," and why he lost it. Each has lessons for the US government as we go forward.

First, the home court advantage: to state the obvious, it's easier to change the minds and behaviors of people you understand. They say all politics is local: perhaps all strategic communication is fundamentally local, too. To sell SpritaPepsaCola—or al Qaeda, for that matter— it sure helps to know the human terrain, as the military puts it. It helps to know the local language, the history, the narratives that resonate in people's minds, the day to day pressures, the long-nurtured grievances, the cherished hopes. If you don't

know these things, you make mistakes (consider my missile defense example). You sound klutzy, overbearing, tone-deaf, or simply ridiculous.

It's also often easier to be the perceived underdog. In life as in sports, there's sometimes a tendency to root for the "little guy," and for a time, bin Laden managed to exploit this: There we were, the big, unilateralist United States, rich, fat and happy amidst a world of poverty and pain. For some populations in parts of the world that globalization left behind, it must have been easy to hate us; easy to take some pleasure, at least a bit of *schadenfreude*, as the world's largest military power flailed around, seemingly hopelessly, in search of one man. (That this one man was the scion of a vastly rich Saudi family and had powerful government backers was something bin Laden and his supporters tended not to emphasize).

So we shouldn't be surprised if bin Laden seemed to "out-communicate" us for a while. And we shouldn't waste time feeling hurt and misunderstood, either. Being a world power comes with a price: you're a lightning rod for animosity and global grievance. If anything, we should rather take comfort in the fact that relatively speaking, the US is getting off lightly: while today global publics remain quite critical of the US, a recent Gallup poll suggests they're even *more* critical of other candidates for global power status.¹ Compared to China, Russia, France, Germany, Britain and Japan, we're actually pretty popular.

More to the point, though, bin Laden didn't out-communicate *anyone* in the end. Even with his early home court advantage in the Muslim world – even with his early, if dubious, underdog status-- he ended up marginalized well before he ended up dead. His status and influence steadily declined after 9/11², as Arab and Muslim publics grew disenchanted with extremism and terrorism. Even amongst those who are still inclined to support extremist groups, al Qaeda has been significantly discredited; a December 2010 Pew poll found that al Qaeda enjoyed far less support in the Arab world than either Hamas or Hezbollah.³

This shouldn't surprise us. Since 9/11, al Qaeda-spawned terrorism has exacted a far more lethal toll on Muslim civilians than it ever did on the US or our Western allies. Maybe bin Laden never had a third grade teacher who explained that actions speak louder than words. In the end, al Qaeda's actions spoke for themselves, and no amount of ringing rhetorical appeals to jihad and Islamic unity could make up for the streets and markets awash in blood.

¹"Worldwide Approval of U.S. Leadership Tops Major Powers," Gallup, March 24, 2011, at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/146771/worldwide-approval-leadership-tops-major-powers.aspx>

²"Osama bin Laden Largely Discredited Among Muslim Publics in Recent Years," Pew, May 2, 2011, at <http://pewglobal.org/2011/05/02/osama-bin-laden-largely-discredited-among-muslim-publics-in-recent-years/>

³"Muslim Publics Divided on Hamas and Hezbollah," Pew, Dec. 2, 2010, at <http://pewglobal.org/2010/12/02/muslims-around-the-world-divided-on-hamas-and-hezbollah/>

So what does all this mean for the United States? Looking back at the last decade, what did we do well, and what do we need to do as we move forward?

In the initial post 9/11 period, the USG made what I think was a major mistake in its strategic communication efforts. At a moment when global publics were shocked by 9/11 and poised to respond with sympathy, we conformed with a script that might as well have been written by bin Laden himself. We validated bin Laden's "special" status, and we began to view the world largely through the lens of our counterterrorism goals.

We raised our walls, making it far harder for foreigners—especially Arab and Islamic foreigners—to come to our shores, and thousands of Muslims already here, including many US citizens, found themselves treated as the potential enemy, pulled in for FBI questioning or in danger of losing their visas. Most of these Arab and Muslims had zero connection to terrorism, but in America right after 9/11, all Arabs and Muslims came under suspicion. At the very moment when we should have reached out in friendship to the millions of Muslims around the globe who condemned terrorism, we withdrew. This along greatly diminished the degree of global cooperation we received, particularly in Arab and Muslim communities.

Just as bad, we turned bin Laden into a larger-than-life bogey-man. By declaring ourselves at war with him, by focusing so many of our official statements on this one man, we elevated his stature, giving him disproportionate and unprecedented prestige. To be sure, he already had a platform. But we made it higher.

I want to be crystal clear here: Osama bin Laden killed thousands of American and others, mostly innocent noncombatants. He committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. But I do not believe he posed an existential threat to the United States. Yet in our early responses to him, we bestowed on him the very prestige he sought—we treated him like he was more powerful than Hitler and Stalin combined, like the most dangerous man in the history of the world. We acted as though the fate of our nation depended on our ability to find and kill that one evil man.

It didn't. Our nation has survived revolution, civil war, two world wars, the Cold War and nuclear stand-off. We have faced worse than al Qaeda before, and no doubt we will face worse again. But treating bin Laden—and al Qaeda—as existential threats gave him prestige and a powerful early recruiting tool with disaffected Muslim publics. Remember his home field and underdog advantage? Our own rhetoric and actions greatly boosted that advantage in the first years after 9/11. For a frightening few years, al Qaeda seemed poised to become one of the world's most rapidly metastasizing franchises, while the US' initial inability to capture bin Laden in Afghanistan, and our resulting pivot to war in Iraq, left many Middle Eastern observers concluding that a blinding obsession with Bin Laden was damaging our judgment and weakening our superpower status.

Meanwhile, our tendency, during that early post/9/11 period, to view the Muslim world mainly through an "are you with us or are you against us" counterterrorism lens alienated

many moderates. For a time, it seemed as if everything we did, from our foreign humanitarian assistance programs to our cultural exchange programs, was done solely to enhance our CT goals. This forced many around the world to make a choice: if the price of US assistance and cooperation was signing on, no questions asked, to a blank counterterrorism check, did working with the US make sense?

This period cost us dearly, and the costs were compounded by a number of events the loomed symbolically large around the globe. Abu Ghraib; black sites; allegations of torture. While the vast majority of our military and civilian personnel upheld the highest moral and legal standards, the well-publicized willingness of a few—including a high-ranking few-- to engage in and defend illegal activities enabled those in some quarters of the Muslim world to view America to as synonymous with abuse of power.

Fortunately, imbalances do have a tendency to rebalance, and two things happened that helped get us out of the hole we were in in 2004 and 2005. For one thing, bin Laden and al Qaeda began to overreach. They grew ever more brutal and indiscriminating; one 2009 study found, for instance, that 88% of those killed by al Qaeda attacks between 2004 and 2008 were Muslims.⁴

For another thing, we got smarter. Past the immediate shock of 9/11, we began to reassess our immediate responses, evaluate global reaction, and undo some of the damage we ourselves had unintentionally done to our own cause. We began to deemphasize the importance of bin Laden, depriving him of the prestige he so desperately needed. We began to shift, in Iraq and then in Afghanistan, to a more sophisticated strategy informed by counterinsurgency precepts. We began to emphasize the importance of establishing legitimacy and addressing genuine local needs.

These trends began in the last years of the Bush administration, and were continued under the Obama administration. Early symbolic action helped turn the page on some of the darkest post 9/11 moments, with Obama's January 2009 Executive Orders banning torture and secret detention facilities and mandating a review of US detention policy. Beyond that, the new Administration made a conscious decision to elevate the importance of strategic communication, appointing a high-level National Security Staff official with responsibility for USG-wide strategic communication.

Even more important, the White House, with the concurrence of all executive branch departments, made another key decision: while counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization would necessarily remain important goals of USG strategic communication, they would no longer be the centerpiece. As much as possible, we would try to disaggregate counter-terrorism from our broader programs and campaigns—we would stop viewing the world entirely through the often distorting prism of counter-terrorism. We would try, at least, to listen more and talk less, and to ensure our words and

⁴"Al Qaeda kills 8 times more Muslims than Non-Muslims," Der Spiegel, Dec. 3, 2009, at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,660619,00.html>

actions were thoughtfully informed by a nuanced understanding of what other publics heard and understood.

In practice, this has had a number of very concrete manifestations. Direct CT-related communication efforts of course continued, particularly by DoD and the intelligence agencies; as long as terrorist organizations pose a threat, we will need carefully targeted programs aimed at those specific issues and audiences. But we also began focused efforts to move beyond the CT frame, and reach out—particularly to Muslims and Arabs, particularly to the educated and the young—over other issues of shared concern, such as science, technology, education, health care and entrepreneurship.

We also sought to decentralize our strategic communication efforts as much as possible. Strategic communication is inherently complex and risky in the 24/7 media environment: all it takes is one US representative saying “the wrong thing” and there’s a global furor. (And that doesn’t even need to be a government representative: witness the global furor, and lethal riots, triggered by Pastor Terry Jones’ determination to burn a Koran). But at the same time, top-down messaging is doomed to failure in this messy, chaotic and democratic media environment. One lesson of the last ten years is that the risks of spoilers notwithstanding, we generally do better to empower more people—not just inside our government—to speak freely and engage freely than to try to “control” messages.

It’s a question of accepting tactical risk to increase the likelihood of strategic gain. Our greatest strength, as a government and a nation, is our people, as quarrelsome, complicated and unpredictable as they often are. The more we find ways to have our people speak to the citizens of other nations, the more we form strong bonds, build trust, and build knowledge.

Right now, I believe we are still in an era of change and reform. The good news, I think, is that both on the Hill and within the Executive Branch, there is increasingly a shared understanding of the challenges ahead. Both the State Department and the Defense Department have made substantial structural changes in the last two years, designed to ensure that we will do a better job at strategic communication.

At DoD, SC and IO-related definitions and management structures have been clarified, and a DoD-wide coordinating body exists to address department-wide strategic communication challenges. At State, the creation of deputy assistant secretaries with specific responsibility for public diplomacy within each regional bureau is also a helpful change, and the new Counterterrorism Strategic Communication Center, led by Richard LeBaron, has sought to take an innovative and nuanced approach to CT-specific challenges. Within the executive branch, coordination mechanisms are fairly robust, both as a result of NSS-led interagency policy committee meetings and as a result of more informal groups that deconflict activities between agencies. Still, there is much more to be done.

Looking forward, let me emphasize some things I believe we need more of and some things we need less of. When it comes to strategic communication, organizationally we need to continue to improve internal USG coordination and training mechanisms. We need to trust each other more, which means, for the White House and for senior leaders in general, letting go of what sometimes seems from the outside like a fixation on controlling the message. Messages that are overly controlled are often not very persuasive or effective.

We also need to develop more sustained and robust mechanisms for linking up with the private sector. There are many things the US government can't, won't or shouldn't do, but that may be appropriate for NGOs, universities and corporations. Many private organizations are eager to play a role in US strategic communication, and Congress and the Executive Branch need to find better ways to serve as enablers of private activity.

We also need more old-fashioned public diplomacy: exchange programs, cultural programs, educational programs. People-to-people ties do matter, and we need to have more confidence both in our own people and in foreign publics. The budget cuts in public diplomacy program in the last decades have been nothing short of shameful, as well as deeply short-sighted. Foreign assistance, whether it takes the form of food aid or cultural programs, isn't an act of charity. It's a vital means of advancing our national interests, of building good will and developing the strong networks of friends and information sources that will stand us in good stead when hard times come-- as they will. Are there risks in greater openness, more exchanges and people-to-people ties? Certainly: every now and then, we'll trust someone we shouldn't trust, and pay a price. But as ever, it's an issue of accepting some tactical risk for strategic gain. In the long run, we isolate ourselves at our own peril.

Hard-head realists will argue that we shouldn't obsess too much about inducing foreign publics to "like" us. As long as they don't attack us or aid our enemies, say the realists, it doesn't much matter if other people like us or not. There is plenty of wisdom in this—if the protesters in Egypt's Tahrir Square reject terrorism, that's much more important than "liking" the United States.

But it's true only up to a point. An obsession with being loved and appreciated is not a good basis for strategic communication: sometimes people won't like our policies, and we will have principled reasons for being unwilling to change them, and that's that, and as it should be. But there is a difference between trying to generate a shallow "liking" versus trying to generate confidence and respect, even in the face of inevitable differences. There does appear to be a strong correlation between positive feelings about the United States and fewer attacks against US interests. Being liked is overvalued, and often impossible in a world where conflicting interests are inevitable. But efforts to build trust and understanding do pay off.

Increasing old-fashioned public diplomacy takes money and, at times, political courage. It's not easy to argue for increasing visas for people from Arab and Muslim countries

when letting in a single bad actor could lead to an intense backlash. It's not easy to argue for more funds for cultural activities or economic aid overseas when people are hurting here at home. But in each case, we need to understand our activities as investments that will pay off over a longer time frame. If we under-invest now, it will be too late later.

More generally, we must also ensure adequate funding for linguistic, regional and cultural training, both for our military and foreign service personnel, of course, but also in our civilian schools and universities more broadly. During the Cold War, the US Congress appropriated substantial funds for universities to start language and area training programs. Most of that money is long gone, and we risk having a population that can't find Iraq, Afghanistan or Libya on a map, much less hope to communicate with anyone from one of these countries—or from China or India or any number of key partner states or rising powers, for that matter.

Those are some of the things we need *more* of, as we move our strategic communication policy forward into this post-post-9/11 era. There are also some things we need *less* of. I've touched on them all already.

We need less fixation on terrorism. It's a threat, and an ongoing one, but an obsession with CT may blind us to other emerging threats and opportunities. Our strategic communication efforts should be just as focused on China, India and other rising powers as they are on terrorism, for instance—and the list goes on. We're in a an unpredictable, dynamic, multipolar world; any fixation on a single threat is dangerous.

We also need less of a zero-defect mentality. Effective strategic communication requires decentralization, which creates risk. We *will* make mistakes. Somewhere, right now, some US government employee is doing something dumb, maybe even illegal, in the name of strategic communication. It's just inevitable. But there's been a tendency, in the media and a bit here on the Hill, to throw the baby out with the bathwater: one foolish DoD radio spot? Slash the budget! One DoD contractor engaged in shady practices? Impose draconian new reporting requirements! I understand the temptation: no one hates idiocy in the name of strategic communication more than those government officials charged with defending and reforming US efforts. But you can't legislate against human stupidity or venality-- and while seeking accountability is always appropriate, we also need to keep things in perspective.

A corollary to this is that we need less obsession with metrics and assessments. Again, accountability is vital, but strategic communication is as much art as science, and it's part of the long game. One or two budget cycles may tell you very little. Congress and the public rightly demand transparency, but failure to document clear and immediate links between strategic communication efforts and outcomes should not result in instant budget cuts. Strategic communication success is hard to quantify, and may not become apparent for years or even decades. Some of the spaghetti will stick, and some won't, but that's not a reason to stop trying out new spaghetti recipes.

Finally, we need less naval-gazing obsession with who does what. One of the least productive diversions in the strategic communication game is the endless round of “why is DoD doing X when really *State* should be doing X?”. We have real and urgent government-wide needs to develop effective strategic communication strategies, and from my perspective, squabbling over the roles of different executive branch agencies is a waste of time.

In an ideal world, State should be far better funded, and should be able to recruit and retain a far larger cadre of dedicated, well-trained officials. That would be nice, and I hope we will get there; those in Congress who would like to see the State Department do more than it currently does have a simple expedient, which is to give State some more money. But in the meantime, if the State Department lacks the funds or capacity to undertake programs or activities that are manifestly in the national interest, then of course other agencies should step in. If “whole of government” means anything at all, it must mean getting beyond petty squabbles about roles. The mission is too important.

Mr. Chairman and members of the sub-committee, I will close here. I have touched on a wide range of issues in these prepared remarks. Even so, I recognize that in many ways these remarks only scratch the surface, and my oral remarks will necessarily be even briefer. I hope that some of these comments provide useful fodder for further discussion, and I look forward to talking about these issues with you and your staff. Thank you once again for inviting me to share these views.