

Confronting the Past for the Future: A Way Ahead for Joint Force Information

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Confronting the past for the Future: A Way Ahead for Joint Force Information, by Maj Ethan R. Akerberg, 50 pages.

In an era of great power competition, learning to operate effectively in the information environment is critical for future US military success. Critical examination of current and past information related doctrine and organizations reveal a dysfunctional approach to the information environment. This dysfunction is fueled by an unreconciled tension between the need for government information with the American ideals of free speech. These two ideas are not wholly incongruent and can in fact be complimentary. The period of US history from WWI through the Cuban missile crisis reveals the roots of this journey. Failing to involve information as an element of policy development, organizing government information around specific conflicts and lack of unity are the negative trends from the past still inhibiting the Joint Force. The US only achieved success in the IE during the Cold War through wholesale reorganization and a commitment to leveraging the inherent advantage of a nation with a commitment to free speech. Taking these lessons learned, if the Joint Force is to be successful in future competition, they must adopt an information first approach to all operations.

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Abbreviations

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPI	Committee for Public Information
DOD	Department of Defense
IE	Information Environment
IO	Information Operations
JCOIE	Joint Concept for Operating in the Information Environment
MISO	Military Information Support Operations
NSC	National Security Counsel
OCB	Operations Coordination Board
OWI	Office of Warfare Information
PA	Public Affairs
PD	Public Diplomacy
USG	United States Government
USIA	United States Information Agency
VOA	Voice of America

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I. Introduction:

The United States political atmosphere surrounding the 2016 presidential election was extremely tense. The modern status quo of a generally civilized and sanitized public debate between parties was disrupted by the bombastic style of the Republican candidate, Donald J. Trump. The way in which he used social media to rally followers to his platform of “America First” was unprecedented and took many Americans by surprise. What surprised Americans even more was the intense Russian information campaign that coincided with the entirety of the 2016 election season. Among other things, this campaign involved hacking the networks of both political parties and extrapolating data for use in broad disinformation (deliberately false information) activities on social media. Their intent was not to aid one specific candidate but rather to gain insight to future national policy strategy, to incite division among the American populace and cause people to question the legitimacy of the electoral process itself.¹ These attacks have continued over the past four years, bringing to the forefront a significant issue that had been bubbling below the surface since the end of the Cold War - How does the United States effectively engage her adversaries and protect her citizens in the IE?

Russian disinformation campaigns and election meddling is nothing new. In the 1960's, 70's, and 80's Soviet information agents planted stories, created false FBI memos and paid journalists to write inflammatory content. Senator Barry Goldwater was painted as a Racist, Senator Henry Jackson as a homosexual and Ronald Reagan a warmonger.² The difference between then and now is that the United States Information Agency (USIA), a well-integrated,

¹ US Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Information Warfare: Issues for Congress*, by Catherine A Theohary, R45142 (Washington, DC: CRS, 2012), 9–10, accessed March 23, 2021, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R45142.pdf>.

² Seth G. Jones, “Russian Meddling in the United States” (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2019): 3–4, accessed March 22, 2021, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russian-meddling-united-states-historical-context-mueller-report>.

well-resourced executive agency existed to actively fight in this space on behalf of the United States for the entirety of the Cold War. Today, with the ease and speed of information proliferation, the threat is greater than ever, but there is no USIA. The USIA, along with most of its subordinate functions, was abolished in 1999. Today, adversaries are using the IE as the primary means to threaten the American way of life and the US security apparatus is unprepared to fight back. At a National Defense Industrial Association conference in October 2020, Retired Special Forces General, Michael Nagata put a much finer point on the issues, saying, “I think the United States is being strategically defeated in the information environment. We’re not even holding our own. We’re being defeated. We’re being outmaneuvered, we’re being outflanked, we’re being out persuaded.”³

The problem highlighted by LTG Nagata has plagued the US security establishment for over a century. Since World War I, the United States has grappled with the question of how a democracy, valuing freedom of speech as a bedrock principle, effectively fights and defends itself in the war of ideas. This has led to creating various organizations over the years, and today, without the USIA the Department of Defense (DOD) is desperately trying to answer the same question.

Nagata argues for a drastic reframe, stating “Perhaps military physical action ... or any other form of physical action by the U.S. government now should be increasingly seen as things that support information operations.”⁴ This is not a new idea, but was last given prominence in a different era with but with a similar strategic environment. In 1968, during the height of the Cold War, a study for the US Navy concluded “military operations should be conceived, planned,

³ Michael Nagata at National Defense Industrial Association Conference (October 2, 2020) quoted in Mark Pomerleau, “Why Is the United States Losing the Information War?” (October 6, 2020): 4, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.c4isrnet.com/information-warfare/2020/10/05/why-is-the-united-states-losing-the-information-war/>. Michael Nagata currently serves as an advisor with the National Counterterrorism Center and was speaking in this capacity when making these remarks.

⁴ Ibid.1

conducted and evaluated in the light of what they may or do communicate to foes, allies, and neutrals among diverse populations.”⁵ If the ideas for an information first approach to national security have been around since the Cold War, perhaps the events leading up to and during the Cold War can illuminate the path for DOD information in the 21st century.

The historical record of US information from WWI through the Cuban Missile Crisis reveals an unreconciled tension between the American ideals of free speech with the necessity for her government to leverage narrative in defense of the nation and a failure to appreciate the all-encompassing nature of the IE. However, this story also reveals how America’s commitment to free speech was not a detriment at all, but one her greatest strengths in defeating great powers of the past. If the United States is to effectively engage adversaries in the information age, they must treat the IE in a manner consistent with its all-encompassing nature and leverage the inherent strength of a society founded on the principle of free speech.

Theoretical Approach:

This study examines the formation and actions of the various US information organizations that existed from WWI through the Cuban Missile Crisis. This period was chosen for the following reasons: First, WWI marks the United States’ first foray into utilizing a national information apparatus in conjunction with national security on a large scale. From WWI to 1999, the executive branch maintained some form of national information organization. Second this period exemplifies a transition from the hot conflict of World War II to the Cold War. This is similar to the current operating environment, where the DOD is ending an extended period of kinetic operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and finds themselves returning home to an era of increased great power competition. Finally, this period incorporates the rise of the USIA, the official government agency responsible for narrative production and dissemination during the

⁵ James M. Dodson, William W. Chenault, and M. Dean Havron, *The Role of Psychological Operations in Naval Missions: An Appraisal and Recommendations*. (McClean VA: Human Sciences Research INC, June 1, 1968), ii, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/AD0836305>.

Cold War. The USIA represents the best attempt by the US Government (USG) to officially incorporate the “Informational” element within in the Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic (D.I.M.E.) construct of national power and strategy. As The story of USG information is a significant part of the DOD’s informational heritage, understanding this heritage can help the military understand why they have struggled to adapt in the changing information environment, despite much professional research outlining necessary changes. To inform this discussion, the ideas of a paradigm shift as discussed in Thomas Kuhn’s in the *Structure of Scientific Revolution* and the concept of narrative as discussed by H. Porter Abbott in *the Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* are used to help explain where the DOD is today why their approach to conflict must change.

In *the Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn defines a paradigm as the accepted norms of practice in a particular field. Paradigm shifts begin when the established norms for solving a problem are no longer sufficient to the task. This leads to model crisis, followed by a revolution where a new model is built.⁶ In this concept, a shift may take decades or even centuries to complete with not all entities adapting to the change at the same time. The US security establishment is in model crisis and has arguably been in this state since the close of WWII, meanwhile their competitors have shifted completely to an information first approach to security and power projection. Given the advent of nuclear weapons that can end civilization as we know it and the sheer monetary cost of competing in armed conflict, such a shift is only logical. Even more logical is that those with less resources invested or to invest in conventional military forces would be first to make the shift as they seek an advantage against a stronger adversary. Conversely, the strongest and the richest will be slow to make the shift as the necessity for change will take longer to emerge. In the case of informational power, the United States is

⁶ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd edition (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 10.

coming to grips with a reality that competitors have seen for years. The *Joint Concept for Operating in the Information Environment*, (JCOIE) of 2018 even states “The increasing importance of information requires that the Joint Force move beyond the current paradigm focused primarily on physical power.”⁷ Unfortunately, the title of this work itself reveals the DOD’s siloed approach to using informational power. If the Joint Force understood and rightly appreciated the IE, this concept would simply be titled “The Future Joint Operating Concept.” The IE cannot be treated separately from the operating environment.

Also informing this writing is H. Porter Abbott’s concept of narrative as expressed in *the Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. According to Abbott, narrative is the representation of events, consisting of story and narrative discourse.”⁸ He further expounds that humans are naturally hardwired to create narratives with which to explain their surroundings and the things that happen within those surroundings. According to this theory, all world events are going to be explained in some fashion or another; by the people those events happen to, the people orchestrating the events, and those outside simply observing those events. The implications for national security of this theory, particularly in the world of instantaneous communication, is that the information space is going to be filled. The only questions remaining are, who is going to fill it, and with what narratives?

Defining the Information Environment and Propaganda:

The terms information environment and propaganda are frequently used in the national security community but are not commonly understood. The definitions provided below use US Joint doctrine as a starting point for clarity and provide the basis for how the DOD speaks of information as an element of national power.

⁷ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Joint Concept for Operating in the Information Environment* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, July 25, 2018), 9.

⁸ H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 19.

The Information Environment:

“The information environment is the aggregate of individuals, organizations, and systems that collect, process, disseminate, or act on information. This environment consists of three interrelated dimensions which continuously interact with individuals, organizations, and systems. These dimensions are the physical, informational, and cognitive.”⁹ Figure 1 is the model used in US Joint Doctrine and depicts this understanding by placing these three dimensions inside a larger bubble entitled the “information environment.”

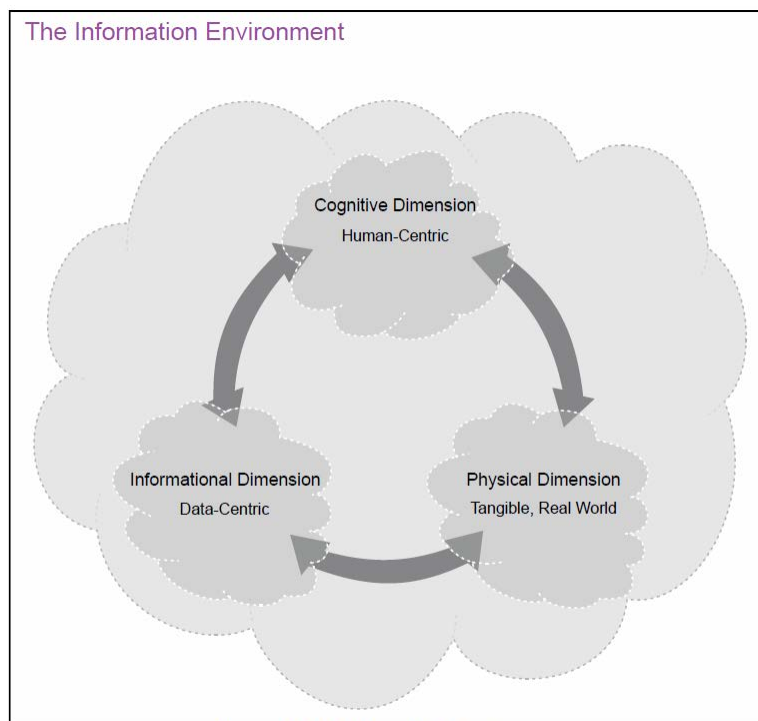


Figure I-1. The Information Environment

Figure 1. The Information Environment. US Department of Defense, Joint Staff Publication (JP) 3-13, *Information Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2014), I-2.

This definition and model are useful as they depict the all-encompassing nature of the IE. One can logically conclude from this framework that all actions in the physical dimension will have effects on the information environment. The JCOIE supports this idea saying, “every Joint

⁹ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-13, *Information Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2014), I-1.

Force action, written or spoken word, and displayed or relayed image has informational aspects that communicate a message or intent.”¹⁰

The current model sufficiently explains the environment but could be enhanced by adding a model depicting the human element of message transmission. Such a model should include the well-established concepts of encoding, decoding, messages, noise, feedback, environmental context and most importantly the idea that all actions send messages; therefore, the DOD is continuously sending messages. A model depicting these concepts, alongside the current model of the IE would more accurately reflect the complex nature of communication and the current operating environment.

The key takeaway regarding this definition is that the DOD doctrinally understands the all-encompassing nature of the IE. However, current and past practice does not reflect this understanding. In current military planning and organization, creating effects in the information environment is seen as a subordinate or supporting element to other action. Nowhere in the planning process is the leader challenged ask how he can employ all available assets to create a narrative and send a message. This disconnect is a symptom of the United States’ national discomfort (enhanced by government violations of First Amendment rights over the years) with government information. Due to this discomfort, there has always been a tendency to try and separate information into compartmentalized activities rather than accept the ubiquitous IE for what is.

Propaganda:

Propaganda as a term is frequently used but without common understanding. In reviewing past and present literature, propaganda always has three characteristics. It is always understood as government produced information, always meant to influence behavior, but not always negative or untrue. The “not always negative” aspect largely depends on perspective – are

¹⁰ US Joint Staff, *JCOIE* (2018), viii.

you the one creating the information, or the one being targeted by the information? Due to the ambiguity and negative connotation, the DOD does not officially use the term except when tasking Joint Public Affairs with countering propaganda. In this context propaganda is defined as “any form of communication, misleading in nature designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, or behavior of any group to benefit the sponsor.”¹¹

The word itself originated with a religious connotation meaning to propagate the faith, or to advocate for, but over time it took on a political connotation and subsequently a negative connotation.¹² This negative connotation is particularly strong in the United States where any attempts by the government to manipulate or restrict freedom of the press are immediately seen as an attack against the American notion of freedom as guaranteed by the First Amendment. These fears are not unfounded and date back to the early days of the fledgling republic when the dominant political party passed the Aliens and Seditions Acts of 1798, making it illegal for citizens to speak out falsely and aliens to speak critically against the government’s official policies. The acts were repealed in 1801, but a new version of the seditions act was passed in 1918 which was linked with President Wilson establishing America’s first information agency, the Committee on Public Information (CPI).

The abuses of the First Amendment by the CPI combined with the rise of Nazi propaganda during the interwar period further enhanced Americans discomfort with propaganda and the government having authorization to fight in the IE. It was not until passing the Smith-Mundt Act in 1947 that America made a tenuous peace with propaganda. This act allowed the government to produce and disseminate information the United States provided it was not

¹¹ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-61, *Public Affairs* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2016), I-3.

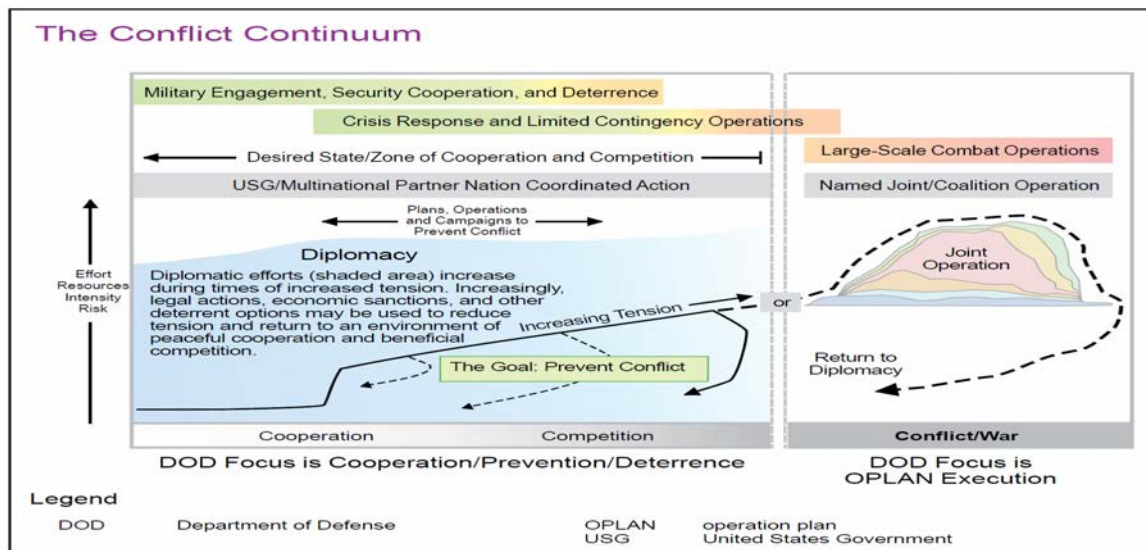
¹² “Propaganda, Definition, History, Techniques, Examples, & Facts,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed March 18, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/propaganda>.

primarily consumed by or directed toward US citizens.¹³ These artificial borders have always been impractical but are especially problematic given the nature of today's thoroughly interconnected, internet enabled, IE.

The Changing Operating Environment:

As the United States ends their long war in Afghanistan, they are returning home to an altered strategic landscape. One which challenges the status quo of American hegemony. While the United States spent nearly twenty years embroiled in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan against non-state actors, China and Russia have been consolidating their power and ushering in a shift from the uni-polar world of US dominance to a multi-polar world with a global shift in balance of power. Russia seeks to assert regional dominance while actively undermining USG efforts at home and abroad, while China is seeking to usurp the United States' global position through their belt and road initiative. As such, the DOD has shifted to a great power competition mindset.¹⁴

The current construct for understanding this shift is the conflict continuum (figure 2) as depicted in *JP 3-0 Joint Operations*.



¹³ Mac Thornberry, "H.R.5736 - 112th Congress (2011-2012): Smith-Mundt Modernization Act of 2012," webpage, 2011/2012, last modified May 10, 2012, accessed September 2, 2020, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/house-bill/5736>.

¹⁴ White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington DC: White House, 2017), 1.

Figure 2. The Conflict Continuum. US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2018), VI-2.

This graphic depicts conflict on a scale of intensity ranging from standard military engagement in peacetime to large scale combat operations in war. The same basic scale has been a staple of joint doctrine for many years, but the lower portion depicting cooperation, competition, and conflict/War was an update in 2018 and coincides with release of the 2017 National Security Strategy. As this graphic illustrates, peaceful cooperation between global powers is the goal and conflict/war is to be avoided to the greatest extent possible.

On the surface, this may not seem like a shift. Hasn't avoiding conflict always been the goal? No, and the last 20 years of conflict during the Global War on Terror provide the example. The United States has been perfectly content to use military force against adversaries who do not pose an existential threat. Herein lies the difference in great power competition. The world has seen the devastating effects of great powers who engage directly in conflict and there is no desire to bring about these ramifications, particularly in a post-nuclear age. However, this does not mean peaceful utopia. Expecting perfectly aligned interests is unrealistic, therefore making competition inevitable and the most likely realm of US military employment in the future. This is a new kind of Cold War where the information environment reigns supreme.

The Changing Information Environment:

Along with the return to great power competition, there has been a drastic shift in the IE. The effects of the information revolution created an environment where any actor, large or small, rich, or poor can instantaneously message the globe and influence world events.¹⁵ The Islamic State in Iraq's (ISIS) use of media and the internet to spread their caliphate gave the world a taste of how the new IE was changing modern conflict. Unlike other terrorist organizations, such as Al

¹⁵ Joseph S Nye Jr, "The Information Revolution and Power," *Current History* (January 2014): 19–22. The information revolution in this context refers to the advent of computing power in the 1960's ongoing through the present. From 1993 – 2000, connected computer usage went from 5 million to 500 million and now over a third of the world's population is connect via mobile computing devices.

Qaida who gained prominence in the late 1990's, ISIS was born into a world of prolific social media usage and fully considered its capabilities throughout all operations.¹⁶ By prolifically documenting and projecting their attacks, executions, and even humanitarian efforts on social media platforms, ISIS rallied thousands to their cause from around the globe. ISIS placed great emphasis on skill in the IE and developed a sophisticated information apparatus to script events and project their narrative.¹⁷ Although, nations in conflict have always used available media platforms to manipulate public opinion, with ISIS, the world saw how the new tools available in the IE allowed a disproportionately weak adversary to directly compete with a great power. If ISIS, as merely a violent extremist organization, effectively wielded unprecedented informational power, a much greater threat emerges when nations with far greater resources weaponize information on an industrial scale.

This is exactly what is happening in China and Russia. The theories of warfare espoused by both countries rely heavily on using non-kinetic means to influence their adversaries.¹⁸ As such, they have reorganized their national security entities and militaries with special emphasis on using the cognitive domain to influence outcomes and placed information experts in prominent positions of strategy formulation and operational execution.¹⁹ For the Chinese, the political work

¹⁶ Anti-Defamation League, *Al Qaeda*, accessed December 2, 2020, <https://www.adl.org/resources/profiles/al-qaeda>.

¹⁷ Souad Mekhennet, Greg Miller, "Inside the Surreal World of the Islamic State's Propaganda Machine," *The Washington Post*, November 20, 2015.

¹⁸ Russian idea of Information warfare is centered on the idea of manipulating what your enemy perceives to convince him to take actions that are advantageous to your objectives. Oschwald, Benjamin, *Russian Warfare: Information Operations, Cyber Operations and Spetznatz*, (Fort Leavenworth: US Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 2018); Chinese systems warfare is the idea of utilizing modern and emerging information technology to operate in a completely interconnected system while also exploiting all available information to dismantle the enemy system. This is usually spoken of in terms of the "Three Warfare's": Public opinion warfare, Psychological warfare, and Legal warfare, Engstrom, Jeffrey, *Systems Confrontation and Systems Destruction Warfare: How the Chinese Peoples' Liberation Army Seeks to wage Modern Warfare*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2018), 1-22.

¹⁹ Linda Robinson, *Modern Political Warfare: Current Practices and Possible Responses* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2018), 41–93. Robinson provides an extensive case study on how Russia organizes for conflict in the post-Cold War era.

department synchronizes Communist Party and Peoples Liberation Army global messaging efforts. Similarly, the Russians utilize the Federal'naya Sluzhba Bezopastnosti: (FSB), to plan and perform all manner of information operations on behalf of the Russian Federation. These organizations are one-stop -shops for China and Russia, possessing all the necessary tools to create effects in the information environment.²⁰ The information-centric strategies of Russia and China are the epitome of Sun Tzu's approach to warfare – "Supreme excellence in warfare consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting."²¹

Meanwhile, the US national security apparatus handled the information revolution in an entirely different manner than the Russians, Chinese or Violent Extremist Organizations. Because US military superiority was disproportionately credited for winning the Cold War, and Americans had yet to reconcile their discomfort with government sponsored information, leveraging the emerging technology platforms for non-kinetic operations was outside of the United States' national security paradigm. In fact, instead of streamlining non-kinetic capabilities across the government and military, the only United States equivalent to the FSB or political work department, the USIA, was disbanded.

Instead, the information revolution to the US military is characterized by greater precision, greater lethality, and greater situational awareness of the battlefield while severely neglecting delivery of non-kinetic effects. These investments paid off when US forces handily defeated their adversaries in the first gulf war in 1991, the Taliban in 2002, and again during the invasion of Iraq in 2003. However, when defeating the Iraqi Army and Taliban did not secure victory the United States found themselves locked in ideological battles where they were ill-

²⁰ Edmund Burke et al., *People's Liberation Army Operational Concepts* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2020), 32, accessed February 11, 2021, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA394-1.html; Michael Connell and Sarah Vogler, *Russia's Approach to Cyber Warfare*, Occasional Paper (Arlington VA: CNA, September 2016), 5-6.

²¹ Sunzi, *Sun Tzu on the Art of War: The Oldest Military Treatise in the World* (Luzac & Company, 1910), 17.

equipped to fight. In this type of conflict, insurgent forces quickly displayed a superior understanding of how to use the IE and a willingness to do so. This situation only grew worse as the wars dragged on and the development of social media allowed the belligerents to reach global audiences.

A favorite enemy technique used throughout the Global War on Terror (GWOT) is to accuse American operations of causing civilian casualties because it easily discredits American activity and plays on the US military's reluctance to engage in the IE. In 2019, the Resolute Support headquarters in Afghanistan received 541 reports from all types of media sources of civilian casualties. Of these reports, only 57 were determined to be credible.²² The US military takes these accusations seriously and by the time the US military investigates (taking until March of the following year) and gets their version of the truth out to the information space, there is no telling how many times the false information has been reposted on the internet. The damage is done and US forces watch helplessly as their credibility is degraded and valuable resources are wasted chasing ghost stories. This story has played out in the same manner, year after year for almost 20 years.

As any adversary would, these insurgent forces were looking for an asymmetric advantage and found that influencing the ideas and actions of target audiences via the social media enabled IE is far more efficient and cost effective than maintaining a large military force. The US military spent decades pouring their information technology advancements into greater lethality but is now poorly equipped to compete in a war for the narrative. In today's operating environment The DOD must learn to maneuver effectively in the IE or risk mission failure.

²² US Department of Defense, *Report on Civilian Casualties in Connection with United States Military Operations in 2019, 2020*, 11–12.

II. Literature Review

Historical Perspectives of US Information Efforts:

Informing this work significantly are the writings of Wilson P. Dizard, a life-long member of the US information Service. In 1961 he published *The Strategy of Truth: The Story of the U.S. Information Service* and he expanded this work in 2004 by publishing *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency*.²³ Dizard uses his own experience as well as a wealth of primary source material to weave his cautionary yet optimistic tale of America's relationship with information. In both books he expresses the need for America to confront her past in order to handle the challenges of public diplomacy for a free democratic society in a world of great power competition. Additionally, Nicolas Cull's *The Cold War and The United States Information Agency* provides an in-depth account of US information activities throughout the Cold War. As a professor of public diplomacy and not a practitioner, he balances the Dizard's work by providing an external perspective on US information during the Cold War.²⁴ Finally, *Psychological Operations: American Style the Joint United States Public Affairs Office, Vietnam and Beyond* by Robert Kodosky's work is important as it provides perspective on an under researched aspect of US information history, the JUSPAO. Kodosky explores how the legacy of the Vietnam war and the JUSPAO is still hindering the US information apparatus in the GWOT. He argues that the manipulation of the IE by the Johnson administration to support the poor policy decisions in Vietnam are negatively affecting the DOD's approach to applying informational power, today.²⁵

²³ Wilson P. Dizard, *The Strategy of Truth: The Story of The U.S. Information Service* (Washington DC: Public Affairs Press, 1961); Wilson P. Jr Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004).

²⁴ Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989*, 1st Edition (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²⁵ Robert J. Kodosky, *Psychological Operations American Style: The Joint United States Public Affairs Office, Vietnam and Beyond* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007).

Contemporary Analysis of DOD Information Efforts and Recommended Changes:

There is a plethora of research concerning the challenges for the US military in the IE. The RAND Corporation, The American Security Project and other think tanks have produced extensive full-length studies on this topic with excellent recommendations for how the DOD and specific services can improve performance in the IE. Throughout these studies there are specific recurring themes and recommendations. The following are recurring themes from various academic studies regarding the USG's report card on information from 2005 to the present:²⁶

1. The Joint Force across all branches is inconsistent in the way they speak about information which inhibits communication and ultimately synchronization of assets.
2. The US military places less emphasis on information related career paths than their competitors who are perceived to be more effective at operating in this environment.

²⁶ Christopher Paul, *Assessing and Evaluating Department of Defense Efforts to Inform, Influence, and Persuade: Worked Example* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2017), accessed September 2, 2020, http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR809z4.html; Arturo Munoz, *Assessing Military Information Operations in Afghanistan, 2001-2010* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2012), accessed September 2, 2020, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9659.html; Christopher Paul and William Marcellino, *Dominating Duffer's Domain: Lessons for the U.S. Army Information Operations Practitioner* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2017), accessed September 2, 2020, http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1166z1.html; Eric V. Larson et al., "Foundations of Effective Influence Operations. A Framework for Enhancing Army Capabilities: (596982009-001)" (American Psychological Association, 2009), accessed September 2, 2020, <http://doi.apa.org/get-pe-doi.cfm?doi=10.1037/e596982009-001>; Christopher Paul et al., *Lessons from Others for Future U.S. Army Operations in and Through the Information Environment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2018), accessed September 2, 2020, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1925z1.html; Robinson, *Modern Political Warfare*; Christopher Paul and Miriam Matthews, *The Language of Inform, Influence, and Persuade: Assessment Lexicon and Usage Guide for U.S. European Command Efforts* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2018), accessed September 14, 2020, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2655.html; Rand Waltzman, *The Weaponization of Information: The Need for Cognitive Security* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2017), accessed August 11, 2020, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT473.html>; Kennon H Nakamura, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and Current Issues* (December 18, 2009); Theohary, *Information Warfare: Issues for Congress*; Jason A. Mead, *Using the United States Information Agency Methods in the Twenty-First Century*: (Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, May 1, 2008), accessed September 2, 2020, <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA484892>; Matthew Wallin, "Military Public Diplomacy: How the Military Influences Foreign Audiences," *American Security Project* (2015): 47.

3. The US military is largely reactive in the IE due to unsynchronized efforts and rigid informational authorities that prevent commanders from responding effectively to changes in the IE.
4. Information related capabilities are scattered throughout the force making Integration extremely difficult.
5. Employing information related capabilities is often an after-thought to mission planning.
6. The US military has frequently launched ineffective information operations due to misunderstanding of cultures, language and how target audiences receive information.
7. The US military has a disjointed approach to the IE. This is often exemplified in the bifurcated relationship between Public Affairs and other traditional influence operations entities.
8. The US military struggles to measure effectiveness of their messages and is more likely to focus on irrelevant measures of performance.

The large value of this research is how it has tracked trends of US behavior in recent years and provides ample evidence for the DOD to make drastic changes moving forward. These recommended changes range from forming a new USIA equivalent, to simply changing how the branches think about information. Practical organizational recommendations include:

1. Breaking down the “firewall” between public affairs and other information related capabilities.
2. Placing more emphasis on Information related career paths to grow professionals who fully understand the IE and how to employ the growing non-kinetic capabilities.
3. Fully integrate informational and physical capabilities.

Finally, there is an underlying assumption in much of this research and the JCOIE that points to competitors having a distinct advantage because of how they control information in their societies. The weakness of this research is the focus on symptoms of failure and not root causes.

By only focusing on symptoms, the literature being seen by the US military fails to fill in the gaps as to why they are performing the way they do and what is preventing change. Is this learned behavior from somewhere else? Perhaps the DOD in modern form is the downstream effect of a long history of mistreatment of the IE. With so many clear recommendations, why is the DOD still struggling for effectiveness in this domain? Examining America's historical relationship with the IE and can help overcome some of the trends identified in these surveys.

III. The United States' Approach to Information:

To confront these failings and challenges of the IE the Joint Force published JCOIE in 2018 as the starting point for creating a solution. According to the JCOIE, the military must integrate informational power with physical power to win in an era of great power competition.²⁷ In this context winning is achieving one's strategic objectives or preventing the enemy from achieving there's. Winning, according to this concept requires harnessing the "inherent informational aspects of military activities."²⁸ The JCOIE admits the DOD's past failures in the IE stating, "effective use of information by competitors and adversaries has often caught Joint Forces unprepared and unable to respond to the high volume of multi-channel propaganda sent via text, video, audio, and still imagery propagated via the Internet, social media, satellite television, and traditional radio and television broadcasting..."²⁹ This statement is accurate; the ease at which information moves across the globe makes projecting a message easier for adversaries but pointing to propagation of information technology as the key element for US military failings is a distraction from the true issues. Competitors hold no technological advantage over the US military. The US military is the most well-resourced force the world has ever known. The true advantage to competitors comes from a fundamentally different approach to warfighting,

²⁷ US Joint Staff, *JCOIE* (2018), 11.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁹ US Joint Staff, *JCOIE* (2018), 5.

a way that negates the lethal overmatch of US forces. The following review of how the USG speaks of and organizes for information activities shows a currently dysfunctional approach that does not rightly value informational power or understand the nature of the IE.

Organization and Doctrine of US Information

In 2012 RAND Corps completed a study of military information operational effectiveness in which one of the recommendations was that the Joint Force needed to “Harmonize IO doctrine and practice, and implement greater integration with PSYOP and public affairs.”³⁰ In 2015, RAND completed a follow-up report stating the Department of Defense (DOD) had yet to implement the suggested changes from the previous report.³¹ Finally, in 2020, an article published in *The Cyber Defense Review* entitled “Doctrinal Confusion and Cultural Dysfunction” enumerated the confusion in great detail; noting that the problem had only become greater since the time of those previous RAND studies.³² With this in mind, this section seeks to clarify the current state of US military information by providing a historical overview and current synopsis of how the USG and DOD conceives of using information today.

The concept of leveraging informational power during conflict has steadily expanded in the USG since WWI. Political warfare, Public Diplomacy, Strategic Communication, Psychological Warfare, and Information Operations are all terms used to describe how governments use the IE to influence behavior. Today, the USG speaks in terms of Public Diplomacy and the DOD broadly speaks in terms of Information Operations (IO) or Operations in the Information Environment (OIE).

³⁰ Munoz, *Assessing Military Information Operations in Afghanistan, 2001-2010*, 3.

³¹ Arturo Muñoz and Erin Dick, “Information Operations: The Imperative of Doctrine Harmonization and Measures of Effectiveness” (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2015), 2, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE128.html>.

³² Herbert Lin, “Doctrinal Confusion and Cultural Dysfunction in DoD,” *The Cyber Defense Review* 5, no. 2 (Summer, 2020): 89–108, accessed February 9, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26923525>.

Public Diplomacy:

According to Joint Public Affairs Doctrine, “Public Diplomacy consists of overt international public information activities of the USG designed to promote US foreign policy objectives by seeking to understand, inform, and influence foreign audiences and opinion makers, and by broadening dialogue between American citizens, institutions, and their counterparts abroad.”³³ The DOD is only a supporting effort to US Public Diplomacy activities which reside within the DOS and are the responsibility of the Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.³⁴ After shutting down the USIA, the DOS became the responsible agency for all US Public Diplomacy efforts. Within this office, the US Agency for Global media (USAGM) and the Global Engagement Center (GEC) assumed in a much more limited capacity, the responsibilities of the USIA. The USAGM is responsible for maintaining and running the programing for the VOA while the GEC is responsible for US counter-propaganda efforts.³⁵ As subordinate elements within the state department the USAGM and the GEC do not possess the budget, and authority once held by the USIA.³⁶

Information Operations:

The DOD defines Information Operation as, “the integrated employment, during military operations, of information-related capabilities (IRCs) in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision-making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own.”³⁷ As of 2018 doctrine, the IRC’s are Key leader engagement (KLE), Public Affairs (PA), Civil Military Operations (CMO), Military Information Support Operations

³³ US Joint Staff, JP 3-61(2016), II-9.

³⁴ Nakamura, “U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and Current Issues,” 17.

³⁵ US Agency for Global Media, “Who We Are,” accessed September 2, 2020, <https://www.usagm.gov/who-we-are/>; US Department of State “Global Engagement Center,” accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-public-diplomacy-and-public-affairs/global-engagement-center/>.

³⁶ Nakamura, “U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and Current Issues,” 24–27.

³⁷ US Joint Staff, JP 3-13 (2014), GL-3.

(MISO), Military Deception Operations (MILDEC), Operational Security, Electronic Warfare, Special Technical Operations, Combat Camera, Space Operations and Cyberspace Operations.³⁸ Most easily understood, “IO” is the umbrella term under which the DOD categorizes the many and various non-kinetic capabilities.

Functionally, IO is an afterthought in the DOD. IO Officers transition to this career field at a midpoint in their careers without a requirement to have previously worked in one of the subordinate IRCs. In the Marine Corps, IO, and most of the subordinate IRCS are only a secondary occupational field. Marines are typically transitioned in and out of billets on a two-to-three-year rotation which inhibits professional growth and the continuity required for effective IO. For example, a combat engineer could receive orders to the Marine Corps Information Operations Center to work in the Psychological Operations Company. He or she would attend the requisite schooling at the Army Special Warfare School and work as a Psychological Operations Officer for 24-36 months before being transferred back to an engineer unit. Most likely, never serving in the information field again.

Due to the growing information capabilities, in 2018, the Joint Staff made information its own warfighting function³⁹ *Joint Publication 3-0 Joint Operations*, defines the information function as encompassing “the management and application of information and its deliberate integration with other joint functions to change or maintain perceptions, attitudes, and other elements that drive desired behaviors and to support human and automated decision making.”⁴⁰ Most relevant to the argument of this monograph is how the Joint Force understands leveraging information to affect behavior. According to doctrine, affecting behavior has three primary activities: “influence relevant actor behavior, inform domestic international and internal

³⁸ US Joint Staff, JP 3-0 (2017), III-22-26.

³⁹US Joint Staff, JP 3-0 (2017), III – 1-52.

⁴⁰ Ibid., III-17.

audiences, and “attack and exploit information, information networks and Systems.”⁴¹ The DOD primarily employs MISO and PA for these tasks.

Psychological Operation:

In modern war, the concept of specifically targeting an individual’s decision-making by non-kinetic means is commonly known as psychological warfare (PSYWAR) or psychological operations (PSYOPs). The US military dabbled in “PSYWAR” in WWI and developed a robust influence capability during WWII which continues to this day as MISO. During WWII, the US military defined PSYWAR as “*any* weapon to influence the mind of the enemy. The weapons are psychological only in the effect they produce and not because of the weapons themselves.”⁴² This broad definition captures the true essence of the IE and is possibly the clearest understanding the DOD has ever had on this subject. This definition reinforces the idea that all military actions have an informational component, and it is useless to try and separate physical actions from psychological effects.

In 1952, the US military formalized PSYWAR by establishing the Psychological Warfare Center to professionalize the influence capability developed during WWII. During the Vietnam era, the term PSYWAR became “PSYOPs”, to capture the idea that the military might be influence behavior anywhere along the conflict continuum, not just armed conflict.⁴³ Vietnam also saw the temporary joining of public diplomacy and PSYOPs when the Joint US Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) was formed to lead information operations in Vietnam. JUSPAO was a USIA led effort manned by elements of the VOA, military PA and military PSYOPS personnel. JUSPAO was largely a failure due to a combination of American exceptionalism and President

⁴¹ Ibid., III-18.

⁴² Department of War, "Overall Strategic Plan for the United States", March 01, 1943, JCS Records, Strategic Issues, Reel 11.

⁴³ Curtis Boyd, “The Future of MISO,” *Special Warfare*, no.1, (January-February 2011): 22–28, accessed March 13, 2021, <https://www.soc.mil/SWCS/SWmag/archive/SW2401/SW2401TheFutureOfMISO.html>.

Johnson's desire to manipulate the information coming out of Vietnam.⁴⁴ The JUSPAO experience strengthened the desire within the DOD to separate "inform" and "influence" capability in future conflicts. Typically viewed as a non-traditional capability, PSYOPS grew within the US Special Operations apparatus and today US Special Operations Command is the proponent for MISO capability. By existing within SOCOM, MISO is functionally separated from the conventional military, increasing the gap for the DOD to bridge in the IE.

Doctrinally speaking, the terms Psychological Warfare and Psychological Operations became more exclusive, until the Joint Force eliminated the terms from their lexicon in 2014 in favor of something with a less negative connotation -"MISO."⁴⁵ "Psychological operations" first appeared in a US military training manual in 1947 where it was defined as the "imposition of a belligerents will on that of his opponent by means of propaganda."⁴⁶ The major problem with this definition is that it relies on the all too squishy and also unagreed upon definition of propaganda. The last Joint definition of psychological operations and current definition of MISO is "planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals."⁴⁷

The tragedy in this linguistic evolution is how far the Joint Force has come from their initial understanding of Psychological warfare; going so far as to include the following statement in bold text in the current edition of *JP 3-13.2 MISO*:

It is important not to confuse the psychological impact of other military operations with MISO. Many actions of the Joint Force, such as air strikes, have psychological impact,

⁴⁴ Robert J. Kodosky, *Psychological Operations American Style: The Joint United States Public Affairs Office, Vietnam and Beyond* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 27-30.

⁴⁵ Boyd, "The Future of MISO,"1.

⁴⁶ US Department of the Army, *Tactical Psychological Warfare*, (Fort Riley, KS: The Ground General School, 1947), 2.

⁴⁷ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-13.2, *Joint Psychological Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2010), GL-8.

but they are not MISO unless their primary purpose is to influence the attitudes, rules, norms, beliefs, and subsequent behavior of a TA (target audience).⁴⁸

Is the purpose of warfare not to influence the behavior of your adversary in a manner that is favorable to your objectives? By this statement, the DOD has clearly lost their way regarding the use of informational power.

Public Affairs (PA):

Inseparable, but currently delinked from MISO and the greater IO effort is DOD PA. Doctrinally, PA's responsibility is to inform domestic and foreign audiences of US military activities, counter propaganda, and serve as the commander's mouthpiece and principal advisor on strategic communication. Most importantly, PA is mandated by law and policy to present only truthful information.⁴⁹

Functionally, PA personnel serve on the personal staff of every General Officer and above. Their role is to coordinate and synchronize all public information activities on behalf of the commander and his organization. In this role it is envisioned that PA is "proactively" explaining military activities in an area of operations, and countering adversary propaganda by sharing truthful information.⁵⁰ Given these responsibilities, Joint doctrine makes it clear that PA must work *with* the IO cell, but does not work *for* them. As the DOD sees it, this separation is necessary due to the functions of PA vs IO. According to *Joint Publication 3-61: Public Affairs*:

PA is a command function focused on communication at the national, theater, command, and strategic levels to inform and educate relevant audiences. IO, on the other hand, specifically focus on creating effects in the information environment during military operations, largely against the threat but also to influence indigenous audiences in the operational area.⁵¹

⁴⁸ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-13.2, *Joint Military Information Support Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2014), I-2.

⁴⁹ US Joint Staff, JP 3-61 (2016), viii.

⁵⁰ US Joint Staff, JP 3-61 (2016), I-2; US Joint Staff, JP 3-0 (2017), III-22.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, A-2-3.

The separation and perception of PA and IO create a series of cascading issues for the DOD. First, the separation is illogical and inconsistent with the DOD's understanding of the IE and the conflict continuum. If all military activities happen within the IE, then every action is communicating something. PA may project a message to a specific audience, but in the ubiquitous era of the internet, there is no limiting what borders the message is crossing and how the message is being received. Furthermore, the DOD is always conducting "military operations" and they are not always against a "threat" as the PA doctrine proposes. In fact, the DOD perception of the conflict continuum makes clear that most military activities are not occurring during violent conflict.

However, due to past experiences such as Vietnam or the 2003 Iraq invasion, where the media felt manipulated by PA, the separation of PA from IO, is generally thought of as necessary to maintain PA credibility. In their research on DOD PA and its relationship to IO and the civilian press, both LtCol Opperman and Major Freeman posit that the military should not be concerned if the press feels they are manipulated by PA. After all, the stated purpose of PA is to support the military mission, so there should be no surprise when the military, via PA creates opportunity for the press to aid in accomplishing these objectives.⁵²

Finally, the functional separation but hopeful coordination of PA and IO is a model destined for failure. The Commander's personal staff works on a different battle rhythm than the rest of the staff and does not coordinate operations. This is the role of the C/J/G/S-3 operations section. By not fully integrating as part of the regular staff sections, PA cannot effectively fill their role in "proactively" countering propaganda or projecting the message of the command if they are disconnected from the intelligence and operations process within the command. In the best-case scenario, they will only be responsive/defensive in nature (i.e., Afghanistan civilian

⁵² Bryan R Freeman, "The Role of Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, and Psychological Operations in Strategic Information Operations" (Monterey CA: Naval Post Graduate School, 2005); Duane A Opperman, "Information Operations and Public Affairs: A Union of Influence" (US Army War College Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013, 2012).

casualties). Leaving PA intentionally disconnected from the operations process is leaving a powerful weapon out of the fight.

IV. The US Information Story: World War I to the Cuban Missile Crisis

Examining the history of the USIA its predecessors and descendants reveals America's failures to correctly understand the nature of information as well as the continuous internal struggle existing between the ideals of democracy and necessity of government information. However, within this story the United States was able to balance the tension between government information and freedom of speech, ultimately making use of it to win in great power competition.

World War I: The Early Mistakes of Government Information.

Although America has been communicating her ideas abroad and domestically since her birth, it took the United States entering WWI for her to establish the first official information apparatus. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson won reelection on campaign promises that he would keep America out of the European conflict, but as it became increasingly clear that this was an impossibility, he now had to sell the war to millions of Americans. He started his sales pitch with his own form of propaganda, during in a joint session of congress in which he famously said "the world must be made safe for democracy."⁵³ Shortly thereafter, with a short executive order, (one without details regarding specific purposes or limitation) he established CPI to finish the psychological work he started.⁵⁴ Chaired by a former journalist, George Creel, the CPI understood their tasks as selling the war to the American public and squelch the voices of

⁵³ Woodrow Wilson, *Address to Joint Session of Congress* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1917), accessed February 27, 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibitions/world-war-i-american-experiences/about-this-exhibition/arguing-over-war/for-or-against-war/wilson-before-congress/>.

⁵⁴ Woodrow Wilson, Executive Order 2594, "Creating Committee on Public Information," *Code of Federal Regulations*, 1917, accessed December 2, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/executive-order-2594-creating-committee-public-information>.

dissension. A secondary effort would be to work with deployed military forces and coalition partners on their psychological operations. CPI tactics were simple, flood the IE with government information. The CPI used military related press releases, recruiting posters, anti-German propaganda and for the first time in US history, a government produced newspaper, *The Official Bulletin*.⁵⁵ *The Official Bulletin* was free and distributed widely across the country. The CPI actively worked to provide more “news” than traditional newspapers could handle, by issuing up to ten press releases a day and recruiting an army of their own journalists who would write government propaganda for newspapers. Empowered by the new Seditions Act of 1918, the CPI further suppressed dissent by working directly with the US postal service to inhibit materials with anti-war sentiment from being delivered around the country.⁵⁶ The CPI was ultimately effective in producing support for the war effort, but at the cost of effectively burying independent journalism and degrading the confidence of the American people in their government.⁵⁷

Due to a general negative outcry from the public over the Committee’s work, the CPI was disbanded, and the Seditions Act was repealed shortly after the war. Unfortunately, their legacy negatively affected future information organizations and the DOD of today in two ways. First, with their primary focus on information for domestic audiences and abuses of the First Amendment, the CPI furthered America’s discomfort with government information. The CPI legacy is the root cause for the current separation in law and doctrine between domestic and foreign information projection and the absurd notion of separating informing activities from

⁵⁵ Patricia O’Toole, “When the U.S. Used ‘Fake News’ to Sell Americans on World War I,” *HISTORY*, accessed February 12, 2021, <https://www.history.com/news/world-war-i-propaganda-woodrow-wilson-fake-news>.

⁵⁶ Christopher B. Daly, “How Woodrow Wilson’s Propaganda Machine Changed American Journalism,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, April 28, 2017, accessed February 13, 2021, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-woodrow-wilsons-propaganda-machine-changed-american-journalism-180963082/>.

⁵⁷ Daly, “How Woodrow Wilson’s Propaganda Machine Changed American Journalism.”

influencing activities. Secondly, due to the unchecked authority of the CPI, no future US information organization was granted the necessary authorities to be fully integrated into strategic direction or to fully create unity of effort in the IE. This negative trend continues today and is seen in how information capability and responsibilities are spread between the DOS, CIA, DOD, and the further bifurcation of information responsibilities within the military branches.

World War II: Building the Information Apparatus.

With the start of conflict Europe in 1939, the United States was confronted with preparing for war on a global scale. During WWII the United States developed the idea of leveraging truthful information, built a global influence infrastructure and learned the value of integrating military and other government organizational informational capability. Unfortunately, these developments also started the negative trend of viewing information as only an additive function to other government actions rather than an essential element of policy development. The advances of government information during this period were foundational to successfully fighting the Cold War, but also stunted the DOD's growth in learning to fight within the IE.

From their WWI experience, policymakers in Washington understood a war of this scale required a national intelligence service and a capacity to create and disseminate information to domestic and international audiences. These two functions were initially placed under the same organization, the Office of the Coordinator of Information (OCI). The OCI was the forerunner to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and then eventually became the Central Intelligence Agency in 1953.⁵⁸ Two important developments in US information came from the OCI. First, the OCI, heavily influenced by the negative effects of the CPI, committed to a "strategy for truth."⁵⁹ This set the United States on a path of using truthful information for the remainder of the

⁵⁸ Nicholas J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989*, 1st Edition. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 13–14; Dizard, *The Strategy of Truth*, 33.

⁵⁹ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 14.

war and established expectations of US information operations that lasted throughout the Cold War and into today. Information from the USG would report the good, the bad and the ugly. In today's Joint Force, PA has a mandate to tell the truth; a limitation that should never be viewed as negative. The expectation of truth lent credibility to US information throughout WWII as it was in such a stark contrast to the propaganda presented by the totalitarian governments of the Axis powers. The truth, if the DOD is willing to leverage it, can do the same for the Joint Force today.

Secondly, the OCI had the foresight to develop foreign language radio stations across the Pacific. Known as the Voice of America (VOA), these stations were the primary vehicle for explaining the war to foreign audiences and US troops alike.⁶⁰ The network of stations expanded during the war and eventually connected most of Asia, Europe, and parts of Africa to American produced information. These stations and the regional expertise developed by their staffs became the action arm of the USIA and are the only significant US information element still in existence.

When the United States was officially brought into the war, the foreign information element of the OCI was placed under the newly created Office of Warfare Information (OWI), while the intelligence and covert operations element became the OSS. Within the military, the Pacific and European theater commander's each established the Psychological Warfare Department within their Headquarters. The OWI was created to coordinate all US information activities at home and abroad. The OWI was created with an equally ambiguous charter to that of its' WWI counterpart, with a mandate to produce "win-the-war enthusiasm."⁶¹ By not clearly establishing expectations for the organization or a clear reporting chain, the OWI fought an uphill battle from day one.

The OWI was divided into two elements, domestic and international tasks. On the domestic front, the OWI, headquartered in New York City, was viewed by the War Department

⁶⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁶¹ Dizard, *The Strategy of Truth*, 34.

as content producing entity and largely excluded from the policy and strategy discussions in Washington. This mentality about the OWI combined with dual reporting requirements to the War Department and the State Department, caused problems throughout the war for the OWI. In his post war report to President Truman, OWI director Elmer Davis bemoaned this convoluted structure, because he never possessed the authority to rightly manage the US information apparatus and future information organizations should be placed directly under the White House authority.⁶² Nevertheless, the domestic OWI's numerous films, radio broadcasts, posters and characters such as "Rosie the Riveter" rallied the American public around the war effort and successfully created an enduring narrative of unparalleled national unity in the effort to defeat the Axis powers.

The overseas element of OWI, was not without its challenges but is an example of how truthful information and psychological operations can and must be integrated to achieve maximum effect in the IE. By executive order, Most OWI personnel reported directly to theater commanders.⁶³ Some commanders resisted, while others quickly realized the value this organization (particularly the VOA), have on the morale of enemy combatants and occupied peoples alike.⁶⁴ By providing truthful content of war progress in a variety of native languages, the OWI radio broadcasts found a faithful audience around the world and their messages were having an effect. One US Navy-OWI collaboration used a German speaking officer to broadcast war information over a frequency typically reserved for international distress calls. Naval intelligence knew these broadcasts were listened to as they saw German U-boat movements change in direct

⁶² Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 16.

⁶³ Franklin D. Roosevelt, Executive Order 9312, "Defining the Foreign Information Activities of the Office of War Information," *Federal Register* 8, vol. 50, 1943.

⁶⁴ Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 32–34.

response to broadcasts. After the war, captured naval records indicate these broadcasts had a “crushing effect on the morale of German naval personnel.”⁶⁵

During WWII, there was an understanding that the OWI would also play an active role in supporting PSYWAR as an integral element of the Psychological Warfare Department’s (PWD) (theater level organizations) efforts and there was no assumption that Public diplomacy efforts would only be directed toward foreign audiences or that public affairs would only be directed toward domestic audiences. General Dwight D. Eisenhower was a strong proponent of PSYWAR and unified the European information effort by including the OWI, the OSS, military PA, and two other British information organizations as part of his PWD.⁶⁶ With all these elements working in concert, the allies mounted a robust information campaign against the Germans. The PWD sought to fill the IE by using leaflets, newspaper articles and radio broadcasts. The PWD also successfully executed the elaborate pre-D-Day deception operation. The successful deception kept enough German combat power away from Normandy long enough to allow allied landings and was influential in a large German force surrendering at Cherbourg.⁶⁷ As allied forces moved across Europe the effects of the OWI were manifest by German forces specifically targeting OWI transmitters and by an allied tank raid with the specific objective of securing Radio Luxemburg.⁶⁸ By wars end, fully integrating military and “other government” (OSS, OWI) information capabilities clearly stood on its own merits. General Eisenhower stated in his after-action report of the war:

The exact contribution of psychological warfare toward the final victory cannot, of course, be measured in terms of towns destroyed or barriers passed. However, I am convinced that the expenditure of men and money in wielding the spoken and written word was an important contributing factor in undermining the enemy’s will to resist and supporting the fighting morale of our potential Allies in the occupied countries. Without

⁶⁵ Edward Barrett, *The Truth is our Weapon* (Funk and Wagnalls, January 1, 1953), quoted in Dizard, *The Strategy of Truth*, 35.

⁶⁶ Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 32.

⁶⁷ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 17.

⁶⁸ Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 33.

doubt, psychological warfare has proved its right to a place of dignity in our military arsenal.⁶⁹

This appreciation for the allied information effort informed his perspective of US information needs in the coming Cold War.

The OWI story is one of tactical success, but strategic failure. At the end of the war, the positive value of a persistent forward information presence was undisputed. Having information professionals with regional specific expertise and with the ability to project a message in a target audiences' native language was proven essential to successful operations. Also, the successful coordination between the OWI and the US military exemplified an awareness of the inseparable nature of their purposes. However, amidst this cooperation, the question of who should be ultimately responsible for designing and executing psychological operations was left contested between the OWI, OSS and US military. These unresolved issues carried themselves forward into the Cold War and are clearly seen today in the PA / MISO divide within the military.

The OWI failed on the strategic level, due to its heavy focus on content production and physical separation from decision makers within the war department. At the end of the war, the executive branch still did not understand the value of using information professionals to shape policy. This failure effected the future DOD in the same manner. Today, the DOD does not view information professionals as integral members of shaping operational approaches, but rather as a supporting element to operations that have already been planned. Additionally, the DOD is poorly integrated to the remaining elements of DOS public diplomacy and vis versa. Failing to integrate informational capability and informational organizations is a primary element preventing the DOD from successfully competing in the IE.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Freeman, "The Role of Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, and Psychological Operations in Strategic Information Operations.", 21.

⁷⁰ Paul et al., *Lessons from Others for Future U.S. Army Operations in and Through the Information Environment*; Robinson, *Modern Political Warfare*, xiv.

With the swift demilitarization occurring post war, President Truman officially dissolved the OWI in August of 1945, but was counseled to keep elements of the foreign information service (most predominantly the Voice of America) as it would be useful for foreign policy, post-war reconstruction and in the event of another war. US information activities abroad were kept alive through the state department via the Interim International Information Service (IIIS) followed by the Office of Information and Cultural Affairs (OIC).⁷¹ These offices mostly worked on De-Nazification and reeducation campaigns in Europe and Japan, and became the justification for further expanding the foreign information elements that were the primary vehicle for the United States to disseminate her narrative throughout the Cold War.⁷²

Beginning of the Cold War and the Campaign of Truth:

In February 1946, George Kennan, the Acting Chief of Mission in Moscow wrote his famous “Long Telegram” to Secretary of State, James Byrnes in which he laid out very clearly that the United States was in an ideological war with the Soviet Union. He described in detail the threat of communism to the world saying, “communism is like a malignant parasite that only feeds on dead tissue.” A broken, post-war Europe was highly susceptible to this parasite unless a better alternative was offered.⁷³

We must formulate and put forward for other nations a much more positive and constructive picture of [the] sort of world we would like to see than we have put forward in past. It is not enough to urge people to develop political processes similar to our own. Many foreign peoples, in Europe at least, are tired and frightened by experiences of [the] past and are less interested in abstract freedom than in security. They are seeking guidance rather than responsibilities. We should be better able than Russians to give them this. And unless we do, Russians certainly will.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 23–24.

⁷² Ibid., 27.

⁷³ George Kennan, “George Kennan’s ‘Long Telegram,’” February 22, 1946, accessed September 15, 2020, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 11.

Kennan clearly understood the inherent advantage of a society who believed in freedom of information vs. the controlling nature of the Soviet regime. To him, the Soviets used negative propaganda to paint democracy in a bad light, because they had nothing better to offer. He had seen first-hand the failings of communism, and how all it could offer was temporary security. On the other hand, American democracy and its declaration of individual liberty and a chance for prosperity had delivered on its promise and had been doing so for over 150 years. He was fully convinced that armed conflict with the Soviets could be avoided, but only if the United States regained control of the narrative and filled the IE with the story of freedom triumphing over oppression.

To enact this strategy required a simultaneous defensive and offensive strategy on both the foreign and domestic front. Russian propaganda must be exposed at home and abroad (defense), while explaining to American's what the USG is doing about the threat and projecting to the world the story of American freedom (offense). For the entirety of the Cold War, a narrative-first strategy, capitalizing on American freedom of speech, instead of focusing on the negative propaganda of Russia eased the public's tension with government information and allowed the USG to fight effectively in the IE. The USG did not always get it right, but this principle laid a foundation from which to build trust between the American people and government information.

Recognizing the unpreparedness of the United States to fight the Soviets if required, President Harry Truman, reorganized the national security structure with the National Security Act of 1947. This structure created the modern Department of Defense (DOD), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the National Security Council (NSC).⁷⁵ Despite Kennan's clear warning, this new structure failed to account for the *overt* informational component of national

⁷⁵ National Security Act of 1947. U.S. Code 116-283, (1947), accessed September 7, 2020, <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/COMPS-1493>.

security and left the question of responsibility for psychological operations unresolved. For the time being, the remnants of the Foreign Information Service and VOA operating would operate as an element within the DOS. Government information was left without a voice in national policy or decision making. According to Nicholas Cull, by omitting information as a stand-alone component of the NSC, the administration committed the "original Sin" of information. A sin that haunts public diplomacy efforts to this day. From this point forward, "Public Diplomacy would always tend to be seen as a tool for the enactment of foreign policy rather than a dimension of foreign-policy-making as a whole."⁷⁶ Without a permanent seat at the policy-making table, each subsequent administration would choose its own path as to the role they allowed for information in foreign policy.

Shortly after the National Security Act, the Information and Educational Exchange Act (Smith-Mundt Act) of 1948 was passed. This act and its modern revision (2012) are the most significant legislation related to the United States' treatment of public diplomacy and serves a milestone for future success and failure in the IE. The Smith-Mundt Act provides authorization for conducting public diplomacy activities but prohibits the distribution of this content in the United States. The act allows for government funding of private media sources to produce content on behalf of the government, so long as the government does not become a controlling entity within any organization or sector of the media industry. The intent of the act was to address the public's fear of Government information in the form of lawful structure around a US propaganda apparatus that had been steadily growing since WWI. Unfortunately, in making the American public feel more comfortable, it also severely limited the government's ability to protect the public when the homeland is attacked by foreign information campaigns like that of the Russians in the 2016 Presidential election.

⁷⁶ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 38.

With the Smith-Mundt Act in place, the United States Information Exchange (USIE) began aggressively pursuing a “campaign of truth” aimed at influencing populations by spreading tales of life within the United States and America’s idea of liberty around the world. As George Kennan saw it, the best way to fight the spread of Soviet ideology was to expose it, by continually offering the better alternative. Hence the campaign of truth was a combination of news (facts, not editorializing) and interest pieces on life in the United States. In October 1948 two Soviet pilots intentionally crashed their aircraft in the US controlled zone of Austria. The pilots explained how the VOA reporting on the Virginia State Fair were in such contrast to their current existence, that defecting was worth the risk.⁷⁷ The United States capitalized on such stories and even dedicated specific programing on Radio Free Europe to broadcast the stories of Soviet defectors or other refugees from communism.

In April 1950, the “Campaign of truth” became an official aspect of US foreign policy when President Harry Truman used this phrase in a speech to the American Society of Newspapers Editors. To rally the American press behind this idea he stated “We must make ourselves known as we really are – not as Communist Propaganda pictures. We must pool our efforts ... in a sustained intensified, program to promote the cause of freedom against the propaganda of slavery. We must make ourselves heard round the world in a great campaign of truth.”⁷⁸ The campaign of truth received an 89-million-dollar budget from the US Congress which was used to expand the growing network of libraries and radio stations overseas, and work with US publishers, Hollywood, corporations and charities to produce or donate content to the cause. *Time*, and *Life* Magazine donated unsold copies for overseas distribution, internationally circulated newspapers were persuaded to incorporate ant-communist themes and messages into their advertisements and comic strips. Films and documentaries such as *The Million Dollar*

⁷⁷ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 47.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 55.

Nickel, *The Hoaxters* and *Red Planet Mars* and numerous others were all produced as part of this campaign.⁷⁹ A particularly effective aspect of the campaign was its emphasis on building individual and community support within the United States. Unlike the days of the CPI where Americans were being pummeled with government propaganda, the USIE encouraged Americans to join the government in fighting communist propaganda through individual involvement in the broader information effort. Notable examples were letter writing campaigns by first- and second-generation immigrants back to their home countries and US towns “adopting” a foreign town and then forging a connection through various forms of exchange.⁸⁰ The campaign of truth was successful because it leveraged one of America’s greatest strengths, freedom of speech, to mobilize the American people to their own defense. For the remainder of Truman’s presidency and most of the Cold War, the concept of boldly telling the American story to the world dominated US information policy.

When Eisenhower was elected president, he brought a first-hand understanding to the White House of how to use information and immediately wanted to tackle the growing sense that the US information apparatus was ineffective. He understood the effectiveness of psychological warfare or the “P- Factor” as he called it” and was determined to maintain the successes of the campaign of truth and ultimately seize the initiative in the IE back from the Soviet Union.⁸¹ President Eisenhower ordered an immediate assessment of American information programs within the executive branch of government. Over the next year executive committees reviewed overt and covert USG information activities, which included most significantly, an assessment of the activities of the CIA, the VOA, and the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB). The PSB was established during the Truman administration to coordinate the “psychological operations” (ill-defined at this time) of the executive branch. The investigations concluded the PSB should be

⁷⁹ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 58–59.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 54–56.

⁸¹ Ibid., 81.

dissolved as it was not fully integrated into the national security structure and because “psychological activity is not a field of endeavor separable from the main body of diplomatic, economic and military measures.”⁸² However, they also concluded “the propaganda function, like the military and economic is significantly different from diplomacy to warrant separate administration [from the State Department].”⁸³ These two statements seem contradictory, but can be reconciled in the context of narrative as H. Porter Abbott discusses it. Narrative is explaining events. People naturally create narratives to explain their surroundings.⁸⁴ Narrative does not happen on its own, therefore any attempt at influence without leveraging the events themselves is futile. However, how a country influences, if they are to be effective, is a full-time effort and therefore worthy of its own administration by professionals who understand the IE.

The two committees concluded that the American information organization was unwieldy and lacking direction. Furthermore, the USG was not taking full advantage of the capability because it was not implemented into national level planning. Finally, the new secretary of state, John Foster Dulles was anxious to rid himself of this nuisance of an information program so he could focus on his idea of traditional diplomacy. With this advice Eisenhower moved forward with plans for an Independent information Agency.⁸⁵

Kennan’s assessment of how to use the IE and Eisenhower’s bold reexamination of US information capabilities is reflective of needs in today’s environment. The country had come out of a conflict which scarred the American people and were immediately plunged into a new kind of conflict that they did not understand. One that did not lend itself to wielding power in the same manner as before. Eisenhower desperately wanted to prevent a conflict on the scale of WW2. As

⁸² Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954*, vol. II, Part 2, Foreign Relations of the United States 1952–1954 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, n.d.), 1797, accessed September 17, 2020, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v02p2/d357>.

⁸³ Ibid., II, Part 2:1862.

⁸⁴ Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 19-27.

⁸⁵ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 88-110.

such, he initiated reframing activities, questioning all current organizations and practices and then boldly reorganized information along new lines of effort with a narrative-first strategy. By doing so, he set America on the correct course to engage effectively in the ideological battle with the Soviet Union for the remainder of the Cold War.

As the DOD comes out of 20 years of conflict with non-state actors, they too must reframe; critically examining all aspects of their information operations from organization to activities. There must be no sacred cows, no assumption that current practices or even ‘best practices’ gained from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq will hold true in great power competition. Today the United States is not using a narrative-first strategy, which leaves American policy highly vulnerable to propaganda from others. Throughout the DOD’s involvement in Afghanistan, the Taliban employed negative propaganda of unfounded civilian casualties and temporary security because that is all they had to offer. Unfortunately, their message found receptive space when there was nothing better in the IE to counter it. Domestically, the DOD poorly projected on-going actions back to the American public which left Americans susceptible to the same propaganda and caused support for the war effort to decline. In this case, the US military was so busy focusing on what was said against them and did not use the justice of their own cause to project the benefits of offensive action by coalition forces to their own people or to the Afghan people. The same situation is occurring now on a much larger scale with Russian and Chinese information efforts. These totalitarian governments are filling the information space and the United States is not leveraging her inherent advantage of freedom of information to present a better alternative.

Mission and Structure of the USIA

In 1953 the United States Information Agency was officially born with the following mission:

1. The purpose the USIA shall be to submit evidence to peoples of other nations by means of communication techniques that the objectives policies of the US are in harmony with and will advance their legitimate aspirations for freedom, progress, and peace.
- 2 The purpose in paragraph 1 above is to be carried out primarily:
 - a. By explaining and interpreting to foreign peoples the objectives policies of the United States Government
 - b. By depicting imaginatively the correlation between US policies and the legitimate aspirations of other peoples in the world.
 - c. By unmasking and countering hostile attempts to distort or to frustrate the objectives and policies of the US.
 - d. By delineating those important aspects of the life and culture of the people of the united states which facilitate the understanding of the policies and objectives of the government of the US.⁸⁶

The USIA understood this mission, as carrying on the work of the OWI – leveraging the power of the truth. By explaining the US policies, her actions, and the lives of her people to the world, they would fight the influence of communism on a global scale.

The graphics below depict the USIA within the executive branch and its internal organization. The placement of the USIA within the national security establishment was an immediate limiting factor on the effectiveness of US information, but the internal organization of the USIA exemplifies an organization with a true understanding of the IE and the unity of effort required to be effective in global narrative projection.

⁸⁶ US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954*, vol. II, Part 2, 1753, accessed September 17, 2020, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v02p2/d357>.

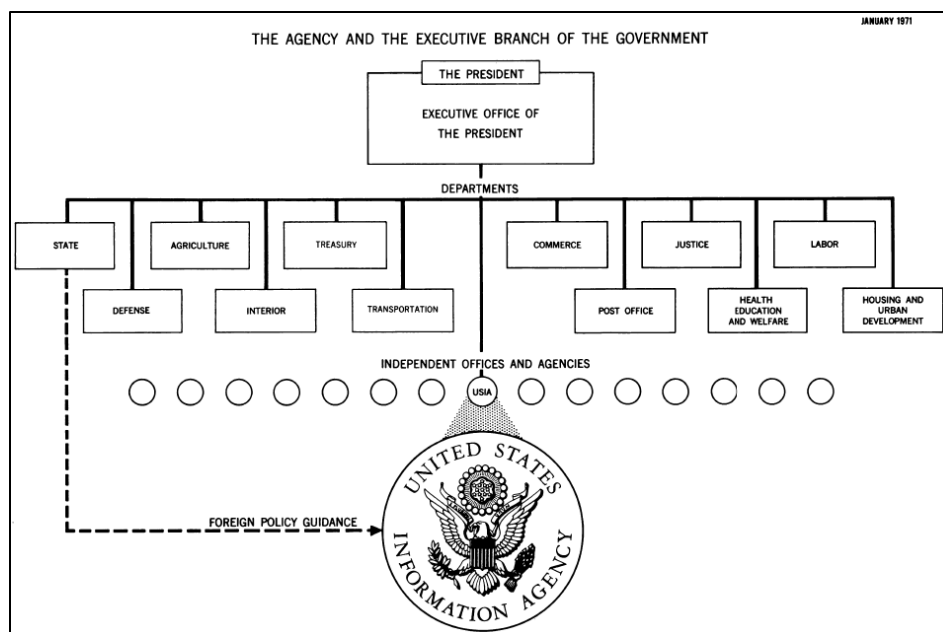


Figure 3. USIA Organization Chart. US Department of the army, alksUnited States Information Agency, *The Agency in Brief* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1971), 11.

Figure 3 depicts the USIA has having direct access to the president, just as Eisenhower directed. However, per their founding charter, the USIA was still under the policy direction of the State department.⁸⁷ While establishing the USIA, brought information closer to the NSC, the director's advisory role was still relegated to the subordinate Operations Coordinating Board (OCB). The role of the OCB was to support the NSC in providing feasibility of support for national policy.⁸⁸ The OCB was created as the fix to the defunct Psychological Strategy Board (PSB). In this position, the USIA and information was in a position of influence, but once again downgraded to policy projection instead of policy shaping.

The less-than prominent position of the USIA in national security was a compromise shaped between Eisenhower and the feelings of his personal advisors. Eisenhower believed in a prominent role for information and the need for better coordination, therefore providing its director with access to the White House.⁸⁹ However, his close advisors view on information was

⁸⁷ Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 58–59.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 68.

⁸⁹ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 91.

that of a policy executing tool and favored the covert means of the CIA over the overt VOA techniques. Thus, giving the USIA membership on the OCB instead of a seat on the NSC was the happy medium.⁹⁰ Without a formal position in national security formulation, the fate of the US narrative would be subject to the personalities in the White House, State Department and USIA itself for the remainder of its existence.

The internal organization of the USIA, depicted below, consisted of four primary directorates: policy and plans, research and assessment, world expositions and public information.

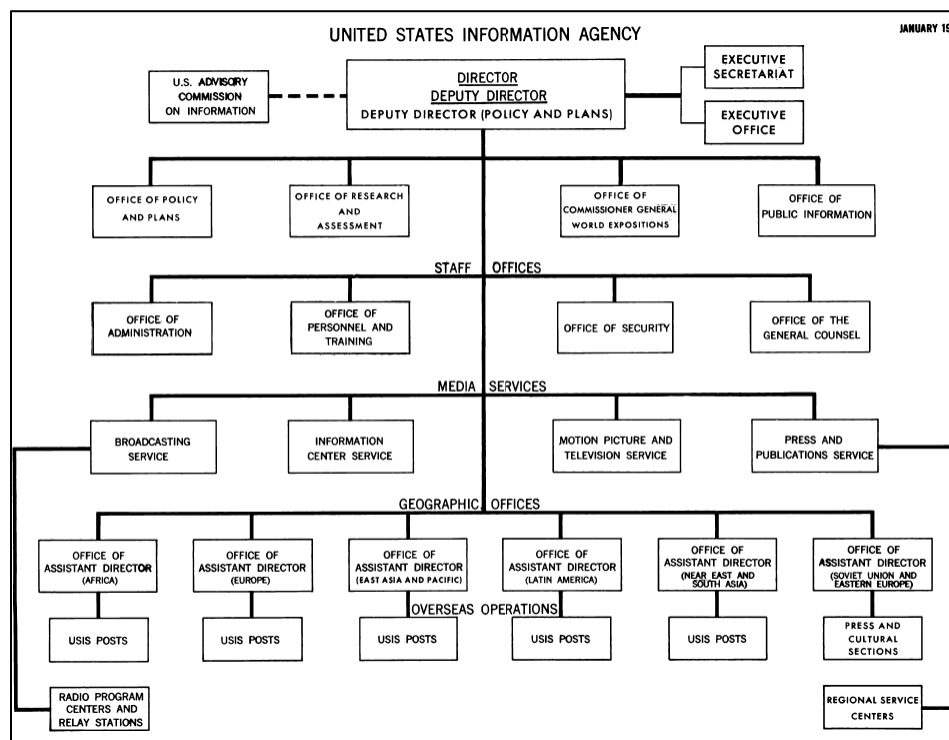


Figure 4. USIA Internal Organization. United States Information Agency, *The Agency in Brief*, 12.

The action arms of the USIA were the media services division, and overseas Information Service (USIS). Together these sections created and disseminated media content of all types around the globe. The USIA was best known for their public libraries in foreign countries, facilitating the Fulbright exchange program and their VOA radio broadcasts. By 1960 the USIA

⁹⁰ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 91.

had over 200 overseas posts in 80 countries and was regularly broadcasting in 37 languages across the globe. ⁹¹

One of the most important sections within the USIA was the research and assessments directorate. This element employed robust public opinion polling to determine the effectiveness of US information abroad and domestically and monitored how audiences were receiving their information. The USIA valued this section greatly, as it lent validity to their actions and provided the USG with a means to keep their finger on the pulse of global public opinion and the most effective use of media. This directorate was like a military intelligence section that maintains a continual Intelligence estimate for a potential area of operation but instead of focusing on military forces, it focused on the IE as a whole.

Finally, the dashed line to the US advisory Commission on Information depicts the oversight of the US information activities as established by the Smith-Mundt Act. The USIA was required to provide annual reports, via the DOS on their nation-wide activities as well as recommendations for the US narrative at large. Accountability to the American people is critically important for an effective national information apparatus.

As adopted, this structure prevailed throughout the Eisenhower administration and operated as designed. The First two directors of the USIA enjoyed regular access to the President and found a place in policymaking by force of personality on the OCB. By the end of the Eisenhower administration, the USIA was copied on all NSC meeting minutes and their concurrence was sought on policy discussions. As Eisenhower envisioned, the USIA was off to an excellent start.

Despite its failings to be fully incorporated within the national security structure at large, the internal structure and the approach of the USIA represents a thorough understanding of the IE.

⁹¹ US Advisory Commission on Information, *15th Report* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1960).

The various directorates of plans, policy, analysis, and public information represented a comprehensive approach to creating and projecting the US narrative. This bright spot in US information reveals that a successful approach to the IE is more than media production and projection. It is a comprehensive investment of professionals who continually assess the environment. The DOD could create fully integrated career paths for Information professionals and monitor the IE in a manner like the USIA, but this would require a significant shift in resources to do so. The DOD is currently unwilling to make these investments because they are still committed to a kinetic operations paradigm and have not made the shift to a narrative first paradigm.

USIA and the CIA

Not depicted on this organizational chart is the ever – present, tenuous relationship with the CIA. Since WWII and throughout the Cold War, the CIA operated parallel, and at times intersecting public information programs with the various US public diplomacy organizations. Throughout the Cold War the CIA's programs grew in parallel with the soviet propaganda machine and included books, magazine editorials, television, and radio broadcasts. One of the most well-known pass-through media outlets for the CIA was *The Readers Digest*. At times US independent media and even the USIA unknowingly picked up and published CIA disinformation as fact.⁹² In the 1970's the CIA publicly revealed that they, in violation of the Smith-Mundt Act, had sponsored books that were published in English and distributed in the United States as part of their anti-communist propaganda campaign.⁹³ These instances were a source of frustration for the USIA as it hurt credibility in their international broadcasting and served to erode American distrust of government sponsored information.

⁹² Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 140-141.

⁹³ Ibid., 141-145.

Interagency coordination was limited. The USIA provided a liaison to the CIA in Washington, and the foreign information offices received information as the CIA deemed necessary. In this dysfunctional relationship, the USIA was frequently caught unaware of CIA operations in which there were significant public diplomacy equities. This poor coordination discredited the US narrative and undermined the USIA's ability to project a truthful picture of American society to the world.⁹⁴ Nowhere was this clearer than during the Bay of Pigs.

Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis

When President Kennedy was elected, a large portion of his campaign was a claim that he would bring prestige back to America. The Soviets had beaten the Americans into space and the supposed "missile gap" that had developed were huge black eyes to the United States. The USIA and their new director, Ed Murrow, had their work cut out for them with the new administration. Murrow believed the current operating environment mandated an even more aggressive approach by the USIA, but this proved immediately difficult, as the new administration promptly abolished the OCB, (his only voice into policy) in favor of giving greater direct involvement in foreign policy matters to the White House Staff.⁹⁵

On 17 April 1961, the failed CIA sponsored invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs brought to light the ramifications of dissolving the OCB and failing to involve the USIA on policy decisions. In the preceding two weeks, USIA director, Ed Murrow had been informed of a planned invasion by a New York times reporter. Murrow was furious and contacted the CIA about the plan. Aware of a recent opinion poll from his assessment directorate, showing large support for Fidel Castro, Murrow did not believe the invasion would result in a popular uprising as the CIA hoped. Understanding that one of Kennedy's stated policy goals was regime change in Cuba, he reluctantly agreed to support the CIA plan as necessary. However, the CIA nor State

⁹⁴ Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 143.

⁹⁵ Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 84.

Department provided the details of the invasion to the USIA. When the invasion occurred on 17 April, the USIA and VOA were caught flat-footed. The VOA director, Henry Loomis, learned of the invasion on his drive to work that morning and angrily called Murrow reminding him how important it was for the information apparatus to be “in on the take-off’s” of foreign policy.⁹⁶ The USIA attempted to manage the public diplomacy nightmare by increasing Spanish language coverage, but without clear policy direction (as promised before the invasion) from the State Department, the VOA floundered as much as any other media outlet; reporting CIA disinformation, and even Castro’s messages coming out of Cuba just ensure they were saying something to maintain credibility as a news source.⁹⁷

As the details of the Bay of Pigs came to light, there were clear flaws in the USG approach to the IE. The environment of Radio and Television had not only made the world a smaller place but had also created an expectation of information. Hoping to execute a large-scale military invasion in secrecy against a sovereign nation, and then hope to control the arising narrative without extensive planning and involvement of information professionals was sheer lunacy. The information space will always be filled, but it is a question of who fills it and with what information. With a proper approach to the IE and coordination with information professionals, the Bay of Pigs disaster may have been averted completely. After the Bay of Pigs, Ed Murrow let his frustrations be known to the President, and Kennedy listened. A direct line from Murrow’s desk to the Oval office was installed.⁹⁸ The USIA regained their voice, and for the remainder of the Kennedy administration, held a prominent position in foreign policy formulation.

Bringing the USIA into the inner circle proved invaluable during the Cuban missile crisis. The crisis, largely regarded by historians as the closest that the Cold War ever came to getting

⁹⁶ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 196.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 195–196.

⁹⁸ Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 87.

hot, began when the USG confirmed the presence of Nuclear missiles in Cuba on October 14th, 1962. By October 16th, the President had been briefed and presented with an array of options. One option, highly supported by senior defense officials, was to invade Cuba immediately. This certainly would have led to war with the Soviet Union and the President was not ready to start World War III or invite nuclear holocaust. He decided against overt military action and instead opted for a naval blockade. This option was favored by the USIA, who then influenced Kennedy to take the crisis to the American public and world in every form of media available. Donald Wilson, Deputy Director of the USIA, argued adamantly for release of photos of the missile sites, which the CIA and DOD thought too risky as it would reveal the capability of US spy planes.⁹⁹ For the information professionals, the choice was clear – America must go on the offensive to win public opinion. On October 22nd Kennedy delivered a speech informing the world about the crisis and approved the photos for release. The USIA ensured his speech was broadcast in Cuba and the Soviet Union by way of 52 transmitters that were able to break through soviet Jamming. They also saturated the airwaves in 35 different languages with the dangers and dread associated with Nuclear war. In Pakistan, they increased their weekly magazine publication to daily coverage and put 8 times as many copies into circulation. Over 50,000 photos were printed and shipped to Europe, along with negatives for further reproduction on printing presses. The USIA even used utilized satellite communications for the first time to reach audiences in Europe.¹⁰⁰ For the remainder of the crisis, the USIA aggressively used the truth to inform the world about the Soviet threat. The ability of the USIA to scale up atmospheric analysis, content production and narrative projection through radio and print media is a testament to the long-term investment in information infrastructure and information professionals. The robust structure of the USIA allowed Director Murrow to rise to the demands of the Cuban missile crisis and seize the

⁹⁹ Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, 217; Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 89–92.

¹⁰⁰ Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 89.

initiative in the IE. By their actions, America was able to control the global narrative for the duration of the crisis and reap the benefits of an effective information-first approach to national security. By understanding the value of information and leveraging all available communication means, the USIA was instrumental in keeping the Cold War cold.

The prominent position of information within the Kennedy administration during the Cuban missile crisis is the closest the United States has come to a correct understanding of the information environment and information's rightful place within national security. The Joint Force cannot continue to uphold the artificial barriers between informing and influencing. If it does not heed these lessons and continues treating information as wholly separate from other aspects of operations, it will never realize the potential of informational power and lose in 21st century great power competition.

V. Conclusion: What Can the Joint Force Do Now?

For the remainder of the Cold War, the USIA worked with each administration to advance democracy and discredit communism by telling the American story to the world. In 1999, with the Cold War fading in the rearview mirror, the USIA was shut down, once again relegating USG information to the backburner of national security where it remains to this day. Despite the internal struggles of Americans with government information and a frequent mistreatment of the IE, the American story of information is one of success, but success that only came from taking risk. Until such time as a new USIA is reborn, the DOD must help the United States in reconciling with their past and lead them into the future with a narrative-first approach to national security.

The First step is for the DOD to think reframe their action in terms influence continuum, complimentary to the conflict continuum. Simply put, as the military moves toward kinetic conflict, they must respect the ubiquitous nature of the IE and continually increase non-kinetic

messaging efforts at the same rate as kinetic action. If conflict is a battle of wills as Clausewitz says, then the cognitive element of the IE is too important to leave up to chance. Every action by the military is trying to influence an adversary or partner to a specific action and must be paired with an overt non-kinetic message across all available capabilities. This means no longer allowing public affairs to play the role of merely “informing,” but fully embracing their role as influencers and then fully integrating their mandate for telling the truth into strategic and operational planning. As Henry Loomis was fond of saying about the USIA – “we must be in on the take-offs and the landings.” As Public Affairs is the DOD’s chosen means for communicating the military story, nothing but complete and full integration with other “influence” capability will suffice. Thinking in terms of an influence continuum will bring the US military back to the post-WWII doctrine of PSYWAR where information operations were not confined to the established IRCS.

Practically speaking, this means the DOD should be the first to report on their own events and not leave it up to the court of public opinion to decide what happened. How different would the prevailing narrative of the United States’ actions in Afghanistan be today if when an air strike or ground action was being conducted, near simultaneous messages were released on social media explaining the strike, the target, and why that target was struck? Such synchronization of kinetic and non-kinetic effects would reflect a right understanding of the IE and enable the United States to seize the initiative in the IE – controlling the narrative, instead of waiting for the narrative to be dictated to them by their adversaries.

The second step in this reconciliation is actively defending the homeland in the IE. Despite declining trust in the government in recent years, the US military is far more trusted than other elements of government and overall, is still considered one of the most-trustworthy institutions in America.¹⁰¹ This makes the DOD an excellent candidate to defend Americans in

¹⁰¹ Courtney Johnson, *Trust in the Military Exceeds Trust in Other Institutions in Western Europe and U.S.* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2018), accessed March 18, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/09/04/trust-in-the-military-exceeds-trust-in-other-institutions-in-western-europe-and-u-s/>.

the IE. When Americans are under attack, they need to know, and they should hear it from the DOD. The DOD has the ability and authority within their PA apparatus to actively message the American public about the threats they face in the IE. Because Americans live in a society that values freedom of speech, the DOD can use this to help Americans understand how they are being attacked and how they can defend themselves. Supporting the American public in this manner has the potential to undermine malicious actors by mobilizing Americans in defense of themselves. This is an advantage only available in a free society.

The DOD must unify information internally and increase coordination externally. The IE is far more complex and changes faster now than in the days of Eisenhower or Kennedy, but if an administration dealing with only print media, radio and limited television saw the necessity to unify efforts, the DOD can logically conclude unification is a necessary step. For the DOD this would mean replacing Cyber-command with Information Command as a functional Combatant Command. Despite its relatively new creation, Cyber Command merely represents terrain where information events occur, and does not represent the IE as a whole. Cyber-command was a reaction to a growing problem within the IE and now only perpetuates a siloed approach to information; disproportionately elevating one element of information to the highest levels of the national security establishment while leaving the other elements behind. Additionally, the DOD must look externally to increase engagement with the national Public Diplomacy efforts of the USAGM, GEC and VOA. In theaters of declared conflict where the DOD is the lead US agency, these elements should be leveraged, if not subordinated to the DOD to gain and maintain the initiative in the IE.

Finally, The DOD must be willing to accept the risk associated with actively fighting in the IE. Just as President Kennedy decided to release photos during the Cuban missile crisis, against the wishes of his military commanders, commander's today must be willing to assume similar risks to achieve gains in the IE. The IE is unpredictable. Actively messaging DOD activities brings the added risk, that your message may not be received as intended or that DOD

capability is exposed. However, not overtly communicating the message leaves the vast information space open for the adversary to communicate on your behalf and fill the information space with their own narrative. If the United States allows this, they will lose the battle for the mind and, the next conflict, before it ever begins.

The story of US information is complex as the IE itself with mistakes and successes too numerous to count. However, the story is uniquely American in that its struggle is bound up in the ever-present tension between the ideals of freedom and a government with duty to defend those freedoms. If the United States can harness the strength found within this tension as they did in the past, there is no doubt they will prevail in the conflicts of the present and future.

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