

Strategic Communications and Public Diplomacy “Seen on the Web” (#56)

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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

● [The Public Affairs Section of the American Embassy, Islamabad] managed over \$60 million in U. S. government resources devoted to public diplomacy programs in FY 2015 chaired the embassy's Strategic Communications and Countering Violent Extremism working groups conducting 8 of the 12 key activities under [Integrated Country Strategy] objective 1.1, to increase civilian and non-civilian capacity to counter violent extremist narratives. The section had the Department's only unit dedicated exclusively to countering violent extremism, called the Community Engagement Office.

[Inspection of Embassy Islamabad, Pakistan](#)

Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of State, February 2017

● USIA . . . operated other broadcasting services, including WorldNet Television and Radio Marti (directed at Cuba) . . . countless US Information Centers, US Libraries, and other public information centers around the world; staffed U.S. embassies with their information and cultural consuls . . . conducted foreign exchange programs of all kinds, sent cultural ambassadors on missions everywhere; carried on the Fulbright and other scholarship programs; . . . generally provided public relations, public information, and other communications services for the President, the State Department, and other agencies overseas; monitored foreign media; sampled foreign public opinion, including under the challenging circumstances presented by closed societies in which public opinion was completely distrusted and discounted by the people's own governments; and had overall charge of the nation's public diplomacy program. The aim of the effort was to communicate with the people of other countries by going over the heads of their governments, local news media, and barriers to contact and understanding.

[On Restoring the Voice of America and America's Tools of Public Diplomacy](#)

Joseph Morris, The Heartland Institute, February 23, 2017

2. BROADCASTING

● The Chinese government controls much of the content broadcast on a station that is blanketing the U.S. capital with pro-Beijing programming. WCRW is part of an expanding global web of 33 stations in which China's involvement is obscured.

[Beijing's covert radio network airs China-friendly news across Washington, and the world](#)

Koh Gui Qing and John Shiffman, Reuters, November 2, 2015

3. SOCIAL MEDIA • INTERNET

March 5, 2017

- . . . as the week wore on, I discovered several truths about our digital media ecosystem. Coverage of Mr. Trump may eclipse that of any single human being ever. The reasons have as much to do with him as the way social media amplifies every big story until it swallows the world. And as important as covering the president may be, I began to wonder if we were overdosing on Trump news, to the exclusion of everything else.

[I Ignored Trump News for a Week. Here's What I Learned.](#)

Farhad Manjoo, The New York Times, February 22, 2017

- Propelled by new media, campaign politics has become a national addiction. It's similar to the way people drive cars into trees because they can't stop texting. No one will let go—not the tweeting president, not the surly press and not the hooked, agog public. Still, there's a political casualty waiting to happen inside the great American thrill ride—the presidency. Trump the president is looking like he's trapped inside Trump the campaigner.

[Trump vs. Trump](#)

Daniel Henninger, The Wall Street Journal, February 22, 2017

- In a matter of hours on Saturday, thousands rushed to the nation's airports, beckoned by tweets. The flash protests in response to Mr. Trump's immigration ban, which continued to grow in many cities on Sunday, were as organized as they were instantaneous. Dispatched online, the protesters knew where to go, and they knew what to do once they arrived: to command the story by making a scene.

[The Alt-Majority: How Social Networks Empowered Mass Protests Against Trump](#)

Farhad Manjoo, The New York Times, January 30, 2017

4. DISINFORMATION • FAKE NEWS

- The Russian Foreign Ministry's idea of "proving" something is fake news is . . . putting a stamp over a screenshot of the article that reads: "Fake: Contains False Information." That's it. No point-by-point rebuttals. No disputing of an article's premise, logic, or conclusions. No counterarguments. No context. Nothing. Just a stamp that says, in effect, "It's fake because we say it's fake."

[The Kremlin's Fake Fake-News Debunker](#)

Brian Whitmore, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, February 22, 2017

5. INFORMATION OPERATIONS

- Perfidy is an unlawful battlefield deception. Lawful deceptions in war are called "ruses." Ruses are defined in Geneva Protocol I as "acts which are intended to mislead an adversary or to induce him to act recklessly but which infringe no rule of international law applicable in armed conflict and which are not perfidious because they do not invite the confidence of an adversary with respect to protection under that law." Article 37 then goes on to give examples of permissible ruses: "the use of camouflage, decoys, mock operations and misinformation."

[Deception and Disinformation](#)

Herb Friedman, psywarrior.com, last accessed March 1, 2017

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March 5, 2017

- Residents of eastern Mosul have written letters of solidarity that the Iraqi Air Force dropped over western neighborhoods on Wednesday. * * * One . . . said that he had received similar reassuring letters from other Iraqis when the east was being liberated. He said ISIS had tried to confiscate those letters. * * * One of the letters read: "Do not be afraid of the security forces -- they are coming to protect and to liberate you from injustice. Collaborate with them and don't be afraid of them. They are your sons. We wish you safety and security." Another read: "We ask Allah to ease the pain that you are in. We pray to Allah to protect you. We ask you to please stay indoors for your safety when security forces arrive in your areas. Allah bless you our people."

[Iraq retakes Mosul airport; 'ISIS is now trapped,' US envoy says](#)

Hamadi Alkashali, Ingrid Formanek, Euan McKirdy and Angela Dewan, CNN, February 23, 2017

6. INFORMATION WARFARE

- This paper examines how and why Russia is extensively employing information warfare to ensure regime survival and in the service of its increasingly aggressive foreign policy goals. A theme throughout is how the West has yet to grasp the full implications of the Russian word informatsia and the challenge posed by Putin's information strategy.

[Protecting Falsehoods With a Bodyguard of Lies: Putin's Use of Information Warfare](#)

Deborah Yarsike Ball, Research Division, NATO, February 2017

- The bipartisan, nearly full-political-spectrum tsunami of factually unverified allegations that President Trump has been sedulously "compromised" by the Kremlin, with scarcely any nonpartisan pushback from influential political or media sources, is deeply alarming. Begun by the Clinton campaign in mid-2016, and exemplified now by New York Times columnists (who write of a "Trump-Putin regime" in Washington), strident MSNBC hosts, and unbalanced CNN commentators, the practice is growing into a latter-day McCarthyite hysteria.

[Why We Must Oppose the Kremlin-Baiting Against Trump](#)

Stephen F. Cohen, The Nation, February 22, 2017

7. CYBER

- After a four-year hiatus, Iran recently resumed destructive cyber attacks against Saudi Arabia in what U.S. officials say is part of a long-term strategy by Tehran to take over the oil-rich kingdom and regional U.S. ally.

[Iran Renews Destructive Cyber Attacks on Saudi Arabia](#)

Bill Gertz, Washington Free Beacon, February 22, 2017

- Last September, a Google offshoot called Jigsaw declared war on trolls, launching a project to defeat online harassment using machine learning. Now, the team is opening up that troll-fighting system to the world.

[Now Anyone Can Deploy Google's Troll-Fighting AI](#)

Andy Greenberg, Wired, February 23, 2017

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8. RADICALIZATION ▪ DERADICALIZATION

- The idea is to prevent the hardline Sunni group from brainwashing a new generation of suicide bombers and fighters into threatening Iraq's stability again after an ongoing army offensive in their stronghold of Mosul ends. "We encourage them to choose life, not death," said Zaki Saleh Moussa, head of the institution in the northern Iraqi city of Dohuk.

['Choose life, not death' reform center tells Iraqi teenage militants](#)

Michael Georgy, Reuters, February 14, 2017

- Islamic State is “clearly aware of the value of these refugee routes for the purposes of recruitment and for exporting their operatives into Europe”. The research found children and young people, sometimes travelling alone and often uneducated, are particularly prone to propaganda.... The researchers found “Children are easier to indoctrinate, intimidate, and mould, requiring less by way of resources and money.”

[Islamic State recruiting child refugees as they head to Europe](#)

Ben Farmer, The Telegraph, February 6, 2017

9. RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT

- Instead, the new administration should make use of the powerful tools it inherited from previous administrations to engage constructively with the world's religions and religious institutions, among them Islam.

[Trump administration should use key diplomatic tools for religious engagement](#)

Katherine Marshall and Susan Hayward, Religion News Service, February 17, 2017

10. MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

- Until the 2015 riots, Niger had a history of relatively peaceful religious relations between its Muslim majority and small Christian minority. Now, the increasing extremist influence from neighboring northern Nigeria – the seat of Boko Haram – seemed to threaten the status quo, pushing religious leaders here to focus their efforts on building bridges between faith communities and denouncing violence.

[In Niger, Christian and Muslim leaders push harder to counter creeping radicalism](#)

Kira Zalan, Christian Science Monitor, February 12, 2017

11. CONSPIRACY THEORIES

- “They think that Turkey is facing big troubles . . . created by malicious forces conspiring against Turkey. That’s Erdoğan’s narrative, they buy into that,” says Mustafa Akyol, a Turkish analyst of politics and culture, and author of the new book “The Islamic Jesus.” “They think this conspiracy will only be undone by a very powerful, defiant leader * * * “That political propaganda is in your face every day, every single moment. . . .

[In Turkey, Erdoğan fans an Islamic nationalism to build Ottoman-style influence](#)

Scott Peterson, The Christian Science Monitor, February 22, 2017

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12. HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

- I think the Palestinians have to get rid of some of that hate that they're taught from a very young age. They're taught tremendous hate. I've seen what they're taught. And you can talk about flexibility there too, but it starts at a very young age and it starts in the school room.

[A Big Deal?: Netanyahu comes to Trump's Washington](#)

Elliot Abrams, The Weekly Standard, February 27, 2017

13. MEDIA SAVVY ▪ EDUCATION ▪ JUDGMENT

- How to tell if a story is for real? Experts say the best indicator is the feeling it elicits. "My biggest rule of thumb is if it arouses an emotional response in you, double-check it," said Brooke Binkowski, managing editor at Snopes, a website that specializes in debunking popular internet myths from both the left and the right. "They upset you because they're meant to."

[How to Stay Sane in a World of Crazy News](#)

Deena Shanker, Bloomberg, February 16, 2017

- Determining what is true is difficult. People will tell you it is simple if you just accept the facts. How do you know what facts to accept? Before you attempt to test your opinions externally with evidence, you need to look internally at the fears and assumptions that could lead you to believe unsupported opinions.

[How to Discern Fake News from Real News](#)

Marcia Reynolds, Psychology Today, February 11, 2017

- The appearance of fake news on websites and social media has inspired scientists to develop a "vaccine" to immunise people against the problem. A University of Cambridge study devised psychological tools to target fact distortion. Researchers suggest "pre-emptively exposing" readers to a small "dose" of the misinformation can help organisations cancel out bogus claims.

[Cambridge scientists consider fake news 'vaccine'](#)

BBC, 23 January 2017

14. IDEAS, CONCEPTS, DOCTRINE

- Patriotism is enough — it needs no improving or expanding. Nationalism is something else. It's hard to think of a nationalist who does not pervert patriotism into something aggressive — either against foreign adversaries or against domestic minorities, or both. * * * Putin's nationalism has been characterized by demonization of the United States in domestic propaganda and invasion of neighboring countries. * * * I believe that nationalism is a demagogue's patriotism. Demagogues of the Right and Left both play upon natural and even benevolent instincts for their own purposes. The Left's demagogues distort love of justice and equality into a leveling desire to scapegoat others. * * * Demagogues of the Right — or nationalists — argue that our troubles are the result of immigrants' taking our jobs or foreigners' stealing our factories. This is not natural love of home and hearth or reverence for America's founding ideals; it is scapegoating.

[Patriotism Not Nationalism](#)

Mona Charen, National Review, February 17, 2017

Countries and Regions

15. RUSSIA

- Russia disclosed this week that it has strengthened its information warfare forces amid U.S. charges of influence operations aimed at swaying the outcome of the 2016 election.

[Russia Reveals Information Warfare Troops](#)

Bill Gertz, Washington Free Beacon, February 23, 2017

- The challenge of Russian information warfare is . . . not a static situation, but a developing process. The Russian approach evolves, develops, adapts, and just like other Russian operational approaches, identifies success and reinforces it, and conversely abandons failed attempts and moves on.

[The Next Phase of Russian Information Warfare](#)

Keir Giles, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, May 20, 2016

16. ISLAMIC STATE

- “The amount of Islamic State videos and propaganda aimed at children has really jumped in recent months,” said Daniel Koehler, director of the German Institute on Radicalization and Deradicalization Studies. “We haven’t seen anything quite like this, not on this scale and of this quality. They know that in the West, you don’t expect a 10-year-old to be a terror suspect.”

[They’re young and lonely. The Islamic State thinks they’ll make perfect terrorists](#)

Anthony Faiola and Souad Mekhennet, The Washington Post, February 11, 2017

- . . . researchers at King’s College London issued a report this week that offers an important recommendation: To counter the group’s attempt to deputize Muslims as propagandists will take more than showing the negative aspects of IS, such as the dismal life for its jihadi fighters or its misguided ideology. . . . Rather, potential recruits, who may be young Muslims looking for a life purpose in a chat room or on social media, must be offered positive messages that meet their needs and prevent their radicalization.

[Winning the hearts of Islamic State’s potential recruits](#)

Editorial Board, The Christian Science Monitor, February 14, 2017

- ISIL displays attributes of all four hybrid modalities. . . . the traditional modality through its fielded military and militia forces. . . . the irregular modality through its use of shadow governments, highly visible terrorist operations, killings of Sunni and Shia “apostates,” and Internet-based recruiting. . . . the disruptive/criminal modality through its vast network of illicit oil trafficking and sales, illegal bulk cash transfers through charities and individuals, stolen foreign aid, kidnapping operations, taxes, and illegal checkpoints. . . . Fourth . . . a catastrophic terrorism modality ISIL’s extensive information operations (IO) contribute to all four modalities

[Hybrid Threat Center of Gravity Analysis: Taking a Fresh Look at ISIL](#)

Michael D. Reilly, Joint Force Quarterly, January 26, 2017

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Toolkit

17. MUSIC

In 1942, Shostakovich premiered his Seventh Symphony during the Siege of Leningrad. Forsaken by the state and under siege from Germany, people of Leningrad (today, St. Petersburg) cooked leather for food, hunted cats and dogs, and died of starvation, but they still turned to music. In that moment, music became a powerful symbol of resistance. It gave hope and uplifted the morale of the besieged and served as an act of defiance against the besiegers.

[Music In War: From Rebellion To Patriotism](#)

Pikria Saliashvili, warontherocks.com, November 11, 2016

18. CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY OFFICER’S SOUL

- World hunger is in dramatic decline...the hunger indicators are all moving in the right direction: Fewer people are going hungry, both in absolute numbers and as a share of the world’s population; hunger has fallen dramatically in China after a program of partial economic liberalization; those people around the world who are underfed are less underfed than they were a decade or two ago, with their average daily calorie deficits down to about 85 calories — just 1.5 McNuggets short of a full day’s nutrition . . .

[Planet Nebraska: A hungry world no more](#)

Kevin D. Williamson, National Review, February 22, 2017

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