

# Strategic Communications and Public Diplomacy “Seen on the Web” (#55)

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This is a compilation of news, articles, essays, and reports on strategic communications, Public Diplomacy, public affairs, U.S. government international broadcasting, and information operations. The editorial intent is to:

- share with busy practitioners the academic and policy ferment in Public Diplomacy and related fields
- from long speeches, testimonies, and articles, flag the portions that bear on Public Diplomacy
- provide a window on armed forces thinking on the fields that neighbor Public Diplomacy such as military public affairs, information operations, inform-influence-engage, and cultural learning, and
- introduce the long history of Public Diplomacy by citing some of the older books, articles, reports, and documents that are not available on the internet.

Public Diplomacy professionals always need a 360-degree view of how ideas are expressed, flow, and gain influence. Many points of view cited here are contentious and/or biased; inclusion does not imply endorsement.

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## **Professional Topics**

### **1. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**

- . . . there are many things Americans can do to bolster liberal values abroad that require little sacrifice of blood or treasure. Call out the dictators. Show respect to our allies. Cultivate and strengthen ties among the democracies. Invest in measures against propaganda and disinformation. Offer judicious assistance to pro-democracy groups around the world, and share advice with countries that are struggling to build democratic institutions.

#### **[The two words Donald Trump can't bring himself to say](#)**

Christian Caryl, The Washington Post, February 17, 2017

- The president should bring some activist, experienced public diplomacy professionals into the White House and State Department to counter ISIS propaganda and online recruiting efforts. He doesn't need to reinvent USIA but Secretary of State Rex Tillerson should revitalize State's moribund Public Diplomacy Office by naming a dedicated, dynamic media professional who will be a full member of the president's new national security team.

#### **[Guy W. Farmer: A need for public diplomacy](#)**

Guy W. Farmer, Nevada Appeal.com, February 11, 2017

- [Gregory] Tomlin offers a highly readable account of Edward R. Murrow's role in a tumultuous time of U.S. political history and the development of America's information dissemination capabilities. It will be of interest to professionals and the more casual reader alike. I highly recommend it.

#### **[Murrows Cold War](#)**

Renee Earle, American Diplomacy, January 2017

### **2. BROADCASTING**

- According to a poll shared by Radio Free Europe, Russia enjoys significantly less popularity in the Nordic countries than in the majority of European countries. This may be why official Russian outlet Sputnik closed its Danish, Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian language services last year: In an environment where Russia's policies and actions are fundamentally unpopular, it is difficult to build an audience using very openly pro-Kremlin messaging – even if it is communicated in the local language.

#### **[Intimidation as a propaganda tool in the Nordic countries](#)**

Euvsdisinfo.eu, February 13, 2017

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- Current Time television, a product of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and the Voice of America, is a 24/7 Russian-language television network based in Prague and aimed at audiences inside Russia as well as the borderlands of the former Soviet Union.

[A way to get real news to Russia](#)

Editorial Board, The Washington Post, February 12, 2017

### 3. SOCIAL MEDIA • INTERNET

- In recent months, governments in several countries have turned off internet access during elections when violence broke out or was merely expected.

[African Nations Increasingly Silence Internet to Stem Protests](#)

Dionne Searcey and Francois Essobma, The New York Times, February 10, 2017

### 4. DISINFORMATION • FAKE NEWS

- . . . rather than strengthening established media institutions, banning fake news might very well undermine them in the eyes of the public. If alternative outlets are prosecuted or shut down, mainstream media risk being seen as unofficial propaganda tools of the powers that be.

[Shutting down fake news could move us closer to a modern-day '1984'](#)

Fleming Rose and Jacob Mchangama, The Washington Post, February 10, 2017

### 5. FACT CHECKING

- First Draft News has announced [the launch of CrossCheck](#). This collaborative verification project aims to help French voters make sense of what and whom to trust online. CrossCheck is a cooperation between First Draft News, Google News Lab and seventeen newsrooms in France, including AFP, Le Monde, Les Echos and Libération. It will use state-of-the-art software to spot trending content online and then check images, videos, memes and also comments, so that myths are swiftly debunked, and misleading or confusing stories accurately reported.

[La Lutte continue](#)

Disinformation Review, February 13, 2017

### 6. INFORMATION WARFARE

- Russian information warfare thinking anticipates that trolls and bots not under Kremlin control will amplify the messages and effects of Russia's own information operations. However, having a U.S. president, his administration, and his own networks of disinformation playing these roles is probably beyond the wildest dreams of Russian strategists and tacticians of information warfare. Putin will not squander this opportunity.

[The Trump Administration Plays Right into Russia's Information Warfare Strategy](#)

David Fidler, Council on Foreign Relations, February 13, 2017

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## 7. PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

- Across the vast continent of Africa, U.S. Army Special Operations psychological operations teams are working through, with, and by their partnered forces to spark societal change. There’s a saying in the PSYOP community, “ARSOF [Army Special Operations Forces] makes change happen. PSYOP makes change last.” PSYOP is the long game, where changes in behavior are measured not over a deployment, but often over years. In today’s rapidly evolving information battlespace, PSYOP Soldiers are almost always at a disadvantage.

### [The Crucible: PSYOP battalion forged for Africa](#)

Capt. Stephen Von Jett, Defense Video Imagery Distribution System, February 8, 2017

## 8. CYBER

- U.S. government computer systems remain unsecured and vulnerable to cyber attacks from a host of bad actors, according to a new government report that identifies a range of weaknesses in U.S. cyber defenses that could lead to a devastating attack on the American government.

### [U.S. Government Computers Still Not Safe From Cyber Attacks](#)

Adam Kredo, Washington Free Beacon, February 21, 2017

- Cyber-based intrusions and attacks on federal systems and systems supporting our nation’s critical infrastructure, such as communications and financial services, are evolving and becoming more sophisticated. GAO first designated information security as a government-wide high-risk area in 1997. This was expanded to include the protection of cyber critical infrastructure in 2003 and protecting the privacy of personally identifiable information in 2015

### [Cybersecurity: Actions Needed to Strengthen U.S. Capabilities](#)

Gregory C. Wilshusen, Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Research and Technology, House of Representatives, February 14, 2017

## 9. COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

- Now the Trump administration wants to toss out the term “violent extremism” and the rubric we used to fight it. Instead, they are renaming it “countering Islamic extremism,” or “countering radical Islamic extremism.” Fine. Abandon the name, but let’s not abandon the strategy. First, let’s acknowledge that it’s working.

### [Why Saying ‘Radical Islamic Terrorism’ Isn’t Enough](#)

Richard Stengel, The New York Times, February 13, 2017

- American and Arab lead youth counter-terrorism organization, Defeating Islamic Radicalization and Extremism (DIRE) today announces ‘PeacePals: BFFs Beyond Borders’ (PPBBB), its newest solution based, ‘soft power’ long-term strategic youth program aimed at sowing seeds to create cross-cultural unity and ultimately combat ideological based extremism.

### [Arab & American Youth Anti-Terrorism Org. Launches “PeacePals: BFFs Beyond Borders”](#)

Digital Journal.com, February 21, 2017

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## 10. IDEAS, CONCEPTS, DOCTRINE

- “In fact, contrary to the prevailing orthodoxy, Donald Trump is not the man who will kill the mainstream media. He is the man who could save it,” writes Amol Rajan, media editor at the BBC. Paid subscriptions to news outlets have jumped during the Trump presidency. The New York Times reports a surge in digital subscriptions – 276,000 in the fourth quarter of 2016, the single best quarter since 2011, when its pay model launched.

[How Trump is challenging the media to redefine its role](#)

Linda Feldmann, The Christian Science Monitor, February 21, 2017

- Most modern presidents have found that the transition from campaigning to governing presents a unique set of challenges, especially regarding their newfound national security responsibilities. Regardless of their party affiliation or preferred diplomatic priorities, presidents have invariably come to appreciate that they cannot afford to make foreign policy decisions in the same manner as they did when they were a candidate.

[Process Makes Perfect](#)

Kori Schake and William F. Wechsler, American Progress, January 5, 2017

- If [Governor] Basuki [“Ahok” Tjahaja Purnama] wins the final round, he may still face a court trial for his recent comments about the Muslim holy book, which he says were taken out of context. But any legal battle could take years. In the meantime, an election win for him would send a message to much of the Muslim world that a religious test for those seeking office does not fit the basic purpose of government as a neutral protector of people of all faiths.

[In the most populous Muslim nation, a test of tolerance](#)

Editorial Board, The Christian Science Monitor, February 21, 2017

## 11. HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

- There was a time when the West knew what it was about. It did so because it thought about itself—often in freshman Western Civ classes. It understood that its moral foundations had been laid in Jerusalem; its philosophical ones in Athens; its legal ones in Rome. It treated with reverence concepts of reason and revelation, freedom and responsibility, whose contradictions it learned to harmonize and harness over time.

[Do We Still Want the West?](#)

Bret Stephens, The Wall Street Journal, February 20, 2017

- The shaping of the young Egyptian mind on the subject of Israel starts in school, with the Islamic religious narrative that frames the Jews as traitors. This goes in hand with the media's constant depiction of the Jews as evil people who want to destroy Egypt.

[The Future of Egyptian-Israeli Relations: Cairo More Committed to Peace Than Normalization](#)

Haisam Hassanein, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 18, 2017

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- In 2013, then Prime Minister Erdogan's government made it compulsory for students in fourth grade and higher to take up "religion" classes. In religion classes, the Turkish curriculum almost exclusively teaches the virtues of Sunni Islam, but non-Muslim and Alevi students also must attend these classes.

[What Turkish Islamists Understand about 'Education'](#)

Burak Bedkil, Gatestone Institute, February 5, 2017

**Countries and Regions**

**12. RUSSIA**

- In the case of the “civilizational” discourse of the Russian information war, there are two main purposes. The more general one is to ennoble Russia’s international role. In terms of interstate politics, Putin’s Russia is clearly a rogue. However, if one views the world events through the prism of civilizational conflict, Russia suddenly stops being the primary antagonist, with Islam taking its place. Moreover, from such a viewpoint Moscow can be perceived as an ally.

[Russia has weaponized ideas of Samuel Huntington](#)

David Batashvili, TheHill, February 20, 2017

- It has become accepted wisdom that Russia’s interference in the presidential campaign represents a fundamentally new sort of intrusion into a modern democracy’s inner workings. But the Kremlin’s efforts—designed to help elect Donald Trump, according to the consensus view of the U.S. intelligence community—aren’t so new. In fact, they are a revival of Soviet covert behavior that dates back to the Cold War.

[Vladimir Putin’s Political Meddling Revives Old KGB Tactics](#)

Andrew Weiss, The Wall Street Journal, February 17, 2017

- . . . if we know that Russia gives the “pro-Russian” forces, both civil and military, their marching orders and uses its own regular troops directed by their own commanders in combat, Russia is the aggressor, not a peace mediator, and should be treated as such when Trump and Putin meet. Trump is on mark to demand an answer from the intelligence and academic communities to this question.

[It's Time For Trump To Call Ukraine's 'Pro-Russian Rebels' What They Are: Russian Invaders](#)

Paul Roderick Gregory, Forbes, February 10, 2017

**13. NORTH KOREA**

- Capabilities that can be said to have truly picked up steam during the Kim Jong-un regime are diverse and interesting. Among these capabilities is the primitive—yet effective—cyber-warfare threat that has developed in recent years. \* \* \* Because of the relatively easy, indoor nature of these operations (also often operated outside of North Korea, from terminals in China or Japan), children of the elite in the DPRK are often the ones to fill these positions. This unit (and other lesser units in North Korea) have targeted large business conglomerates, governmental agencies, and even newspapers and television stations. . . . these cyber-attacks have also targeted

American-based entities and citizens. Of course the best known cyber-attack against American-based entities was the Sony incident....

[A Marine's Guide to North Korea](#)

Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr., Marine Corps Gazette, December 2016

#### 14. ISLAMISM

- McMaster has been cautious not to conflate the religion of Islam with jihadist terrorism. In a 2016 speech at the Virginia Military Institute, he accused the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) of “[using] a perverted interpretation of religion.”

[New national security adviser pick marks big change on Russia](#)

Katie Bo Williams, TheHill, February 21, 2017

#### Toolkit

#### 15. PUBLIC AFFAIRS

- Crisis handling 101. Mr. President, if you're having to deal with the press, tell the truth. First. Last. Always. Be the first with the information. Drive the news cycle, do not let it drive you. Make one narrative and stick to it. The whole team must tell the same story. Politicians lie for a living, that is what most people think. You have stayed away from politicians. Use that advantage. The press is actually your friend if you tell the truth first, last, and always.

[White House Sought Help to Counter Russia Stories](#)

Joel Harding, To Inform is to Influence, February 24, 2017

- The State Department is responsible for explaining US foreign policy to the country and the world, and is the only agency outside of the White House that traditionally speaks publicly every day through a televised news conference. But since January 19, there has been no State Department briefing and, after Tillerson recently took the helm, there has been little in the way of communication about Foggy Bottom's priorities, schedules or policies.

[State Department silent while other countries shape the message](#)

Nicole Gaoutette, CNN, February 22, 2017

- The pomp and circumstance of signing an executive order, however, always makes a great photo op. The ornate prestige of the Oval Office and the sober and serious mien of suited officials standing guard communicate gravitas and decisive action, regardless of the impenetrable legalese on the page. So it was with the Executive Order on Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements, signed by President Donald Trump last week. The public relations value of this order, however, is decidedly mixed and largely insular, when compared to the damage done to relationships and perceptions abroad.

[A great photo op-but at what cost?](#)

Steven Pike, PR Week, January 30, 2017

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## **16. SPORTS DIPLOMACY**

- Although sports diplomacy has the potential to improve relations between Iran and the United States, there are distinct limits to relying on public diplomacy to make a major dent in the hostile wall of mistrust between Washington and Tehran.

### **[The Limits of Sports Diplomacy in US-Iran Relations](#)**

Nader Entessar, lobelog.com

## **17. CASTOR OIL FOR THE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY OFFICER'S SOUL**

- It turns out that the year 2000 marks a grim historical milestone of sorts for our nation. For whatever reasons, the Great American Escalator, which had lifted successive generations of Americans to ever higher standards of living and levels of social well-being, broke down around then—and broke down very badly. The warning lights have been flashing, and the klaxons sounding, for more than a decade and a half.

### **[Our Miserable 21st Century](#)**

Nicolas N. Eberstadt, Commentary, February 15, 2017

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