

# OPTIONS FOR REFORMING U.S. OVERSEAS BROADCASTING

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE

## COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS UNITED STATES SENATE

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## **OPTIONS FOR REFORMING U.S. OVERSEAS BROADCASTING**

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**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2015**

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:31 p.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Bob Corker (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Corker, Gardner, Perdue, Cardin, Menendez, Shaheen, Murphy, and Kaine.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE**

The CHAIRMAN. The Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

I want to thank everyone for being here. I want to thank the witnesses for joining us today as we discuss options for reforming the Broadcasting Board of Governors. We are currently working on legislation and your input is important to this process. So, again, thank you.

Voice of America and Radio Free Europe were critical during the cold war, and BBG continues that legacy by informing global audiences about U.S. foreign policy and broadcasting objective news into countries with no free press.

BBG's work is as critical as ever when authoritarian regimes around the world deprive their citizens of credible news and use sensational misinformation to undermine the credibility of democratic values and institutions. We see this propaganda providing cover for oppression within these regimes and aggression abroad with ruthless effect.

The United States can, and must, present the other side of the story, and that requires reorganizing the BBG to be a more effective voice. Appointing a CEO, who is with us today, was a step in the right direction, but the position is not fully empowered to make strategic decisions.

Independent analysis has also determined that the BBG's deep involvement with its grantees impedes their success and creates the appearance of a conflict of interest. And I am sure there will be certain statements countering that today, but that is what some independent analysis has said. Nobody is making the tough choices about which language services to prioritize and broadcasters are not being held accountable for achieving results.

Results in my opinion should not mean audience reach or even listenership. It should mean are we informing our target audience and helping it form its own opinion on important topics. I am not sure we can answer that question right now, and I know that all of you would agree the American taxpayer deserves an answer.

Many options for reforming the BBG have been put on the table. The House has put forward a very sensible bill, and we are looking closely at it.

The war of ideas is especially dangerous in the information age, and the BBG must be retooled to compete in an increasingly hostile environment for democratic free market values that are the anchor for global security and stability.

And with that, I turn to our distinguished ranking member.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND**

Senator CARDIN. Well, thank you, Chairman Corker, for convening this hearing on the United States international broadcasting.

As we open today's discussion, it is essential that we recognize that the U.S. international broadcasting is an integral component of our efforts to advance freedom of expression and freedom of the press and share with the world the democratic values we hold so dear here in the United States.

U.S. international broadcasting has played an important role in several of the most important geopolitical advances in the last half a century. To cite just one example, we have consistently heard from our friends in Eastern Europe about how U.S. international broadcasting played a critical role in their transition to more open democratic societies.

Today citizens around the world, specifically those living in closed and restricted societies, continue to rely on U.S. international broadcasting. They turn to content produced by the Voice of America to understand U.S. perspectives on current events, and they turn to surrogate broadcasting services such as those provided by Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and Radio Free Asia for objective reporting on local events in their own country that they would otherwise be denied.

Despite the importance of U.S. international broadcasting, we have come to understand that the structure of the BBG has limited the effectiveness of its efforts. In its January 2013 report, the State Department's inspector general stated that BBG's "dysfunction stems from a flawed legislative structure" and observed that a part-time board cannot effectively supervise the agency's operations.

It is clear that reform is needed and that Congress has a central role to play in strengthening the existing efforts. As part of this process, I would like to see Congress authorize a permanent CEO position, and I also support current proposals that bring together various surrogate broadcasting services into a single institution.

Additionally, while we must guarantee that journalistic integrity and objectivity are absolutely preserved in any reform effort, I see the need for better coordination between BBG and the rest of government. And we need new tools to better evaluate the impact of

U.S. international broadcasting. These are common sense proposals that should be part of any legislative effort.

Mr. Chairman, let me point out that the world changes pretty quickly. And you look at the decisionmaking process on resources which many times are a year and a half before the actual budget takes place and the world has changed a lot during that 18-month period. We need to have the flexibility to put resources where they are the most important to U.S. interests. And it is critically important, I believe, for this committee, the authorizing committee of the United States Senate, to have a role in regards to how those resources are allocated. We know the pie is not as large as we would like it to be, but we have to use it strategically and in the places that are the most beneficial to U.S. interests. And that requires an engagement through, I hope, the authorizing legislation so that Congress can play role in that regard.

I look forward to hearing from all of our witnesses today about how they view current legislative proposals and what legislative changes they think are most critical.

Finally, it is important that we recognize that technology has drastically reshaped the way that we consume information and that our broadcasting efforts are but one option among the vast number of media platforms. I hope our witnesses can speak about how on a strategic level we can update our efforts to connect with new audiences while at the same time continuing to utilize the traditional tools that have been critical to our success to date.

In closing, as former Secretary of State Clinton said in her testimony before Congress in January 2013, that we are abdicating the ideological arena and we need to get back into it. I could not agree more.

I look forward to today's discussion and working with the chairman and my colleagues here on this committee on reform legislation.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you very much.

Our first witness is Mr. John Lansing, the newly appointed CEO to the Broadcasting Board of Governors and former President of Scripps Networks. We are glad you are in this position and thank you for being here today.

Our second witness is the Honorable Jeffrey Shell, chairman of Universal Filmed Entertainment Group, and has been chairman of the BBG since 2013. We appreciate the role that you are playing there.

Our third witness is the Honorable Kenneth Weinstein, the president and CEO of the Hudson Institute and a board member of BBG. Thank you for your service.

We thank you all for being here. If you could summarize your comments in about 5 minutes, we would appreciate that, and then we look forward to questions. Thank you. Just go in the order I introduced you, if that is all right.

**STATEMENT OF JOHN LANSING, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,  
BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. LANSING. Thank you, Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and members of the committee.

My role as CEO is delegated by the BBG Board. I oversee all operational aspects of U.S. international media and provide day-to-day management of the five BBG media entities on behalf of the board.

I have submitted my written testimony, and so I will just summarize here in these oral remarks.

I want you to know first that my initial impressions are best summed up in the great pride I have in the professional, courageous, and often dangerous work undertaken every day by our journalists around the world. I say that both as a new CEO here and as an American citizen.

As the purpose of this hearing is to explore the options of reforming the BBG, let me first make clear that I believe reform is both important and necessary. Any media company today that is not reforming and meeting the audiences where they are is at risk of irrelevancy. I look forward to working with you, Senator Corker and Senator Cardin, and this whole committee in helping move the BBG forward to fulfill its critical role in U.S. international media.

Our role at the BBG is to provide impactful and professional journalism that is credible, agile, and responsive to parts of the world awash in propaganda that is underlying and motivating much of the violent activity as seen in Paris on Friday. The credibility of our reporting is our greatest asset. We do not do propaganda.

In my first few months in this role, I have listened carefully to key stakeholders of the BBG here on Capitol Hill, the State Department, and the White House to name a few. From those conversations and my own observations, I have developed five core themes that provide a framework for how I believe and the board supports we can make the BBG more impactful. They are written in detail in my written remarks, but I will cover them briefly here.

First, number one, aggressively shift to mobile, digital, and other online platforms to meet our audience where they are today, particularly younger, more urban young influencers.

Second, operate the five brands strategically, create the U.S. International Media Cooperative Committee, which I have done as of last month, and have the five entities work together to have the greatest possible impact working together and not at odds with one another.

Third, curate more and create less for maximum benefit and impact, meaning look for an opportunity to curate content so that the money we do invest in content can be the content that is the most impactful and offers the greatest perspective to the issues we are covering.

Fourth, focus our resources on the most difficult problem areas in the world, including the growing influence of China, Russia, and of course, countering violent extremism, which seems to know no geographic boundary.

And fifth and perhaps most important, to measure impact beyond audience reach. All media companies today, whether in the private sector and certainly in the public sector, have to understand that reach is not enough anymore. Reaching an audience or even having an audience consume the media does not tell you anything about the impact that media is having on those audiences. And we must

hold ourselves accountable to our stakeholders, to you that we are measuring that impact.

When I first heard word of the violence in Paris, I was boarding a plane in Kiev, Ukraine, heading back to Washington. I had just completed my visit there having begun with some meetings earlier in the week at RFE/RL in Prague and then on to Kiev where VOA and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty actually do operate cooperatively and strategically to provide maximum impact in Ukraine. Together, the two entities, one Federal and the other a grantee, are acting effectively as a counterweight to the pernicious propaganda coming from Moscow.

The joint production, for example, of a program called "Current Time," that is produced both in Prague and Washington on a daily basis, is the most visible and effective example of cooperation between any two entities at the BBG. It now airs in nine countries on the Russian periphery via 25 media outlets as it regularly counters propaganda with factual reporting.

In addition, VOA's program, "Prime Time," which broadcasts right over here at 3rd and Independence Avenue, features hard-hitting interviews by our own Myroslava Gongadze, with Ukrainian, United States, and other foreign leaders, in which international policies of the United States and other countries toward Ukraine are explored and explained through her skilled interviews.

Complementing VOA's international coverage, RFE/RL produces hard-hitting local coverage throughout Ukraine, particularly in Kiev, often highlighting local government corruption and wrongdoing. So the combination of international and local and the combination of two BBG entities, one Federal and one a grantee, having tremendous impact there.

VOA and RFE/RL programs are carried on more than 120 Ukrainian media outlets and are beamed into occupied Crimea and eastern Ukraine. From meetings with our own Ambassador Pyatt and prominent Ukrainian officials, it is clear to me that through the combination of VOA and RFE/RL, the BBG is having a significant impact on supporting the young, fledgling democracy of Ukraine as it struggles with Russian-backed coercion on its eastern border and Crimea.

For instance, I had the privilege to meet with Ms. Hanna Hopko, chair of the Ukrainian Foreign Relations Committee on Foreign Affairs, well known by members, I am sure, of this committee. When I told her last Friday while we were discussing media in Ukraine, that I was going to have an opportunity to testify here before this committee, she asked me to share this with you. And this is a quote I wrote down. "RFE and RL and VOA provide the truth and objective information that is so much needed in Ukraine today. VOA and RFE/RL," she said, "show things as they are instead of standard of professionalism for Ukrainian media outlets." She went on to explain that there is no other media in Ukraine that can be counted on for truthful and fact-based reporting beyond VOA and RFE/RL working together.

I am immensely proud of the work of our journalists in Ukraine, Prague, and around the world. I have been brought in as CEO to ensure that this comprehensive, coordinated, and impactful approach is engaged in other hot spots, particularly with regard to

violent extremism so shockingly on display in Paris this past Friday. It would not be possible to do that if the BBG entities were operating at cross purposes with dueling CEOs, for example, or dueling boards.

As you review options for reforming the BBG, I would ask this committee to please consider the critical need for U.S. international media to be focused, strategically led, and capable of immediate surge capacity under the leadership of a single CEO, me or anyone else, and a single board just as any private or commercial media company would be organized. Having spent 40 years in my professional media career, 30 of which as a manager at various levels, I honestly cannot imagine running a competitive media company with two CEOs anymore than you would manage a football team with two head coaches.

The example I shared from my visit in the Ukraine represents the potential to increase our impact around the world with a strategy and a management structure that supports all five entities as a collective set of media assets for the United States Government for maximum results.

Thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lansing follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN LANSING

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to speak today regarding the future of the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) and United States international media. I am pleased to join BBG Chairman Jeff Shell and BBG Governor Ken Weinstein today.

I currently serve as the Chief Executive Officer and Director of the BBG, where I oversee all operational aspects of U.S. international media and provide day-to-day management of BBG networks on behalf of the Board.

In my testimony today I want to present my initial reactions to the BBG mission, detail our effectiveness, and outline some of the steps I am taking to position the BBG to be both a leader in the international media space and a uniquely powerful tool in the U.S. foreign policy toolbox.

Prior to my current role as BBG CEO, I served for 9 years as President of Scripps Networks, where I helped the company become a leading developer of unique content across various media platforms including television, digital, mobile and publishing.

More important, I am a journalist at heart. I started out as a photojournalist in the field, with a camera on my shoulder, and from there I was hooked. I worked my way up to serve as a field producer, assignment manager, managing editor, and news director at television stations in Detroit, Michigan, and Cleveland, Ohio.

It is through my professional experience as a journalist that I gained deep respect for the vital role that impartial, fact-based reporting plays in our society. By holding people, institutions, and governments accountable to the truth—and by arming citizens with undeniable facts—journalists show, often indirectly and subtly, how democracies should work. Great journalism presents not only the news, but also the context of that news to provide audiences with a greater understanding of their world and to empower them to take action.

As President Obama said in his speech at the 2015 U.N. General Assembly: “The strength of nations depends on the success of their people—their knowledge, their innovation, their imagination, their creativity, their drive, their opportunity—and that, in turn, depends upon individual rights and good governance and personal security.”

The Broadcasting Board of Governors is fundamentally engaged in the business of fact-based journalism. We are not a propaganda outfit. Rather, we advance U.S. national interests by engaging audiences that are critical to furthering democratic values through open and free exchanges of information.

Throughout U.S. international media’s long history, the tools and goals have been unwavering: to deliver consistently accurate, reliable and credible reporting that opens minds and stimulates debate in closed societies and those where free media

are not yet fully established—especially where local media fails to inform and empower its citizens.

In short, we inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy. This mission is critically important because, more than ever before, information matters.

In today's increasingly interconnected world, responding to the global explosion of information must no longer be considered as a "value added" function in support of broader strategic ends, but rather a key focus of U.S. foreign policy in its own right. Today's media has the power to reach through the screen to activate audiences to action—or to suppress them. Failing to recognize this fact limits the effectiveness of our foreign policy.

Our global agenda will not be effective if we fail to appreciate how the flow of information shapes the actions of policymakers, institutions, and everyday citizens on the street, and capitalize on these trends.

Equally important, we must constantly evaluate how audiences' media consumption preferences change—and we must change with them—if we are to be successful. Any media executive worth his or her salt understands that as markets and audiences evolve, so too must your organization if it is to remain competitive and impactful.

As CEO of the BBG, I recognize that we must change as well. Chairman Shell outlined a few solutions that we believe the Congress can provide that would allow the BBG to succeed in the 21st century. First and foremost, we need legislation to enshrine a chief executive officer position at the BBG who is empowered to manage all BBG operations and functions, including the ability to shift resources as needed and appoint senior officials.

But, regardless of these legislative fixes, my team and I have taken action internally to move the BBG into a more modern, impactful stance. As our adversaries have embraced the opportunities to engage and influence audiences using new tools and techniques, so too must the BBG team.

The key driver of all of our internal reforms is impact. Our success no longer depends on our unique global reach, but also on the intensity of the BBG's relationships with its audiences, the extent to which they share and comment on our news and information and, ultimately, how they influence local knowledge and thought.

The impact of U.S. international media for the next decade will be based on our ability to be an influential news and information source in this dynamic 21st century information environment. We cannot afford to lose our status as a global, influential news service. BBG's programming must exist on the platforms our audiences prefer and use. It must include content that moves and engages them. It must include a focus on regions of the world that need us the most—closed or closing societies. It must use modern tools to embrace younger demographics and engage them as future influencers.

In order to accomplish these imperatives, I, with the unanimous support of the Board, am aggressively prioritizing five core themes to ensure the BBG is the 21st century media organization that the tax payers demand. I will briefly outline these themes here, but I am happy to answer any questions, and brief you in greater detail on any of these points, as needed.

First, we are accelerating our shift toward engaging audiences on digital platforms, especially utilizing the power of video, mobile, and social networks. If we are to be a credible information source we must be on the platforms used by our audiences—be it radio and television, or mobile tools and social media. These platforms not only reach new audiences, but represent a shift from one-way dissemination, to more empowering and engaging audience participation.

A great example of this ethos is the Middle East Broadcasting Networks' (MBN) "Raise Your Voice" campaign, which encourages citizens across the Middle East to speak out and be a part of the discussion about the fight against violent extremism. Over just the past 4 months more than 590,000 votes have been cast on daily "Raise Your Voice" polls and MBN now has 12.3 million followers on Facebook.

Second, we are rapidly expanding coordination and content-sharing across the BBG's five interdependent networks in order to cover and report on the stories that matter to audiences and markets that increasingly transcend political borders and languages. For instance, this will allow us to more effectively share our unique coverage of the Middle East with interested audiences in Indonesia and Russia, or issues surrounding Chinese investment in Africa with audiences across Latin America.

BBG has taken several notable steps in this regard already. One of my first steps as CEO was to convene the U.S. International Media Coordinating Council (ICC), comprised of the heads of each of our five networks.

The BBG's five networks—Voice of America, the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks—operate independently and effectively. But, in many instances, they may have overlapping stakes on key stories—for example, violent extremism or Russian military action in Syria.

In order to better coordinate our reporting, and make use of scarce resources, the ICC now meets monthly to discuss ongoing reporting, share information, and join forces where possible on hard-hitting reporting.

Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) are already making powerful strides on this front. The two networks worked together to create “Current Time,” a popular daily 30-minute Russian-language television news program that is now available in nine European countries of the former Soviet Union via 25 media outlets, and worldwide via digital platforms. In Russia, where placement on domestic stations is not possible, “Current Time” is available on NewsTube.ru, Russia's largest news site. Our new research shows that nearly 2 million people in Russia are watching “Current Time” weekly online and that the program is most popular among 15–24 year olds.

Third, the BBG is concentrating its efforts in five key issue areas where we can be most effective in support of our mission. While our reach is global, the BBG cannot cover all events with equal intensity; we need to focus our efforts.

To do so, we are focusing our reporting on the key spheres of importance that matter most to U.S. foreign policy, U.S. global interests, and the U.S. taxpayer:

- Reporting on Russia;
- Covering violent extremism;
- The widening regional influence of Iran;
- China, not only in the South China Sea region, but also in Africa and Latin America;
- Promoting universal rights and fundamental freedoms in Cuba.

Fourth, we are evolving to an organization actively engaged in curating, commissioning, and acquiring content. For broader impact, we need to focus BBG original reporting to not just rehash the daily news, but to provide depth and perspective on events for more meaning and impact. To do so, we will complement our deeper original reporting through the added curation of external content.

Curating external content will not only free up BBG resources for more impactful, in-depth reporting, it will also potentially support the new generations of compelling storytellers, such as the youth in many of our markets, documentarians and journalists that engage their peers every day on digital platforms.

Finally, we are emphasizing impact over sheer reach. In the past, the BBG was asked to focus primarily on maximizing the number of people our programs potentially reached. This number-centric strategy was befitting a broadcasting organization with a broadcasting mentality. But in today's digital and engaged media environment, we must focus on more than just reach. By putting the audience first in how we collect, create and distribute news and information, we take a more modern approach to informing, engaging and connecting with our audiences.

These five priorities provide an initial framework for how the BBG will position itself as an influential media source on the global stage, and as a more functional tool in the USG strategic toolkit. I look forward to working with this committee, and the rest of the Congress, to implement these strategies fully.

To close, the fundamental purpose and intent of the BBG is to empower our audiences to own their future. We do this by providing fact-based alternatives to the propaganda, offering them access to truth, and demonstrating the building blocks of democratic society—accountability, rule of law (versus rule by law), human security, and more.

Voice of America's first broadcast stated: “The news may be good or bad; we will tell you the truth.” At BBG, we continue to operate with that mindset, because truth builds trust and credibility, and delivering credible news is the most effective means to ensure impact and provide the audience with information that will affect their daily lives and empower their own decisionmaking.

And with that, I am happy to take questions. Thank you for your time and attention.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.  
Mr. Shell.



**STATEMENT OF HON. JEFFREY SHELL, UNIVERSAL FILMED ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, CHAIRMAN; BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS, CHAIRMAN, UNIVERSAL CITY, CA**

Mr. SHELL. Thanks, John.

Thank you, Chairman Corker and Senator Cardin and the rest of the committee, for inviting us here today.

I have a longer written statement as well that I submitted, but I am just going to summarize it very briefly here.

The BBG and its five networks are not widely known by most Americans, but our mission is critical now as it has ever been, a fact that was tragically punctuated once again in Paris last week, as John said.

The United States faces many global challenges, violent extremist groups like Daesh, aggressive and destabilizing actions by countries like Russia and others, and the erosion of the freedom of expression, and many others.

While a strong military and strong diplomacy are vital, ultimately it is our values and our ideas that will win the day. That is where the BBG comes in. Our mission is straightforward: engage and connect with people around the world and support democracy and our values by telling the truth.

As this committee knows, the BBG is overseen by a bipartisan board of people like me with day jobs. My day job is running Universal's film business, a global business I have run for the last 2-plus years. Every day in that business, I grapple with the rapid and fundamental changes occurring in the media business. The same changes are actually affecting the BBG, but unlike Universal, the BBG also has to deal with the rapid and frightening geopolitical challenges that you all deal with. We need to be at the top of our game to do so, but unfortunately, as many of you know, the BBG has been far from effective in past years.

Responsibility lies at the top. Prior boards were fragmented and overly political, not up to the challenge of running a global media organization. They were not providing our talented team, many of whom risk their lives every day, as John said, with the leadership they deserve. Furthermore, most of our services were not set up to fight the asymmetric and digital challenges we now face.

Today I am happy to report that we are turning things around. We have a highly functioning nonpartisan board of experts who are providing the leadership we need. I have to say, serving on a number of boards in both the public and private sector, this is the most highly functioning board I have seen in either place. As a board, we recognize that we cannot, and we should not, play an operational role. So we recruited and brought on a fantastic CEO, John Lansing, who you just heard from, and working with John, we are making the necessary reforms to make us more effective and allow us to join the critical fights this Nation faces.

That is not to say there is nothing else to be done. There are other fixes we need to work with all of you in Congress on.

First, as John mentioned, we need to empower the CEO and future CEOs with the authority to run BBG's complex organizations. And we need to simplify our organization and make it more agile, as you said, Senator Cardin, so we can better surge resources to where we need them. Interestingly enough, I was nominated 3

years ago, and Russia was not even a threat at that point. We were thinking about how to deemphasize Russia, and times have certainly changed on that side. So along with a few other of those fixes, we will position BBG to be a powerful force for our national interest.

Before I finish, I want to add a few words about last week's horrific actions in Paris that are incredibly relevant to this hearing. As President Obama said, this is an attack on all humanity and the universal values we share. American ideals and ideas are more important than ever in the fight against Daesh and global extremism. We need every single tool in the toolkit to be sharp and ready to go and that includes the BBG.

We actually brought a little video here. I think in the interest of time, we will not show this now. But if people are interested, we launched a show called "Delusional Paradise" in the Middle East which is a weekly 30-minute documentary series that offers first-hand accounts of families who have suffered at the hands of Daesh and exposes the brutality and ideology and strips its narrative of appeal. Tools like this show and "Current Time," which John mentioned, a joint VOA and RFE/RL daily program that reports on Russian aggression and propaganda, are incredibly powerful. Are we effective and impactful in this space as we could or should be? No, not by a long shot. However, organizationally we are pointed in the right direction and ultimately we believe fervently that our ideas will win the day.

We look forward to working with this committee and Congress in making BBG what it should be, a powerful tool for our national interest.

As I said earlier, I have a day job, but BBG is my national service. I am incredibly proud of the record year we had at Universal with a number of box office global hits, but I have to say I am even more proud of the progress we have made here at BBG. And it has been an honor to serve my country in this fashion. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Shell follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF JEFF SHELL

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to speak to the unique role that the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) and United States international media play in advancing our national interests.

I am pleased to be joined today by my colleagues, Governor Ken Weinstein and CEO John Lansing. Alongside the rest of the Board and staff at the International Broadcasting Bureau and across the BBG, we are working diligently to shape the Broadcasting Board of Governors into a unique and powerful tool in the U.S. foreign policy toolkit. The BBG team deserves a lot of credit for their consistently excellent programming and I want to use this opportunity to thank them.

Let me also thank the members of this committee for shining a light on the important work that the Broadcasting Board of Governors carries out on behalf of the United States. Many Americans are not aware of Broadcasting Board of Governors, its unique mission and growing role in international media.

Put simply, our job at BBG is "to inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy." To do so, we oversee all nonmilitary international broadcasting supported by the U.S. Government, including the Voice of America (VOA), the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB), and BBG-funded grantees Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Radio Free Asia (RFA) and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN).

We use these resources to provide news and information to overseas audiences that lack adequate sources of objective news and information about their countries and societies, their region, the United States, and the world. In short, we put fact-based journalism to work, on a global scale, on behalf of the American people.

Our reach is global. BBG radio, television, Internet, and mobile programs are consumed by more than 226 million people each week, in more than 100 countries in 61 languages—many of them in communities and countries that face organized misinformation campaigns.

Global media is an area that I understand well. As Chairman of Universal Filmed Entertainment Group, my day job, I oversee worldwide operations for Universal Pictures. And prior to taking on my current role, I served as Chairman of NBCUniversal International in London, where I was responsible for overseeing the operations of all NBCUniversal International businesses, and as President of Comcast Programming Group.

In my professional experience, international media is marked by complexity. In my current job it is my responsibility to ensure that Universal's programming remains successful in a rapidly changing global media environment. I note similar challenges through my role at the BBG, where we not only must contend with a dynamic media landscape but also the asymmetric challenge of state and nonstate actors, often well funded, who effectively deploy media and digital tools to challenge the United States, our values of democracy and freedom, and the very existence of objective truth.

It is critical to acknowledge that in the recent past the BBG has not responded as effectively as it could to these growing challenges. As with any media organization, be it Universal Pictures or the BBG, the responsibility for organizational breakdown and inertia starts at the top. Some of our past problems derived from Board dysfunction and the failure to link the work of the Board to the day-to-day operations of the BBG's global team, and the growing sense of irrelevance and inability to "join the fight" that these challenges engendered.

But despite past challenges, two facts remained enduring. First, the BBG's mission remained unassailably critical to U.S. foreign policy. Second, we boast a team of brave and hardworking individuals who work around the world, in relative obscurity and often outright danger, each and every day to fulfill the BBG's mission to inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.

These facts informed the work of the Board as we sought to overcome past challenges and ensure the meaningful impact of BBG efforts across the globe. I am happy to report that we are making significant progress on this front.

Our biggest change is that our current Board is fully united behind the changes we need to make to ensure BBG's success, and the ways we need to operate to do so. We are nonpartisan and comprised of media and foreign affairs experts who deeply believe in the BBG mission and the need to lead the U.S.' fight against the "weaponization of information" by our adversaries and challengers. The level of cooperation and expertise on this Board is the best I have seen, be it inside government or outside.

Most importantly, we recognize that the Board's role cannot be operational. The BBG is a complex institution and it is beyond the ability of any appointed Board, comprised of appointees with day jobs, to manage it effectively. Recognizing this fact, the Board elected to shift all the powers it could legally delegate to a Chief Executive Officer, who would oversee all aspects of U.S. international media and provide day-to-day management of BBG operations.

A critical act in this regard was to select John Lansing to serve our CEO. John's experience and temperament make him the perfect person for this job. He is a recognized leader in media management, having served nine years as President of Scripps Networks, where he is credited with guiding the company to become a leading developer of unique content across various media platforms including television, digital, mobile and publishing. Equally important, he is a journalist at heart—formerly an award-winning photojournalist and field producer, assignment manager, managing editor, and news director at multiple television stations earlier in his career.

And we have taken steps to modernize our operations as well. For instance, in 2014, we undertook a comprehensive review of the efficacy of shortwave radio as a distribution platform for U.S. international media, which resulted in a shift in focus to digital and mobile tools as our future tools of choice, because that is where our audiences are now and where they will be in the future. CEO Lansing will address our aggressive shift to digital media in his testimony.

Additionally, the BBG is embracing new tools to support the fundamental right of information freedom. Through the Internet Anti-Censorship Program and Open

Technology Fund, we are supporting journalists, bloggers, civil society actors, and activists to use the Internet safely and without fear of interference.

Finally, through the strong presence on the Board of Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Richard Stengel, we are more coordinated with the Department of State than ever before. Closer coordination has allowed the BBG to use its unique resources to impact in some of today's most important foreign policy arenas, such as on the digital battlefield in Ukraine or the global threat of violent extremism.

We recognize we also need to be better coordinated with Congress, which is why we are deeply appreciative of the opportunity to speak to this committee today. In taking the above listed steps, and many others, the current Board has demonstrated its clear commitment to positioning BBG to succeed in the modern media environment. We look to Congress to provide certain additional authorities that will further ensure our success.

First, and foremost, we need the Congress fully enshrine the CEO as the operational lead at BBG. While the Board has elected to delegate key powers to the CEO through its own volition, it is clear that we need to institutionalize this role through legislation so that all future Boards can benefit from expert operational leadership.

Furthermore, we not only need to enshrine the role of the CEO, but we also need to fully empower the position to serve all relevant functions as required by the Board. As I mentioned previously, the sitting Board elected to delegate all authorities that it legally could to the CEO—but unfortunately the Board lacks the authority to fully modernize in this regard. We require legislation to authorize the Board to delegate the remainder of its authorities, required for effective and efficient day-to-day operation of the agency, to the CEO, so that the Board may focus on strategic oversight and governance.

This includes the currently “non-delegable” authority of the Board to reallocate even the most de minimis dollar amount of funds across the various bureaus and federal and grantee broadcasting entities of the BBG when requirements change. In other words, in order to move even one penny between the entities, even under the most urgent of circumstances, the CEO must seek a vote of the full Board.

Beyond these management fixes, we also need to ensure further structural and operational agility, if we are to successfully counter today's dynamic challenges in the information space. Unfortunately, many of our existing authorities, a number of which date back to 1948, or thereabouts, are either obsolete or incomplete for our purposes as a 21st century organization.

A key area in this regard is surge capacity. When crises arise, BBG is often asked to surge its efforts to the affected region quickly. The International Broadcasting Act requires the agency to do so by providing for “the capability to provide a surge capacity to support United States foreign policy objectives during crises abroad.” But, as a surge generally requires increased content and broadcasting, we require not just enhanced authority to operate notwithstanding certain standard processes, but also the ability to turn to a ready source of funding. For us, this means the authority to receive or fully utilize funds from other agencies, or to make use of a no-year fund established for this purpose.

With these fixes, the BBG will be best positioned to thrive in its mandated role as a unique tool in the U.S. foreign affairs toolbox, and will be a powerful force for countering the challenges posed by the growth of misleading or propagandistic information globally.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to conclude on a more personal note. As Chairman of Universal Filmed Entertainment Group, I have been lucky enough to lead an organization that has secured its most profitable and successful years in memory. We released films such as “Jurassic World,” “Furious 7,” and “Straight Outta Compton” to critical acclaim and commercial success. I am immensely proud of that success. But that pride at these successes pales in comparison to how proud I am to serve my country as Chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, and the incredible progress we have made over the past 2 years on behalf of the American people.

I look forward to working with the Congress, and this committee, on our work still to come.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.  
Mr. Weinstein.

**STATEMENT OF HON. KENNETH R. WEINSTEIN, HUDSON INSTITUTE, PRESIDENT AND CEO; BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS, MEMBER, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. WEINSTEIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, other members of the committee, I am truly honored to testify today about the Broadcasting Board of Governors and its importance and the critical operating environment we operate in at this moment when reform is being considered.

I have submitted my written testimony already, and let me just issue an abbreviated version here verbally.

Let me first begin by saying how pleased I am at the BBG that we have an incredible CEO, John Lansing, on board, and John is someone who brings extraordinary experience with him, and especially pleased to work with Chairman Jeff Shell. Jeff is also an extraordinary leader. You have heard about the dysfunctions of the BBG boards of the past. That is no longer the case. We are Democrats and Republicans. Jeff and I do not agree on many issues about how the United States should respond to various crises around the globe, but we do agree on what the BBG is doing and that agreement is wide through all of our members, including Ambassador Ryan Crocker, arguably the most distinguished diplomat who has served the United States in the last half century, as I have heard him referred to; Ambassador Karen Kornbluh, the former Ambassador at the OECD in Paris; Matt Armstrong, a public diplomacy expert; and Michael Kepner, a communications expert. The strong leadership here transcends partisan lines.

And we need this right now because we are in an incredible context for U.S. international media, one, as we all know, of rapid geopolitical change, instability in world affairs, instability which our strategic competitors seek to benefit from, whether it be Russia, China, Iran, ISIS, and other Islamist extremists bringing significant assets against us on multiple levels. And last week's attack in Paris by ISIS was one example of Russia's presence in Syria, de facto alliance with Iran another.

This change, this geostrategic instability occurs and rising threat level also occurs also at a time of massive technological innovation, a time when the enemies of liberty are more adept than ever at using cost-effective technologies that equalize the price of dissemination of their false accounts of information to the cost of—and sometimes gives them a cost advantage over our attempts to broadcast the truth.

Both elite and public opinion have proven unsure and unsteady about how to react to unprecedented policy change and into this breach have stepped massive new state propaganda agencies. Peter Pomerantsev has termed this the "weaponization of information," the use of the tools of a free society, including media and social media to defend the indefensible, tyranny, kleptocracy, invasion, murder, premodern views of society that deny individual rights. And today we have seen the massive growth of state-sponsored platforms, whether it be RT, which according to the State Department and its various other associated media outlets, spends \$1.4 billion a year to present the distorted message; CCTV which, according to the Columbia Journalism Review, spending 19 times what the BBC spends in English each year. We saw the reports

last week of Radio China international outlets in the United States that Reuters highlighted. And so this makes a very complex background against which we have to respond.

There is also another major challenge, as we know, which is the transnational power and appeal of groups such as ISIS that use digital communities without geographic limitation. Technology compresses the time and space needed for disinformation to spread, and they have spread this romanticized vision of the caliphate through the social media not just in the Middle East but in Central Asia, in Europe, as we saw last week, Africa, and elsewhere.

The sheer volume of available information has a major impact on how global audiences consume information and how they make social, economic, and political decisions. This is a very different environment during the cold war when there was an information vacuum that Voice of America and Radio Free Europe were able to step into to bring about significant change.

The BBG—our global reach and our credibility have a critical role to play in correcting falsehoods and holding people and institutions accountable. Let me simply note that having reviewed the complex environment that the BBG is operating in, let me touch briefly on a few key areas where we are having impact.

Responding to Russia. Russia, as we all know, has turned the weaponization of information into an art form. To respond, we are engaging key audiences on the Russian periphery and globally by providing facts, the reality of United States and Russian activities.

You have already heard about “Current Time,” the VOA-RFE/RL joint program, 30 minutes a day in Russian. It is now being expanded into Central Asia. It is now in nine countries and 25 media outlets available to digital audiences worldwide with a following beginning in Russia of 2 million people online.

More than 500 Central Asian media outlets have already subscribed to RFE/RL’s Central Asia news wire. Our “Footage vs. Footage” feature, a new daily video product that contrasts how Russian media and global media report on the same events, has also become an important and useful tool.

Let me note what we are doing to cover jihadi narratives. Violent jihadi narratives, as we all know, often go unaddressed within local media environments. To counter these narratives, we focus on delegitimizing extremism by reporting on and exposing the realities of extremist groups, as Jeff noted, and promoting diverse voices in the Muslim community who are otherwise overlooked in biased media environments. The Middle East Broadcasting Network’s “Raise Your Voice” campaign continues to encourage citizens across the Middle East to speak out and be part of the discussion about the fight against extremism. We are seeking to create communities of discussion among moderate Muslims whom we give platforms to disseminate their ideas.

There are lots of other examples I could cite: Iran, China, Internet freedom, teaching English. But let me just quickly cite a couple of key wins the last few months.

In Nigeria, Nigeria was facing a serious epidemic of polio, and the VOA partnered with the CDC to get news out to end the distortions about the dangers of vaccines in Nigeria. And all of a sudden,

as of the last month, Nigeria is no longer on the list of countries where polio is endemic.

In Burundi, after an attempted coup, VOA remained the only station, the only private station, on the air after the government shut down all privately owned radio stations.

In short, let me conclude by noting we are in a moment of rapid geopolitical change, significant technological evolution, and there are many unprecedented challenges in the global information space. In the face of these challenges and with budgets that are far exceeded by those of our strategic geostrategic competitors, the BBG is having significant impact in some of the most difficult locations on earth.

We are all for reform, but we do believe that these successes are a foundation to build on, and we hope that the committee will remain cognizant of our growing success as it considers reform.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Weinstein follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT KENNETH R. WEINSTEIN

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to speak today on the impact that the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) and United States international media has around the world. We, as a nation, need to remain vigilant to the ways in which information and ideas, as well as disinformation and false ideologies, affect our national security, and I thank the committee for holding today's hearing. I am pleased to join my colleagues, BBG Chairman Jeff Shell and CEO John Lansing, at today's hearing.

I have served as a Board Member on the Broadcasting Board of Governors since October 2013 and as the President and CEO of the Hudson Institute since March 2011. As a political theorist who has spent the past few decades working on U.S. foreign policy and its impact in Asia, the Middle East and Europe, I have had the opportunity to analyze the strategic context, direction, and efficacy of both U.S. foreign policy and U.S. civilian international media.

Today, I will describe the overall operating context for BBG international media, examine some of the challenges and opportunities inherent in that context, and note important ways that BBG reporting is impacting audiences in support of U.S. foreign policy and freedom in this space.

U.S. international media operates in an environment of rapid geopolitical change and growing instability in world affairs. Last week's horrific terror attacks in Paris are just the latest example of the challenging international environment, and one in which tragic events in one country are increasingly linked to those in others.

The broad features of recent geopolitical change include Russia's aggression in Ukraine; the spread of ISIS and other jihadist groups in the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and now, alas, Western Europe; Iran's growing tentacles in the Middle East; economic slowdown in China, and growing assertiveness in the South China Sea.

This geopolitical instability and rising threat level occurs at a time of mass technological innovation, reducing the costs for communication to both large and targeted audiences. Across the globe, the enemies of liberty have become increasingly adept at marshaling the same cost-effective technologies that make the dissemination of information much less expensive today than it has ever been in human history.

Against this backdrop of geopolitical evolution, both elite and public opinion has proven ill-prepared about how to react to unprecedented policy change. At this time of uncertainty, state propaganda agencies have stepped into the breach, making what Peter Pomerantsev of the Legatum Institute termed the "weaponization of information" a central facet of international conflict.

The enemies of free societies—both state and nonstate actors—have become increasingly skilled at "weaponization of information," aggressively using the tools of a free society, including the media and social media, to distort reality, and defend the indefensible: tyranny, kleptocracy, murder, religious intolerance and premodern visions of human society that deny fundamental human rights. They do so proactively, with creativity and attention to production value and a targeting of audiences that is far more sophisticated than the Soviet Union ever did, thereby weakening

intellectual and moral opposition to their policies abroad, highlighting shortcomings of Western societies through a distorted lens, or fomenting anti-Western sentiment at home to justify inexcusable actions by their governments abroad.

Well-funded state propaganda outlets designed to have the patina of impartial media outlets include Russia's RT, Sputnik, Ruptly, Rossiya Segnodnya, and other secondary platforms, which according to State Department estimates spends over \$1.4 billion annually on propaganda. The Columbia Journalism Review estimates that CCTV's English language efforts will be 19 times the annual budget of the BBC, the world's largest news organization. According to *The Atlantic*, Al Jazeera spent \$1 billion to start Al Jazeera English and the network gets \$100 million for its annual budget. These differing platforms target specific audiences, especially in the West, seeking to undermine the possibility of a firm and united Western response to current policy crises.

A second major challenge the BBG faces is the transnational power of and appeal of groups such as ISIS. As predictable political borders have eroded, so have the traditional boundaries that once shaped the media landscape. Today, communities and conversations arise in a digital space without geographic limitation, and technology massively compresses the time and space needed for disinformation and influence to spread.

Social media and the Internet have proven fertile ground, not just for Russian disinformation but also for spreading Islamic radicalism, free from the more truthful filter of traditional journalism. Through social media, ISIS, itself in competition with other radical Islamist groups, projects a romanticized vision of life under the Caliphate to disaffected men and women in Western Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Teenagers in Britain, Turkey or Saudi Arabia may follow the dictates of radical Imams on YouTube and abandon the comforts of home for war-torn regions of Syria or Iraq.

These trends have important ramifications for how BBG, and others, target our intended audiences. Information-seeking communities and individuals get news updates not solely through established media outlets in limited geographical locations, but through their preferred information platforms. CEO Lansing will speak to this issue in greater detail in his testimony, so I will simply note here that moving forward we must continue to embrace digital and social media tools as key platforms for our content, as these are the tools that our priority markets—youths and future influencers—already use on a regular basis.

A second challenge is the sheer volume of available media and the effect that has on how global audiences consume information and, ultimately, make social, economic, and political decisions. Every day, global communities are awash in information. But not all information is created equal. From Crimea, to Syria, Northern Nigeria, and Southeast Asia, propaganda and censorship foment hate and confusion, monitor and suppress dissent, activate acts of terror and roll back hard-won freedoms. Actors from ISIL to China to Russia are using information not just to "win the news cycle," but to shape the very choices of statecraft.

This current context stands in stark contrast to the cold war, during which certain global actors sought to prevent the flow of information to the point of creating vacuums in key communities, which the United States moved to fill with reporting through Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and other tools. Today, we see the opposite: an abundance of false, doctored, or misleading information on a multitude of different platforms for consumption.

A key BBG challenge is ensuring that our high-quality reporting serves as a beacon for accurate, fact-based journalism in spaces awash with dishonest, misleading, or government-controlled information. In environments inundated with propaganda or falsehood, the best antidote is objective, fact-based reporting that arms citizens with the truth.

As such, BBG's global reach and journalistic credibility play a vital role in correcting falsehoods, holding people and institutions accountable, and demystifying U.S. policy in these communities.

Along these lines, I would like to touch on three key areas where the BBG is operating with impact in the modern media space.

#### RESPONDING TO RUSSIA

The Kremlin is actively using propaganda and disinformation as a tool of foreign policy and to maintain support at home. To counter Russian propaganda, the BBG engages key audiences inside Russia, along the Russian periphery, and globally to provide them with the realities about Russian and U.S. activities and, importantly, their context. As elsewhere, we have an appreciation of different audiences that we



seek to reach, and want our audiences to be empowered by facts, the most effective strategy for countering propaganda.

Since the fall of the Yanukovich government in Ukraine in February 2014, and the ensuing occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea and Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine, the BBG has dramatically increased programming to the region. Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) have added or expanded more than 35 new programs on multiple media platforms in Russian, Ukrainian, and other languages to reach new audiences in Ukraine, Russia, elsewhere in the former Soviet space, and around the world.

U.S. International Media are a real force in Ukraine, as I have seen from my travels there. We have every reason to be proud of our journalists. We have every reason to be proud of our journalists in the field. Our coverage of the protests on the Maidan was unparalleled and our brave journalists at RFE/RL remained on the job in the face of intimidation and physical violence; their continuous and fact-based reporting of violence perpetrated by forces loyal to the Yanukovich government was critical to Ukraine's democratic revolution. Our journalists, whether at RFE/RL or Voice of America, are widely respected as among the best in the business, and our diverse programming, which at times has aired programs critical of the Poroshenko government, has broad appeal.

The BBG's response to Russian propaganda represents five broad lines of effort:

- Focus programming to impact strategic audiences;
- Expand partnerships to reach audiences in local markets and influence the news agenda;
- Move resources to digital platforms to directly engage audiences;
- Increase research on the ground to better understand audiences and impact;
- Utilize BBG capabilities and expertise to meet unfilled strategic needs and opportunities.

The BBG is already seeing strong impact in the region. More than 500 Central Asia media outlets have already subscribed to RFE/RL's Central Asia news wire service, which launched in September in Russian and vernacular languages. Voice of America and RFE/RL programs are now carried on more than 120 television, radio and Internet outlets in Ukraine.

RFE/RL continues to ramp up DIGIM, its new social-media driven digital reporting and engagement service, which includes the "Footage vs. Footage" feature, a daily video product that contrasts how Russian media and global media report on the same events, provides the facts of a case and pointing out inconsistencies and falsehoods in Russian reporting.

Additionally, RFE/RL and Voice of America have expanded "Current Time," their popular daily 30-minute Russian-language television news program into Central Asia. It is now on the air in nine countries via 25 media outlets, and "Current Time" is available to digital audiences worldwide. In Russia, where placement on domestic stations is not possible, "Current Time" is available on NewsTube.ru, Russia's largest news site. Our new research shows that nearly 2 million people in Russia are watching "Current Time" weekly online, and that it is most popular among 15–24 year olds.

Through these programs we engage the audience's—often silently held—interests and concerns. Russians, for instance, are considering whether their country is heading in the right direction. They are weighing whether Putin's political and social reality is where they want to raise their children, start or grow a business, get an education; these are core questions that speak to hopes and aspirations. In other words, the future media environment is not just about countering Kremlin propaganda, but a campaign for the future of the region.

It is worth noting that the BBG is not solely engaged in reporting in this area; we also provide equipment and journalism training to key populations. For example, following consultations in June with Ukrainian authorities and our Department of State, BBG provided broadcasting transmission equipment to Ukraine to facilitate delivery of radio and television programs to audiences in areas controlled by Russia or Russian-backed separatists. The equipment: a new, 134-meter tower; a 60 kW solid state Medium Wave transmitter; and three portable FM stations, will be used as part of a low-power network to be deployed near contested areas.

#### COVERING VIOLENT JIHADI MOVEMENTS

Extremist narratives too often go unaddressed within local media environments and digital echo chambers. These narratives are often tied to extremists' alleged religious virtue and organizational invincibility, with a toxic additive of anti-American and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.

Our journalism exposes the gap between rhetoric and reality—ideologically and organizationally—of violent jihadist groups. We do this through objective reporting that adheres to the highest standards of professional journalism. By covering violent extremism, we expose it for what it is.

Extremist groups have excelled at recentering the news cycle on their violence. To counter this tactic, the BBG is pursuing several strategic goals in this space:

- Delegitimize extremism by reporting on and exposing the realities of extremist groups;
- Make communities more resilient to extremism through engagement;
- Promote diverse voices in the Muslim community otherwise overlooked in biased media environments.

While other parts of the government directly support civil society, the BBG is uniquely positioned to elevate moderate voices—from the street to the elites. We cover local issues of concern, and provide constructive outlets for communities to discuss the issues that matter to them.

For example, the Middle East Broadcasting Networks’ (MBN) “Raise Your Voice” campaign continues to successfully encourage citizens across the Middle East to speak out and be a part of the discussion about the fight against extremism. As a result, MBN has seen a large surge in digital traffic and on social media; in last 4 months over 590,000 votes have been cast on daily “Raise Your Voice” polls and MBN has 6.2 million followers on Facebook.

As part of the “Raise Your Voice” campaign, MBN launched “Delusional Paradise” in September, a weekly 30-minute documentary series comprised of firsthand accounts of families who have suffered at the hands of ISIL. This is precisely the kind of work the BBG should be doing: “Delusional Paradise” presents powerful firsthand and deeply moving accounts and interviews of families and communities that have suffered at the hands of ISIL. The program includes chilling interviews with families who have lost loved ones to ISIL recruitment, and compelling interviews with families victimized by ISIL attacks, including an interview with Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh’s family after he was burned to death by ISIL.

#### INTERNET FREEDOM

A third prominent challenge for us is the fundamental importance of information freedom. This is an enduring and central role for the BBG, from the cold war to today.

Today, information freedom means the unfettered ability for people around the world to engage and connect with one another, to be informed, and ultimately to use that information to change their lives and the lives of their community for the better.

In 2002, the BBG created the Internet Anti-Censorship Program (or “IAC” program) to accomplish two major goals. The first is to support journalists, bloggers, civil society actors and activists to use the Internet safely and without fear of interference. The second is to empower world citizens to have access to modern, unrestricted communication channels and to allow them to communicate without fear of repressive censorship or surveillance.

Using funds provided by Congress for censorship circumvention programs, our International Broadcasting Bureau funds large scale proxy servers, such as Psiphon, and other means to defeat censorship. The BBG’s investment and support of multiple circumvention technologies has helped to create a new generation of mobile apps that directly challenge and overcome the powerful government-enforced firewalls of Iran and China. Our web proxy servers allow more than 1 billion Internet sessions a day. Users from the Middle East, North Africa, Eurasia, and East Asia are able to access news and information outside of their tightly controlled information markets.

Through our Open Technology Fund, we underwrite apps and programs for computers and mobile devices that help to encrypt communications and evade censorship. OTF’s approach to identify and support next-generation Internet freedom technologies has led to the development of first-of-its kind tools that encrypt text messages and mobile phone calls, detect mobile phone censorship and intrusion efforts, and allow transfer of data without use of the Internet or mobile networks. Such efforts allow users facing constantly changing censorship methods to continue to communicate safely online.

We are seeing major success in this area. The BBG has Internet freedom tools working in 200 languages. BBG/OTF’s tools have supported nearly 1 trillion circumvention page views over the past year and the delivery of over 1 billion emails and newsletters delivered behind the Great Firewall of China every year. BBG currently provides the fastest Internet connectivity in Cuba, via satellite.

The success of our Internet Freedom work is at the core of our role as journalists and reflects our unique capabilities within the U.S. Government. In the digital era, the freedom to speak and the freedom to listen remain essential. With the support of Congress, we aim to rapidly expand our presence and operations in this area.

#### EXAMPLES OF OTHER AREAS OF IMPACT

The above cases are just a few examples of BBG's powerful impact in areas that are critical to U.S. foreign policy. But they are by far not the only instances. Some are more targeted but highly critical.

For example, in Nigeria, the eradication of polio was halted by rumors and misinformation about the safety of international vaccination programs. In response, Voice of America partnered with the Centers for Disease Control to carry out a multiyear campaign of reporting, Public Service Announcements, townhall meetings, and media trainings. In part due to our work to eliminate falsehoods surrounding the transmission of and vaccination against polio, Nigeria was just last month removed from the CDC's list of countries with endemic polio.

During protests and an attempted coup sparked by Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza's decision to run for a third term, the government targeted independent media, forcibly closing down all privately owned radio stations. However, VOA remains on the air via an owned-and-operated FM station in the capital, Bujumbura, which can be heard in most of the small country, as well as in refugee camps in Tanzania and the DRC. VOA is now one of the only available sources of news and information in Kirundi—the only language spoken by nearly all Burundians—as well as French and Swahili.

And, earlier this year, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud contacted VOA's Somali Service to thank it for broadcasting a series on democratic constitutionmaking that he said was extremely valuable in his country's constitutional drafting conference in January 2014.

In conclusion, at a time of rapid geopolitical change and significant technological evolution, there are many new and unprecedented challenges in the global information space. In the face of these challenges, and with budgets that are far exceeded by those of our geostrategic competitors, the Broadcasting Board of Governors is having significant impact in some of the most difficult locations on earth. The Board views these successes as a foundation to build on and we hope that the committee will remain cognizant of our growing success as it considers potential reforms.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you and thank you for trying to rapidly get through the story you are trying to tell about BBG and all of you for your service.

Look, we have all traveled the world and seen how in many places we are having it handed to us relative to information. We would call what they are doing propaganda. As Lansing has said, we would call what we are sending out the actual news. But the fact is we know in places like eastern Ukraine and other places we are having it handed to us.

So we thank you for the job you are doing. We do understand there have been changes, positive changes. I will say most of us have heard some pretty negative exit interviews from former BBG board members and some current—not today—but while they were serving a few years ago. So we are glad the environment is better there.

I think all of us constructively want to put in place some reforms to make BBG even better for the long haul. You happen to have a board that is getting along better today. Obviously, that is not institutionalized.

So let me just ask a few questions.

First of all, you all have decided to have a full-time CEO on your own. Is that correct?

Mr. SHELL. That is correct, yes.

The CHAIRMAN. You could change that immediately. Is that correct?

Mr. SHELL. We could change that immediately.

The CHAIRMAN. And so what kind of status—I know Mr. Lansing has had a great private sector career and can do this as public service. What status do you have right now within the organization? I mean, can they fire you tomorrow? How is this set up?

Mr. LANSING. I serve at the pleasure of the board right now.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you have a contract?

Mr. LANSING. No.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there a reason for us to not make you permanent institutionally through legislation? Or is there a reason for us to at least consider causing there to be a full-time CEO? Because we had part-time board members trying to run an organization that Senator Perdue knows for sure does not work. Should we do that?

Mr. LANSING. I would say yes, especially having now been involved for most of 3 to 4 months, a few months prior to joining officially and joining officially in September.

The reality is—and it would be no surprise to any of you that are business men and women—that operating a complex business with eight or nine appointed governors who are part-time and meet four or five times a year is a recipe for—to call it dysfunction would be to assume that could somehow be functional. It is designed to be dysfunctional.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask you this. And I thank the board, by the way, for having the foresight to bring in a full-time CEO that actually knows something about what is occurring there.

Do you have the authorities—even though they have put you in the position, do you believe have authorities to do all those things that will be necessary to appropriately reform BBG?

Mr. LANSING. I do, Senator Corker. I have a fantastic board. They are very supportive, but they operate as a good board does with oversight and guidance and policy review. And I feel like I have a very open channel particularly with Chairman Shell who I have a regular meeting with on a weekly basis. But they have delegated the authority to me to make the decisions we need to make to be the most impactful we can be.

The CHAIRMAN. There are a lot of people that disagree with that, just for what it is worth, even heads shaking behind you very negatively regarding that. So I do think that is something we want to pursue.

Let me ask you this. There has been a push on the House side to consolidate the grantees. You know, we have multiple entities that now receive grants. There has been a movement by their legislation to consolidate. I would just love to have y'all's brief opinions on that.

Mr. SHELL. I will respond to that. Can I go back to the CEO just one second, Mr. Chairman, if you do not mind?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, sir.

Mr. SHELL. We are fortunate right now at the board that we have a great dynamic and an excellent CEO. I think you very smartly pointed out that this is a moment in time. One of the things that is interesting is by law we can delegate certain authorities to John and certain authorities we cannot delegate to John by law. And so we can give him the moral authority—for example,

something as fundamental as language services. John does not have the authority by law to close a language service or surge resources into another language service. So even though the board can say, John, you are our proxy in that—and right now, because of our working relationship, it is working—it could very easily not work tomorrow. So there are a number of authorities I would say that John has by virtue of the operating rhythm right now that actually we would urge all of you to consider memorializing and taking out of the hands of the board and delegating to a CEO so that the next CEO can have the same authority that John does with a different board.

The CHAIRMAN. Since naturally it would be more difficult for him to ask for more authority than for you to share with us the additional authority you think we ought to give him, I think I will focus more on you relative to that question.

But if you would move along to the consolidation of grantees.

Mr. SHELL. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for that input. That is helpful.

Mr. SHELL. I think on the consolidation question, I think it would be a smart thing to consolidate grantees, and I will tell you why. And Senator Cardin said this a little bit in his remarks. You do not know when the next hot spot is going to break out in the world. We do not know what tomorrow's battles will be today. And an 18-month process and 24-month process of resources does not work in this environment. It does not work in the military. It does not work with respect to us. And the grantees all have somewhat arbitrary geographic kind of boundaries. So if you decide, for example, that you want to take money out of a place in Asia and surge it into the Middle East to counter violent extremism, it is two different entities that you have to deal with and it is much more difficult to do that. So a consolidation of the grantees would simplify our process to a certain extent and make it much easier to surge funds.

Once again, it is one of the areas we have made work today under John's leadership. It is working well today, but institutionalizing it, that in the long run would be very smart in my view.

The CHAIRMAN. So moving along that same path, there seems to be some contention over the thought of then having a separate board for the grantees. So there is agreement that the CEO by the board should have more institutional powers. There is an agreement, I think, that the grantees should be consolidated so you can move more quickly as you just mentioned. There seemed to be some dissension over whether the grantees ought to have a different board than BBG itself. And I wonder if you all might—it seems to me that that would make a lot of sense to have a different board, otherwise you wonder why you have grantees in the first place. So it seems to me that editorial content, having some independence, having people who are closer to the clients that they are serving would make a lot of sense. Some people disagree with that. I would love to hear your thoughts on that.

Mr. SHELL. Well, I will jump in and then my fellow witnesses can talk about it.

That is probably the part of the House bill that I disagree the most strongly with. I think that we are an organization with one mission that has fights all over the globe in different fashions in

different ways with the same mission. And I think that having two boards and two CEOs makes absolutely no sense. It is like having the Air Force and the Marines in one organization with one CEO and having the Army and the Navy in another organization with another CEO. So it has nothing to do with me keeping my job. I have a day job. This is not what I want to do.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. You have answered the question. You know, it is the same thing I think you said in your testimony.

So the grantees, as I understand it—100 percent of their funding comes through you guys and the Federal Government. If that is the case, why are the grantees not just part of BBG? I mean, it is a weird thing to me to understand, that either the grantees are separate or they are not separate. Explain to me why we have various entities.

Mr. SHELL. It is part of the legislative history of this organization that did not get built all at once. It got built over time in different ways. It also is the grantees, for the most part, are private corporations, not Federal agencies, whereas the BBG, the VOA is a Federal agency. So there is a little bit of a distinction between Federal and nonfederal. But I think if you were going to start with a blank piece of paper and recreate this agency, as you all are looking to do, you would make it all one organization. It is the same mission.

The CHAIRMAN. I have additional questions, but as a courtesy, I am going to stick within the timeframe. Go ahead.

Senator CARDIN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I found your exchange to be very helpful.

You are correct. All of us have traveled over the world and have seen the value of VOA and the different NGO work that is being done. And the NGO work does complement the Voice of America. So it is a good mix. In my work on the Helsinki Commission, numerous times I have visited the people who do the work and am always impressed by their dedication. So it is good to have you all here. Thank you very much for your efforts.

I want to get to the point I raised initially. Currently your budget is approved by the appropriators with line items to the NGOs basically. And it is based, I assume, in part by your recommendations, but it is done well in advance of knowing the current circumstances around the world and where priorities need to be.

Also, this is the authorizing committee. Nothing against the appropriators. But we have the responsibility to set priorities as it relates to the use of these resources in advancing American interests. And it would seem to me that if we were going to reform—and I hope we do because I agree with the CEO and the other issues you are talking about—we should look at a way in which Congress and your agency can be closer in touch as to what the policymakers believe the priorities should be and the flexibility you need to meet changing circumstances and reports to us so that we keep that working relationship. It seems to me it also gives you a better advocate here in Congress to understand what you are doing.

So I would hope, as we look at a reform bill, that we have your input as to how this committee and the comparable committee in the House of Representatives, the Foreign Affairs Committee, can carry out our responsibility as authorizing committees as to how

the different regions are funded and the missions of the different regions as it relates to furthering U.S. policy objectives.

Any thoughts on that?

Mr. WEINSTEIN. We certainly would welcome the input. The authorizing committees are critical to us, to our work, and we certainly would welcome your input as we go forward, absolutely. Because of the appropriations cycle, it is oftentimes very challenging to handle complex geostrategic crises that arise. So input is always very welcome.

Senator CARDIN. I would just point out I have been on this committee since I got to Congress in 2007. And yes, I did know about your work but not in relation to our committee. So I do think it would be better invested for this program, Mr. Chairman, if there was a more direct input that the authorizers have in the work that you are doing. Just a suggestion that might be helpful.

I want to get to Internet freedom. You mentioned this in your written testimony. But obviously, access to the Internet is a critical tool, and the censorship that we are seeing in so many countries to block their citizens from getting access to the Internet very much compromises the free of flow of information, which is one of your objectives.

Do you have the resources and strategy to deal with the anticensoring type of opportunities we have so that people in these countries that have restricted press can get better access to the Internet?

Mr. LANSING. We do, Senator Cardin, although we will be seeking even more resources. In the past fiscal year, we had \$14.5 million that went toward investments in various technologies to allow people who were being blocked from the Internet to access the Internet. We are in the process of building a framework of governance around those grants of dollars to make sure that we can protect that freedom and also guard against any misuse of that technology, and we want to guard against that at the same time. But we see that as a role that we developed over the last 3 years that we can continue to invest in and have greater impact around the world by opening up the free Internet.

Senator CARDIN. Well, I think it is a very important part of the mission, obviously, as you point out. And I should emphasize that. We want to maintain the journalistic integrity in the work that is being done, and the role for Congress must not compromise that.

I agree with Senator Corker. We are fighting propaganda. I understand that. But the way we fight propaganda is through the truth, through information, and part of that is the Internet. And we should not be the only society that is burdened by the Internet. They should also have those issues in their country. So I really do think it is a mission that we need to take on a very high priority.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator PERDUE.

Senator PERDUE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank the three witnesses today for their public service. This is a thankless job, as I can well relate.

I am chair of the subcommittee that oversees the BBG, and I am eager to work with you guys to make this more effective and pro-

ductive in the current environment. In my opinion, we have got a global security crisis. It manifests itself in many ways, but on three different levels, the rise of traditional rivals like China and Russia, the rise of ISIS with their land-based caliphate, and then I think the proliferation of potentially dangerous rogue nations and nuclear proliferation like North Korea and Iran.

In the midst of all that, you have varying degrees of disinformation and propaganda machines out there, well funded machines in China and Russia. And then you see not so well funded but very effective efforts from ISIS in terms of not just fundraising but recruiting. And so in the midst of all that, the guys who get the bad deal are the American taxpayer. We are the most philanthropic country in the history of the world, and yet we get no credit for it. Our ideology is one of a colonialist country that is taking advantage of the less fortunate.

I come to that with your challenge, your mission, Mr. Lansing. And thank you for taking this job. I hope you have it a while. But you talked about the mission or the goal of the organization, and I want to talk about the balance between integrity and independence about content. Mr. Shell, that is your business.

And I have a second question on media and how we do that, but, Mr. Lansing, first, coming into this role, how do you balance our objective of trying to get the truth out and still have a balance between the integrity of the content but also trying to tell the American story? It is the taxpayer that is funding this after all.

Mr. LANSING. Absolutely, Senator. The mission of the VOA, as you know very well—part of the mission is to tell America's story to the world and to discuss and explain U.S. foreign policy. And as far as I am concerned, those are not issues of independence in journalism. Those are factual elements of our reporting that help explain America to the world and I think help debunk the stories that exist in other parts of the world about what America is and what our values are in America.

Senator PERDUE. Could I interrupt just a second? Do you interact with the State Department and other foreign policy originators inside the government?

Mr. LANSING. One of my board members is Rick Stengel, who is the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy, and we have a regular channel of communication with the State Department, although I will say to your point on independence—and I have been a journalist for many decades. And the reason I am here—the first question that I asked before accepting the position is tell me about the independence of this organization. And I learned about the firewall. And I think the firewall is critical in delineating brightly the difference between propaganda and fact-based professional journalism. And I talk about the firewall at every opportunity I get here within our organization or anywhere that I am speaking—the importance of the firewall—so that our independence is protected because at the end of the day if we are not perceived as independent, if our content is not perceived to be credible, then we really have nothing to offer in expressing America's values to the world that can be helpful or cause anything positive to happen in my view.



Senator PERDUE. At a very high level, could you help me understand how you allocate resources and focus? And I realize it is a board decision, but as you come in and looking at this new role—let us just characterize it as the Middle East issue, ISIS, Iran, Hezbollah, all the other actors there versus traditional rivals of China and Russia particularly. And I know there are many others. How do you see that demarcation of—allocation of assets?

Mr. LANSING. As you know, we broadcast radio and television in over 60 languages, and to a large degree, while we spread out very broadly, 70 percent of all of our investment goes to 11 languages, including the 11 most prominent and impactful languages, Mandarin, Arabic, Russian, for example.

And as I look at the resources to be expended and as I discussed in my five themes, I think the top issue for investment for the BBG is investing in social, mobile, and digital platforms. Now, they are not the most used platforms in many parts of the world where we have the most difficulty, but they are the most used among young, urban influencers who will influence the debate going forward much more directly than people listening to the short-wave radio or even—

Senator PERDUE. I want to ask Mr. Shell that in a second. But I want to ask you this. Is there a correlation between geography and language? And the reason I ask, when I lived in France, there were a lot of different languages spoken and now even more today obviously. So, for example, do we have Arabic language content going to parts of Europe, for example?

Mr. LANSING. We do not but I believe we should. I think as I look at the rise of ISIS and what happened in Paris and you realize what is happening to a large extent is disaffected youth in parts of European cities that are being radicalized and sometimes they are coming from Syria, but sometimes they are really just coming from parts of Europe where for whatever reason they are able to be radicalized.

Senator PERDUE. Scandinavia, U.K., and the Latin countries.

Mr. LANSING. Yes, I think it is important for us to know.

Also, again, Senator Perdue, with a digital, social, mobile strategy, you are no longer bound by geographic structure or by a transmitting tower or a satellite. You really can be everywhere by virtue of choosing the right platforms.

Senator PERDUE. Mr. Shell, I am almost out of time, but I have been dying to get to you on this question. In your business, your day job, you have had to adapt to this evolving nature of different media. Can you respond to what Mr. Lansing is pointing out here in terms of how do you allocate resources, what is the focus, what is the genre of individual you are trying to reach, and how do you adapt the media use to that goal?

Mr. SHELL. Yes. So I think John said one of the most critical parts, which is that radio and television are geographically bound and very difficult to reach people, by the way, on television because people tune into a platform. You cannot just put it up on a satellite and expect people are going to watch the show. A lot of our organizations were started during the cold war where the only alternative was the state radio station. The world has changed dramatically since then.

The good news for us, actually a good thing for us, is that mobile allows, as John said, us to break down geographic barriers. We can broadcast Arabic speakers all over the world through mobile. People can pull out their smartphone and just access an application on there to do that. The thing that that requires, though, is access. The Internet freedom question that was asked earlier becomes a much more critical factor. If you cannot access the platform, then it does not matter if the content is on the platform. So I think shifting a little bit to more of an access, we need more resources for Internet freedom because if people cannot get on the Internet, they cannot get our content regardless of how good a job we do.

A question I often get asked is why do you even exist. There is CNN. There are lots of other places. I was in China a month ago. You cannot get CNN on your iPad or your iPhone. It is blocked. So we have to figure out a way both to get the content on the right platform and get people access to the platform, which is true in my day job and true at the BBG.

Senator PERDUE. I have been in places in my career where VOA was the only source of information. Thank you for what you are doing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Menendez.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for your service.

You know, this last point in response to Senator Perdue I think is an essential point to think about. Part of the reason for our broadcasting abroad is that very often we are trying to get to citizens who live in closed societies, whether they be a totalitarian regime, whether they be a government who explicitly seeks to restrict their citizens' access to uncensored media content. And there are very many places in the world, unfortunately, in which that is a reality.

So part of what I would like to hear from you is, one, I hope that we never view a country that is working to stop our success or our efforts as the reason why we should stop broadcasting. For example, if in fact you cannot get access to the Internet in a given country, it does not mean that we should not look at the circumnavigation abilities to ultimately achieve that access because the day we do that, then we might as well just go out of business in terms of surrogate broadcasting.

So is that a pervasive view at the board, that whatever is the society we are trying to ultimately transmit to whatever medium, that we are not going to stop simply because it is more difficult to penetrate?

Mr. WEINSTEIN. Thank you, Senator Menendez, and thank you for your voice on this issue and for what you have done and what you have focused on in the past in this area. I know it is a priority for you.

This is critical to the Internet anticensorship work that we do. The key thing is to empower world citizens with modern unrestricted communication channels so they can get information access and access to information without fear of censorship in places that they cannot. And so our Internet anticensorship efforts—we have

created Internet freedom tools that exist in 200 languages. Our tools have allowed over 1 trillion circumvention pay views over the past year. And so we firmly believe, as there is more of a move toward digital, toward online, that we are going to continue to operate even in countries where our work is most necessary, the enhanced firewalls of Iran and China which our Internet anticensorship tools have allowed access literally to millions of people and more than a billion Internet sessions a day around the globe using our tools. So it is important and it is something that is critical to our mission.

Senator MENENDEZ. Well, I am glad to hear that.

Now, let me ask you. Chairman Royce's legislation, who has made it a priority in the House—I am sure you have had the chance to review it. I heard, Chairman Shell, your response to the chairman about one element of it. As a whole, what would you say about the legislation?

Mr. SHELL. So obviously it is a big, complicated piece of legislation, and I know Chairman Royce and I appreciate the work that he and his committee did and his staffers. They have spent a lot of time on it, and we were involved in the process and talked to him during that process.

I would say in general there are two things that I love about the bill and two things that I find problematic about the bill.

I think the bill is very, very good on giving the CEO the authority the CEO needs and making the board more of a traditional board that provides oversight and strategic guidance, where the CEO runs the organization. I think the bill actually does an excellent job of that.

And I think some of the consolidation stuff we talked about earlier is very well done in that bill.

I do not, as I mentioned before, like the two boards and two CEOs. I think operationally that is going to be very difficult.

And the other thing is I think there is a lot of language in the bill that I would say is more operational. There is language about hiring freezes and physical location and stuff that I personally as a manager of a business think may or may not be the right idea but should not be in a piece of legislation that is going to live for decades and decades and decades or centuries.

So I think in general there are really good pieces in the bill, and I think that hopefully the bill will have some changes when you all pass it.

Senator MENENDEZ. Is that the general consensus?

Mr. WEINSTEIN. I would agree fully with Jeff on that. I have great respect for Chairman Royce and for the staffers who have worked on this bill, but I think the challenges that Jeff pointed out are important to note, as are the important changes and reform that has already been put in place in the board at the board level and now we are seeing at the management level.

Senator MENENDEZ. Now, let me turn to a question. You have addressed it to some degree, but I would like to hear and maybe from your CEO—you know, the one constant that we can depend upon is change. And the reality is when I was in Ukraine at the time that the Russians were invading and then traveled to Poland after that, I can tell you the leaders of those countries felt overwhelmed

by Russian propaganda and felt that to them it was an arm as powerful as any of the military aspects that were crossing in the case of Ukraine over their boundaries or in the case of Poland over their airways.

So what is that you would do differently, structurally or otherwise, that would give you the agility to be able to respond to the Ukraine of yesterday or the ISIL in Paris of today? What is that needs to be done in order to be able to have that agility and flexibility in an organization? And as part of that—since my time is going to run out, I will just give you the question. You can use the rest of the time in answering. You have got about a what? A \$700 million budget or so?

Mr. LANSING. Yes.

Senator MENENDEZ. I look at what the Russians are spending alone, and I say no matter how well organized, no matter how efficient, is it possible to compete in that sphere under those terms and circumstances? So we want you to be as efficient as possible. We want you to be as organized as most powerfully as possible to deliver our content in the way in which we aspire to. But by the same token, I also think there has to be a little intellectual honesty here about how much is necessary to compete if we think that that is a national security strategy.

Mr. LANSING. Thank you, Senator Menendez.

I agree we are being outspent greatly in the sphere of Russia, in China. But that does not mean we cannot be as impactful and efficient as we possibly can be. It goes back to the empowered CEO and the BBG operating as five entities and not splitting it into the grantees and the Federal entities. As the CEO, the one thing I could do is shift resources rapidly from areas that are not necessarily hot at the moment to areas that are becoming hot and not wait for another fiscal year appropriations to do that. But if I had to negotiate with another CEO and our board at the Federal side had to negotiate with the board on the grantee side in order to shift resources, then we end up running a debating society instead of actually having impact in the world when it is needed the most.

I think we can have great impact. In fact, we have added 25 affiliates to the periphery of Russia with this new program, "Current Time," that is coproduced, by the way, by the Federal entity VOA and the grantee RFE/RL and runs every day for a half an hour in the periphery. That was not there a year ago. And it is directly countering Russian propaganda every day. And our Ambassador Pyatt in Ukraine where I was last week said it was a critical tool in the fight against propaganda, as well as the Ministry of Information there in Kiev.

So, yes, we are outgunned in terms of resources, and to be intellectually honest, to use your term, it is an issue. But the only way, given the restraints on our budget, to have the most impact is to have the flexibility to move dollars around quickly and punch hard when a punch is needed.

Senator MENENDEZ. So to recap, the only institutional change, forgetting about resources for the moment, is the ability for you to move resources within the institution without having to negotiate with another element of your broadcasting.

Mr. LANSING. Yes. As it is today, that would be something that boards would have to negotiate with one another in order to move money from one side of the organization to the other. Again, if you envision the 2323 construct of a CEO over the Federal side and a CEO over the grantee side, that creates a mechanism for dysfunction that I am not clear why anybody would organize for dysfunction when you could organize to eliminate dysfunction.

Mr. SHELL. Senator Menendez, can I jump in on one thing?

So the other tool that I think would help John and the rest of the organization is probably shifting more of our funds into no-year funds, which can be kind of set aside or at least designated to make it easier because the fiscal year or the year designated funds makes it more mechanically difficult to do this too. So one of the things we are asking for is the ability to be able to surge, and the organizational issue is one issue. The no-year funds is another issue because you just do not know what is going to happen tomorrow or the next day.

And the other thing I would say too is in the private sector what is happening in media is mobile and digital are making the barriers to entry to launching new media business much smaller. We are going to also benefit from that here at the BBG because the spending that Russia is doing, China is doing, BBC is doing is going to come down dramatically in scale versus our scale when mobile and digital becomes more prevalent. It is just simply not as expensive to launch things and carry things all over the place.

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Very good.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you all very much for being here this afternoon and for your efforts.

I want to follow up a little bit on what Senator Menendez was asking about because a couple of weeks ago we had a hearing on Ukraine and on Russian propaganda in Ukraine. And one of the things that I think I am correct on is there was testimony just about Russia Today, which is the Russian television station which having just been in Europe and having had an opportunity to watch it, it is very slick and it is on all day. I think they are spending about \$1.4 billion on that effort. And he testified that the State Department was spending \$66 million for all of our counter-messaging and civil society support.

You were talking about, with Senator Menendez, the \$700 million that encompasses your budget. And I think as you point out, you have been very effective in certain areas. As a child of the cold war, I grew up when Radio Free Europe and Voice of America were very important to our efforts to respond to the Soviet Union.

But the question that I have now is whether what we are doing is in any way adequate to the challenge that faces us and whether we should be totally rethinking the structure of how we counter-message not only with respect to Russia but with respect to ISIS and the challenges that we are facing in the Middle East where a significant part of their military strategy has really been their messaging. And when I asked this question at the Armed Services Committee, what I heard was, well, we used to work with the State

Department—our military—but we have been asked to stop doing that. We got rid of the U.S. Information Agency back in the late 1990s.

So my question really is, is what we are doing right now—do we have the capacity to do what we need to do around the world in the future with the kind of structures that we are looking at? And so I would ask you to, if you can, put aside your hat as a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors and CEO and tell me whether we are doing what we need to do. Do we have the capacity with the structures that we have set up to do what we need to do in the future?

Mr. SHELL. I would say yes and no, and it is a complicated question. Thank you, Senator, for your question.

I want to hear from John who was just in the Ukraine and Ken.

I think that we have some positives and we have some challenges. The positives we have is that American culture is pervasive around the world, and so while we do not spend \$1.4 billion on a TV network, everybody is watching that TV network, if they are watching it, or probably watching other things, but they are on their iPhone that is produced by an American company and they are watching. And they are probably on Facebook instead of watching Russia Today so they are not doing that. So we have a lot of benefits of American culture, CNN International, lots of different American networks that broadcast across the globe. And so American culture is still pervasive and looked up to in a lot of the world. I do not actually think we are looked at as colonists by a lot of the young people around the world. I think we are looked at still aspirationally as this is the kind of life I want to live as they see it on TV and in movies and the experience of coming here.

The fact is, however, that we are being dramatically outspent, and that does have an impact. It would be intellectually dishonest to say that our 30-minute daily show in the Ukraine is having as much of an impact as a 24-hour network. It is just not possible.

Senator SHAHEEN. Right.

Mr. SHELL. So we are doing what we can with the resources. We think we are more effective with our resources than that \$1.4 billion, but certainly if we are going to take it seriously as a country, we have to get serious about this and probably spend something commensurate with what our enemies spend or at least a bigger fraction of it.

Ken, do you want to jump in?

Mr. WEINSTEIN. Yes. No, I would disagree with Jeff to the extent that I actually am concerned about the image that—and I realize your day job at Universal—with the image that American entertainment companies project around the world. And Martha Bayles, who is an adjunct fellow or visiting fellow at the Hudson Institute, has written about this and thought about this, that a lot of the images that people are receiving around the world that come out of reality television or out of movies today are not necessarily the most positive images of the United States.

Senator SHAHEEN. Amen to that.

Mr. SHELL. Or even the images on C-SPAN.

Mr. WEINSTEIN. Exactly, those too. [Laughter.]

So this makes the challenge of—public diplomacy makes a challenge of what we are trying to do much more difficult. And let us face it. The people in Moscow are sitting there creatively making up stories and then making up images, whether it be aircraft shot down over Ukraine or elsewhere. They are doing this on a full-time basis, and they are using all sorts of creative techniques with a lot more money than we are doing telling the truth. And the sensationalized stuff will oftentimes grab an audience much more.

So we certainly could use significantly more resources than what we are doing. I think given the resources that we have, I think we are doing an excellent job.

Senator SHAHEEN. One of the things that has struck me as we have watched the tens of thousands of refugees who have fled from the conflicts in the Middle East is that they are not fleeing to Russia and to Iran and to many of our—oh. I am sorry. Yes, Mr. Lansing.

Mr. LANSING. I am sorry. I did not mean to interrupt.

I just wanted to add a thought as well, and that is if you think about the old construct of broadcasting in the cold war and it was a transmitter and the Russian message going out to everybody and that is still happening. That is RT.

But there is another thing happening, and I think you have to really focus on the audience. And the audience that we think is most critical are young, 18- to 24-year-old, mostly urban, hip, up-to-speed consumers of media who are not easily fooled, who get their media not just from state television, but from each other on Facebook, on social media. The most trusted source of media for an 18- to 24-year-old is a friend on Facebook, not a friend in Moscow.

So I think that is important because as we shift strategies and shift resources towards more investment in social media and digital platforms and imagine that our consumer is holding an iPhone or any smartphone and that they are savvier than their mother and dad are, just like my kids are savvier than I am, today and that we can—our strategic approach is to tap into the savvy younger media consumer because I guarantee you—and I cannot back this up scientifically other than my own anecdotal evidence with my own teenage twin sons is that their faith in traditional media is nonexistent compared to their faith in each other and their friends.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, certainly we heard testimony to that effect several weeks ago at that that hearing. If we are going to have an impact, we have got to look at how we get into the grassroots and get into those young people and those Internet Facebook and other messaging, which is much more challenging. And we really have not had much of a chance to explore that with you all.

But, Mr. Chairman, I am out of time, but can I ask one more question?

The CHAIRMAN. Sure.

Senator SHAHEEN. When you are making allocation decisions, are those linked to national security priorities in the country and how do you determine those?

Mr. LANSING. We are absolutely linked to the NSC and the State Department. We understand the priorities and we make resource allocations geographically based on those areas that are highlighted and prioritized.

Senator SHAHEEN. And do they come with direct communication to that effect?

Mr. LANSING. They do not come with editorial guidance. Back to the firewall, it is not cover this or do not cover that. It is here are the areas of greatest concern to the United States Government, and of course, we have our own ability to understand where there is a lacking media freedom or other areas that just require the investment of resources. They line up pretty easily.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Kaine.

Senator Kaine. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks to the witnesses for great testimony.

I am interested in your anti-radicalization messaging in the Middle East. You have a Middle East Broadcasting Network, and I understand you have a "Raise Your Voice" campaign to try to counter—well, in extremism, you may even have a short clip here that you have brought with you. I just would like you to tell me about that effort and kind of how long you have been doing it and what you are seeing in terms of its success.

Mr. LANSING. Sure. Thank you, Senator Kaine.

The campaign is "Raise Your Voice." It is both a social media campaign, radio, Internet, and television, including weekly documentaries that highlight the plight of families who lose jihadists and the family is left without the jihadist behind and you see the impact on the family. And we do have a clip if you would like to see it.

But the amazing amount of Facebook likes, followers, shared Facebook messages that have gone on through this program over the last few, I guess, couple of months now has really been heartening to us. There is a moderate voice in Iraq that is being raised—i.e., "Raise Your Voice"—that otherwise was not being heard. And we are surprised to the extent that we have tapped into that moderate fever.

Senator Kaine. I would love to use some of my time to see the clip.

Mr. LANSING. Sure. It is a minute and a half.

Senator Kaine. Mr. Chair, is that—

The CHAIRMAN. That will give you 4 minutes.

Mr. LANSING. It is really quick clip. It is about a 30-second clip. This is a clip of a mother who woke up one day to find her son had left to join Daesh.

[Video.]

Mr. LANSING. We made it short because we were going to try to work into our testimony, but we can bring the whole half hour, if you would like.

It is the part you do not see. You hear about the heroic, off to join ISIS. What you do not see is what is left in the wake behind. And then, by the way, her son was—their family got a call over his cellphone from a stranger that said your son is now a martyr. Thank you. And that was her reaction to it.

Senator Kaine. Tell us how you distribute material like this, you know, to I guess how many broadcasting networks help you. But also talk a little bit about the social media distribution.



Mr. LANSING. Yes. So we have the Alhurra television network and the Radio Sawa across—actually penetration throughout Iraq, 40 percent, I believe, reach in Iraq meaning people have seen it at least once a week, the network itself. The social media aspect has expanded dramatically as I mentioned earlier.

And it touches back to the notion, Senator Shaheen, that I was mentioning earlier, that we have tapped into not only a moderate force but a younger demographic that social media is not their secondary like it is for me, but it is their primary means of communicating. And what happened is it has an exponential effect. So somebody sees the program. They post it on Facebook. It gets shared. It gets liked, and then others share it. So it has a way of distributing itself versus the traditional TV tower and radio tower. And so we are tapping into a moderate, young audience with a message about jihadism that contradicts everything that is being heard through propaganda.

Senator KAINE. In the Middle East Broadcasting Network, you talk about the penetration in Iraq. Talk to me about penetration in other countries of the region other than Iraq.

Mr. LANSING. So it spreads from Morocco all the way across to Iraq. The majority of the listening/viewing is in Iraq where it is significant. But I cannot quote the actual percentages in the other countries, but across the northern tier of the Middle East, it is significant.

Senator KAINE. This is a question that might be out of your lane, but I am kind of curious about it. There has been some speculation that the attack in Paris—I have heard it stated that ISIL was absorbing some defeats on the battlefield and knew that that would be messaged in a way that would hurt them, and so that they may—while these attacks were coordinated, they may have even rushed them to try to take the sting out of some bad messaging about battlefield challenges. Is that something that you know about? If that were the case, it would really speak to the critical importance of what you do, obviously, that winning the war is one thing, but if you are going to lose a big chunk of the war on the battlefield space, then win the narrative, the messaging war if you can.

If you do not know anything about that speculation—and it would only be speculation—I guess I would just offer it as a comment. Even the speculation suggests the critical importance of what you do. It looks like, Mr. Weinstein, you may want to say something.

Mr. WEINSTEIN. Senator, I would say this. The attack in Paris, from what it looks like, would have in all likelihood occurred at some point. Whether it was sped up or not is a different story. There is no doubt that Daesh uses images of violence, whether it be beheadings, otherwise, to present a very masculinized vision of what jihad is in order to entice the young men in the demographic we are talking about to essentially be a man, to stand up, and to fight, to engage in jihad in this way. And these images are absolutely critical to what they are doing. So they are absolutely essential to what ISIL has been up to.

Senator KAINE. And then just to pick up on comments from my colleagues who were asking more about on the Russia side, I know

that you have got a program that you broadcast in the Russian periphery, this “Current Time” program. How long have you been doing that? And again, is there a traditional media and a social media component? Talk a little bit about that.

Mr. SHELL. We have “Current Time” up ever since Russia invaded Crimea. So the BBG did some very quick work in that. We are very proud of what we did there. We were up 48 hours after—in Russian language after that happened, and we have expanded it, as John said, to a number of the different periphery territories since then in the Baltics and throughout the region. So it is a 30-minute show and it is highly watched and shared across the media not just in the affiliates that carry it but on the social networks as well.

Senator Kaine. I hear nine countries, 25 affiliates, but also through a pretty aggressive digital and social media distribution.

Mr. LANSING. Yes. In fact, the digital manifestation of that has grown remarkably fast, and we are expanding into Central Asia now as well with “Current Time Central Asia.”

Senator Kaine. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman. Thank you.

I am just going to ask a couple questions. I know we have another panel and I know people have other pieces of business.

First of all, to have people like you, two board members and a very successful CEO, at BBG carries a whole lot of weight with me and your opinions carry a tremendous amount of weight. There is this issue, though—I think it is an issue of contention, and that is the grantees and their relationship to you. And I know the next panel is going to speak to this. I just want you to speak more clearly, if you will.

I guess there is some question about whether these grantees have credibility if they are, in essence, arms of the Federal Government. I mean, is there an independence issue? Is there something else you might share with us before we have this next panel? From the standpoint of reforms—and I am glad we had the opportunity to hear what you were doing in other places, but there is a piece of legislation that I think you want to see happen in the right way. If you all could just expand a little bit on that before we move to this next panel.

Mr. LANSING. Sure, Senator Corker. I will start with that.

I think about a media conglomerate much the same way I would have thought about Scripps Networks where I was before, six cable networks, food network, travel channel, HGTV. In some cases, a network—travel channel is a good example. Scripps did not own 100 percent of it. It owned 60 percent of it. So it had a different financial model. It had a different place on the balance sheet, et cetera. But strategically, we had control of the asset and we managed it strategically.

I would make the same comparison with the grantees versus the Federal Government. First of all, I do not see any issue with independence. We are operating with a firewall, and independence is a given whether it is a Federal entity or a grantee. So I would set that over here. And if there were an issue with independence, we should be having a hearing about that honestly because I think independence is really not the issue.

The issue to me as a media manager for years—and I would love to hear Jeff weigh in, but with media you always start with the audience and work your way backward. You start with what do you want to have happen. You have an audience. You have an age of an audience. You have a place for an audience that you want to bring content to and then have something happen which is impact. You would organize in such a way, in my view, that you would have the greatest amount of impact and the greatest amount of efficiency and the greatest amount of flexibility so that you could surge particularly with the mission, the critical mission, which dwarfs anything in the cable world of the BBG.

So unless there is a credible argument for why you would make a functional media structure with one CEO and one board like any other media organization in the world is organized, why you would say, well, when the Federal Government runs the media organization, they run it with two CEOs and two boards because they are funded differently. And I would just submit, Senator Corker, that the funding is not the issue. The independence is not the issue. The issue is the effectiveness of U.S. international media and how you manage that effectiveness and how you would organize to do that. I am not a—I know you are not either—from years in the government, you were a successful developer in Chattanooga. To me, I take a business approach, and that is the way I would organize it from a business perspective.

Mr. SHELL. I would add to what John said. We all kind of are up here as businessmen or former businessmen looking at this as a business challenge of how do we compete with other businesses across the world. And what I would say is what I have noticed at the BBG is there a lot of things that are based on historical kind of structures that are no longer as relevant in the world that we operate in. So the grantees, as they are called, are largely surrogate broadcasters in that their mission was to provide local media in places that did not have local media.

And the reality of things is two things have happened since that got set up. One we have talked about ad nauseam today. Geographical boundaries are less and less relevant across the globe where you have people getting messaging from all over the place particularly amongst our audience that is younger. And then I think the other impact is digital versus traditional forms of media which know no boundaries and know no technological boundaries.

And so I think that these surrogates were set up as private entities because it was faster. That was the justification. You could just provide funding to an organization and then let it go. And I think that was a smart thing to do. But to completely separate them out, as John said, I do not even actually see any benefit to what we are trying to accomplish long-term.

The CHAIRMAN. If they have covered it, that will do, but if you want to add to it.

Mr. WEINSTEIN. And I would just say look at what we have achieved in the last year. Look at the synchronization. Look at “Current Time,” the success that it is having. Look at the reporting out of the Maidan, the work together of RFE and VOA. It helps having a single structure, and it has made things easier to produce. I think over time it will lead to cost efficiencies that will prove to

be significant at a highly competitive time in the international media space. And I think that a lot more could be achieved if the right kind of reform gets through.

The CHAIRMAN. We thank you for being here. Look, we have all heard a lot of horror stories about BBG. I know all of us have. And at the same time, we all know the importance of the mission. We know that the three of you have come in and really professionalized the organization. Sometimes legislation has a little bit of a lag time and sometimes it is responding to other points in time in history.

But your testimony today has been excellent. We thank you for your service to our country. We are glad you have someone who understands the media business and have given him the job—or at least, I am glad—and you have given him the job as CEO. And we look forward to working with you productively on legislation to try to capture some of the good things that have occurred but also help the organization move along. So thank you so much. We appreciate it. Thank you.

And with that, we want to thank the witnesses who have just been here. We are moving to the second panel.

Our first witness on the second panel is the Honorable S. Enders Wimbush, who is public policy fellow at the Wilson Center and formerly a BBG board member and director of Radio Liberty.

Our second witness is Mr. Kevin Klose, who is currently professor at the University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism, formerly president of Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and president of NPR.

We appreciate also having two witnesses with such distinguished backgrounds here. I know there may be some differing opinions that are offered here.

We thank you for your testimony. If you would give it in about 5 minutes each, we look forward to questions. And again, thank you for your service to our country.

**STATEMENT OF HON. S. ENDERS WIMBUSH, PUBLIC POLICY FELLOW, WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. WIMBUSH. Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, members of the committee, I am honored to have this opportunity to speak candidly to you about challenges to and opportunities for U.S. international broadcasting, and as a preface to my remarks, I want to note that in July 2014, former BBG Governor Dennis Mulhaupt and I wrote a long critical article on the need for radical BBG reform. When I spoke to Dennis this morning, we both agreed that there was nothing in the piece that we wrote that we would change today.

I would like to recommend in my short remarks—I would like to address in my short remarks three key issues: first, the media environment; second, the BBG's structures of governance and problems; and third, the proposed legislation.

There are several facts that we need to be clear about.

Fact one, in contrast to the period of the cold war, few countries such as North Korea exist in which governments control and approve all information. To the contrary, a casual drive across any continent reveals a sustained explosion of information sources

available to most populations including to the populations of our adversaries and those whom we seek to influence.

Fact two has already been noted. Our adversaries have raised the quality of their media game significantly. For the most part, gone are the big lies. In are the actors' nuanced explanations for why they behaved as they have and why it was necessary. And this is important. They do not control all the facts, which in any case are often easily contradicted in a world awash in information. Rather, they try to control the information that matters to them, and in most cases, this is information coming from local media. And this will speak directly to the value of the surrogate broadcasters as I go forward. With less and less control over visible facts, our adversaries spend more and more time controlling the context in which those facts have meaning to the people they are trying to communicate to.

So to me, this means that the appropriate niche in this media landscape for U.S. international broadcasting should be to provide deep, well resourced, and factually accurate context. The America piece should be a central focus of this context. In particular, audiences want to know how our policy is made, how the policy process reflects our world view, and the different opinions comprised within it.

If U.S. broadcasting has any single reason to exist, it should be to seize the strategic narrative about ourselves. An expert in the Middle East told me recently—and I quote him—“tell our story. We are not going to stop people from hating America if they choose to hate it, but let them hate what exists, not some figment of their imagination.”

The Voice of America charter makes the America story the Voice of America's responsibility. This is not to say that the Voice of America speaks for the United States Government. Indeed, it does not speak directly for the government, but it should have a point of view that reflects our values. And this point of view is, in my view, its essential essence.

A word about the Broadcasting Board of Governors where I served. In my view it was poorly conceived in the beginning, and not surprisingly it has performed poorly. Frequent and ongoing evaluations are unremittingly negative and critical. In the longer remarks that I submitted for the record, I cite a lot of these. But the criticisms invariably fall into three categories: dysfunction, lack of oversight, and absence of strategy. And this should not surprise us because the BBG is charged with reconciling two incompatible governance structures, one Federal and one private.

I was reflecting on CEO Lansing's remarks that trying to work with two boards would be like having a baseball team with two coaches. In fact, he has got it exactly backwards. That would be right if U.S. international broadcasting were a single organization. The problem is it is not a single organization, so you have precisely the opposite problem. You have two organizations with one coach trying to coach two different organizations that sit in different leagues entirely.

We currently await a new report of possible financial and oversight malfeasance at RFE/RL in Prague occurring from at least

2013 to present, which has gained the attention of the OIG, the FBI, and possibly other Federal authorities.

The BBG wildly duplicates capabilities across the five networks at great expense to the taxpayers and to little effect. By my count, of the 61 language services hosted by the five BBG networks, of the 61, 22 are duplicated. That is more than one-third. In practical terms, this means that U.S. international broadcasting has two separate broadcast services for Albanian, Azerbaijani, Dari, Pashto, Armenian, Bosnian, Georgian, Persian, Macedonian, Russian, Serbian, Ukrainian, Uzbek, Burmese, Cantonese, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Mandarin, Tibetan, Vietnamese, and Spanish—two of each. Duplicating services and operational support systems costs lots of money and it severely limits the ability of U.S. international broadcasting to fund new languages where it would benefit our pursuit of foreign policy.

And there is no coordination amongst the duplicates. No one—and I mean literally no one—really knows what these services are duplicating, where they contradict one another or U.S. policy, and where their efforts might be made to converge to create something larger than the sum of their parts.

The BBG board has also failed to deal with chronic leadership issues. The CEO proposition came on the board that I served on, and we put it out first in late 2010 or early 2011. But it took a full 5 years for the board to appoint a true CEO, and he left in 42 days. The new CEO has been appointed, but it is unclear, as has been commented on here frequently, that he has the support necessary to make the tough decisions.

The leadership deficit affects every level of international broadcasting. Kevin Klose sitting here on my left was the last full-fledged president of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. He left 19 months ago on the 1st of March 2014, leaving that vital network now in probably the most challenging environment since the end of the cold war under the control of—and I quote—“two acting interim comanagers, one located in Washington, who has since departed.” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty still has no permanent president even as its broadcast milieu churns. The Voice of America has had no director for nearly 8 months.

The BBG is notoriously allergic to strategy, which is another way of saying that it is mostly unhinged from the process and practice of U.S. foreign policy for which it was intended. We can talk in great detail about that later if you would like.

But I would like to address the discussion on Ukraine particularly. It posed a very difficult test for the BBG. Its response to Ukraine was neither robust nor nimble nor quick despite an influx of new taxpayer funds for that purpose. Nearly a year and a half after Russia invaded Crimea, touching off today's crisis, the BBG, as you have heard, was able to produce a single half-hour news program for placement on local networks around central Europe. I understand that that is increasing and the quality is generally good, which is the good message. But this was clearly a feeble response.

Finally, a few words on the proposed reform legislation, H.R. 2323 from the House side. I am a strong proponent of this legislation for four reasons.

First, because it fixes the Voice of America as America's voice. The America piece, so vital to our strategic narrative and for making our values, visions, and policies understood around the globe, will no longer be ignored or discounted.

Second, the surrogate networks, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, the Middle East Broadcast Networks will benefit hugely from being consolidated into a single management structure with its own private and dedicated board, which means liberated from the current BBG's often dysfunctional and incompatible structure. This independence is essential for the surrogates to meet the new challenges squarely and expertly and at low cost with high impact.

Third, creating what amounts to two companies from five should engender millions in savings and asset sharing while encouraging more mission-centric strategic focus.

And finally, both of the proposed new oversight structures will be more specialized and defined, closer to the audiences they seek to influence, and management will be more accountable to them. Board members possessing expert knowledge of our broadcast regions, especially with respect to the vital consolidated grantee network, should promote a much closer connection between U.S. international broadcasting and our foreign policy objectives.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and the committee, for your attention.  
[The prepared statement of Mr. Wimbush follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF S. ENDERS WIMBUSH

Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin and members of this committee, I am honored to have this opportunity to speak candidly to you about the challenges to and opportunities for U.S. international broadcasting, issues with which I have been intimately involved for my entire professional life. My name is Enders Wimbush, and I have been associated with U.S. international broadcasting for more than 40 years. As a graduate student, I consumed the research products of U.S. international broadcasting's different networks. In the 1980s, I had the privilege of advising then Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty president James Buckley on strategies for broadcasting to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In 1987, I became Director of Radio Liberty, and I held that post during tumultuous years featuring the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the U.S.S.R. In 2010, I was nominated to the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), where I served for 2 years. I believe that I am the only BBG governor ever to have actually directed the operations of a U.S. international broadcasting network.

I recount this brief biography to demonstrate that my perspective on the issues before you is long, detailed, and steeped in both U.S. international broadcasting's operational details, in its history of successes and failures, and in strategies for connecting U.S. international broadcasting to the objectives of American foreign policy. In my short remarks today, I wish to focus on three key issues. First, I will address the new media environment and the challenges to U.S. international broadcasting today. Second, I will discuss as briefly as possible the reasons the BBG cannot meet these challenges adequately, although this subject warrants a very long discussion. And third, I will address the proposed H.R. 2323 legislation before you, attempting to link its provisions to these other issues.

First, today's media environment.

Two facts are critical for understanding the shape and dynamics of this environment, while revealing the challenge to U.S. international broadcasting in finding a niche within it. The first fact should be self-evident. In contrast to the period of the cold war in which our adversaries for the most part successfully monopolized sources of information available to their populations, no such monopolization is possible today, except in a very few places. Very few countries such as North Korea exist in which governments control and approve all the information. To the contrary, a casual drive across Central Asia, Russia, the Middle East, Africa, and most of Asia reveals a sustained explosion of information sources available to these populations. Apartment balconies in cities routinely boast one satellite dish and often as many

as three. Rural communities, likewise, are similarly empowered most places, and I have even seen satellite dishes on shepherds' huts in parts of the Middle East and in the Caucasus. It is no exaggeration to suggest that these people routinely receive several hundred channels of something.

The second fact is that our adversaries in have raised the quality of their media game significantly. For the most part, gone are the big lies; in are nuanced explanations for why these actors have behaved as they have. Sometimes these actors attempt the big lie, but these usually fail precisely because so many other sources of information are available to contradict them. Instead, they try to control the information that matters to them; that is, less control over the visible facts, and more over the context. They seek to explain, to obfuscate, through filters of their own interests why these facts are important, what they mean in the context their own interests, how they contribute to historical justifications for particular actions, and why they are consistent with their identities, what they seek to achieve, and their visions of the future. Networks like Russia Today (RT), China's CCTV, and the Middle East's Al Jazeera have large followings, including increasingly in the United States where all broadcast. Their power is not that they can claim different sets of facts, but in their interpretation of facts in evidence. In a word, context. And their strategies for adjusting the context to resonate with different audiences shows growing sophistication. The New York Times claims to purvey "all the news that's fit to print," and Fox News bills itself as "fair and balanced." RT, CCTV, and Al Jazeera, among others, make similar claims for themselves, and many people believe them.

If most of the world is awash in information, and the competition is less over facts than over context, then the appropriate niche in this media landscape for U.S. international broadcasting should be to provide deep, well resourced, and factually accurate context. The "America" piece should be central to this context. Foreign audiences crave to know how Americans think about things, and the spectrum of different opinions that inform our worldview. In particular, they want to know how our policy is made, and how the policy process reflects our worldview and the different opinions comprised within it. And they seek to understand the impact of our values on our policies and our visions. They want to know who we are, what we believe, and how we are likely to behave, even when they dislike us.

If U.S. international broadcasting has only one reason to exist it should be to seize the strategic narrative about ourselves: to convey an unvarnished version of who Americans are, what we believe and why, and what we hope to accomplish with our policies. This task properly falls to the Voice of America. As an expert on the Middle East told me recently: "Tell our story! . . . We are not going to stop people from hating America if they choose to hate it, but let them hate what exists, not some figment of their imagination." If you wish to know about America, U.S. international broadcasting should be your first stop. This is fundamental, because our adversaries' propaganda centers on distorting America's story in ways that serve their interests.

The Voice of America Charter is explicit on this point. The network's product must be "a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news . . . objective, accurate, and comprehensive." But it must also "represent America" by presenting "a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions," while articulating its policies "clearly and effectively," as well as "responsible discussions and opinions on these policies." This is not to say that the VOA speaks for the U.S. Government. Indeed, it does not. But it should have a point of view that reflects our values. And this point of view is, or should be, its vital essence.

Some thoughts on the Broadcasting Board of Governors. In my view, the BBG was poorly conceived in the beginning, and, not surprisingly, it has performed poorly. One need not take my word for it; the frequent and on-going evaluations, Office of Inspector General (OIG) reports, independent audits, and informed analyses are unremittingly negative and critical. Criticisms fall into several categories:

- **Dysfunction.** This is well known and well documented in a host of reports from the OIG. A comprehensive report of January 2013, for example, highlights problems in individual board member conduct, nepotism, backsliding on strategy, ethics, and travel expenses, among other things. (<https://oig.state.gov/system/files/203193.pdf>)

Lack of oversight. A June 2015 report from the OIG cites Radio Free Asia for dodgy expenditures, possible conflicts of interest and other matters. (<https://oig.state.gov/system/files/aud-fm-ib-15-24.pdf>) The BBG is criticized for lacking "a well-defined structure to monitor grantee activities." A November 2014 independent audit identifies BBG's weak "control environment" that has led to its inability to effectively monitor its grantees. (<https://oig.state.gov/system/files/aud-fm-ib-15-10.pdf>)



- Lack of strategy. A July 2015 OIG inspection of VOA and RFE/RL operations in Kabul noted that “specific strategies for harmonizing the operations in Afghanistan have lingered for 10 years without specific implementation actions.” (<https://oig.state.gov/system/files/isp-ib-15-32.pdf>) A September 2013 inspection of BBG operations in Moscow called for “a comprehensive strategy for U.S. international broadcasting to Russia that includes all Broadcasting Board of Governors entities operating in or broadcasting to Russia.” (<https://oig.state.gov/system/files/217908.pdf>)

A current ongoing investigation of possible financial and oversight malfeasance at RFE/RL in Prague, occurring from at least 2013 to the present, which has gained the attention of the OIG, the FBI, and possibly other federal authorities, is probably a low-point in BBG oversight, given that the BBG board knew of the problem at least a year before it acted, and then only weakly. This is a pretty miserable record for such a small agency, which also consistently receives one of the worst rankings in surveys of federal employees’ satisfaction with their place of work.

The BBG suffers from serious structural deficiencies, many inherited from earlier times but still unaddressed, an unremarkable observation that the BBG apparently recognized in its own “Strategic Plan,” recently posted on its Web site, almost certainly in response to the proposed legislation. The BBG wildly duplicates capabilities across the five networks at great expense to the taxpayer and to little effect. By my count, of the 61 language services hosted by the five BBG networks 22 are duplicated—that is, more than one-third. In practical terms, this means that U.S. international broadcasting has two separate broadcast services in Albanian, Azerbaijani, Dari, Pashto, Armenian, Bosnian, Georgian, Persian, Macedonian, Russian, Serbian, Ukrainian, Uzbek, Burmese, Cantonese, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Mandarin, Tibetan, Vietnamese, and Spanish.

So many duplicate services spread across different networks creates a number of problems. Duplicating services and operational support systems costs lots of money, and it also has severe negative implications for mission effectiveness and oversight. Taxpayers deserve better stewardship of their money.

Next, the strategic problem. Funding duplication severely limits the ability of U.S. international broadcasting to fund new languages when it would benefit our foreign policy, or to double down on critical languages that might help us shape a rapidly changing environment. Spreading these surrogate broadcasters out across multiple network structures dilutes both their impact and any effort to develop a strategic critical mass.

Third, the operational problem. No one—and I mean literally no one—really knows how these services are duplicating, where they contradict one another (or U.S. policy), and where their efforts might be made to converge to create something larger than the sum of their parts. Efforts over many years—indeed, over several decades—to force a modicum of common purpose between the duplicates at VOA, RFE/RL, and Radio Free Asia have been described by different BBGs as “complementary,” “cooperation,” “harmonization,” or—the most innovative effort to justify this waste as something useful—“parallax.” “Parallax” is described by one of my colleagues as choosing to own two leaking barns over one solid structure.

The BBG board has also failed to deal with chronic leadership issues. When the board I served on took office in 2010, we almost immediately voted to install a CEO to deal with issues that cross network boundaries. It took 5 full years for the board to appoint a true CEO, and he left after 42 days. A new CEO has now been appointed—and I wish him well—but it is unclear if he has the authority or support to make the tough decisions required to force asset sharing across networks, end duplication, replace poor leaders and hire new ones, create the processes to allow programming to respond rapidly to changing conditions in the broadcast environment, or harness the most effective technologies to the task.

The leadership issue goes top to bottom in U.S. international broadcasting. Kevin Klose, sitting next to me, was the last full-fledged president of RFE/RL. He left 19 months ago, on March 1, 2014, leaving that vital network—now in probably the most challenging environment since the end of the cold war—under the control of two “acting interim comanagers”—one located in Washington, who has since departed. RFE/RL still has no permanent president, even as its broadcast milieu churns. The VOA has had no director for nearly 8 months. The management of the BBG itself, lacking a CEO or any other credible arrangement, was handed to the joint leadership of three executives, two of whom could be described as junior. The leadership problem is epidemic.

Most concerning, the BBG is allergic to strategy, which is another way of saying that it is mostly unhinged from the processes and practice of U.S. foreign policy for which it was intended. This is the case because BBG’s governance is weak. The board on which I served advanced a strong and comprehensive reform plan within

weeks of taking office, most of whose key elements are now included in H.R. 2323. Our plan was voted into effect unanimously by that board. Then it was almost immediately sabotaged by two members of the board who adopted opposing agendas. In the end, virtually none of it was implemented. The debate over most of its elements continues with the current board, which is no closer than we were to bringing real change to U.S. international broadcasting.

Ukraine posed a particularly tough test for the BBG. The BBG's response to Ukraine has been neither robust nor quick, despite an influx of new taxpayer funds for the purpose. Nearly a year and a half after Russia invaded the Crimea thereby touching off today's crisis in Ukraine, the BBG was able to produce a single half-hour of new daily programming for placement on local networks in Central Europe, and then only by mostly working around the existing capabilities in the two Russian broadcast services in RFE/RL and the VOA and with an infusion of an additional million dollars from the State Department. Is the BBG telling us this is the best we can do? Clearly it is a feeble response. I am told that the quality of the product is quite good, though it often airs late at night on local networks, and that new programs are now being added. But the BBG's response to Ukraine leaves much to be desired.

Strategy at the BBG tends to be driven by the budget. For example, every year I spent on the board I had to defend the tiny expenditure for Tatar-Bashkir broadcasts. The cost of Tatar-Bashkir broadcasts is not much more than a rounding error in the overall BBG budget, but this is exactly what makes it vulnerable to cutting when budgets get tight and economies are necessary. The Tatar-Bashkir regions of Russia sit at the epicenter of its historic Islamic populations, which are in danger of radicalization like other parts of the Islamic world. When Russia's spiral of instability accelerates, as it will, America will eventually wish to communicate to Tatars and Bashkirs as a strategic imperative. The same fate nearly claimed the North Caucasus service, which broadcasts to an area of growing radicalization, for the same reason. Meanwhile, the VOA's impressive English language broadcasts have repeatedly faced severe cuts or elimination, despite being a principal language of young elites around the globe. The budget should not drive these important strategic decisions.

It is worrisome that any discussion of strategy nearly always defaults to questions of technology, the operative question being: Which technologies allow us to deliver our broadcasts effectively to our audiences? This is easy, because one can bring in experts from Silicon Valley and elsewhere to discuss new social media and digital communications more generally without really having to get into the weeds about what it is strategically we seek to accomplish or local limitations to particular technologies. Technology should be part of strategy, but it is not strategy by itself. Largely absent are serious discussions by experts about content, audience, and impact: What should we be broadcasting, to whom, and to what end? What audiences do we seek to influence? How should we measure impact? Do numbers matter? And how does all of this contribute to advancing our foreign policy objectives? These are difficult issues for any BBG, whose members often lack strong foreign policy experience and dynamics in the broadcast environment. Almost none have had much experience with international broadcasting of this kind.

Adding a new CEO to this mix—and investing him or her with authority to determine “strategy”—will not begin to answer this problem. Strategy is a key responsibility of the board, not the CEO. Yet we have already been alerted that the BBG's new CEO will address a meeting of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy on December 2 to discuss “The BBG's New Strategic Direction.” What is this new strategy and how was it arrived at? This seems somewhat premature for someone holding this post for a only few weeks.

Finally, a few words on the proposed H.R. 2323. Former BBG Governor Dennis Mulhaupt and I, in July of last year, addressed the state of U.S. international broadcasting and the need to reform it radically. Little has changed since then in either its condition or the urgency to reform it. (<http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/fixing-us-international-broadcasting-last-796034.html?page=2>)

I am a strong proponent of this legislation. It needs a few adjustments, in my view, that will make it even stronger and more effective. In my discussions with the SFRC staff, I know they are aware of most of my concerns and those of my colleagues who also support reform. But I urge the committee to move rapidly on this legislation, and to be bold. The reform that created the BBG and the current structure failed early and, I would argue, quite spectacularly. This should not be repeated.

The proposed legislation accomplishes a number of essential things, as:

First, it “reaffirms the important safeguards enshrined in the VOA charter,” but insists that the VOA serve as America's voice. The “America piece,” so vital to our

strategic narrative and for making our values, visions, and policies understood around the globe, will no longer be discounted or ignored.

Second, the surrogate networks—Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, the Middle East Broadcast Networks, and, one hopes, the Office of Cuban Broadcasting—will enjoy priority and urgency in implementing a historic mission that requires comprehensive strategy to support America’s interests in a vastly more complex political environment. They will benefit specifically from being liberated from the BBG structure and the provision of their own private and dedicated board. This independence is essential for the surrogates to meet new challenges squarely and expertly.

Third, creating what amounts to two companies from five should engender significant savings and asset sharing, while encouraging more mission-centric strategic focus.

Fourth, the proposed oversight structures will be more specialized and defined, closer to the audiences they seek to influence, and management will be more accountable to them. Board members with expert knowledge of our broadcast regions—especially with respect to the proposed Consolidated Grantees—should promote a much closer connection between U.S. international broadcasting and our foreign policy objectives.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for the fulsome testimony. If we could hold it to about 5 on the opening, I have got a hard stop at 4:29, and I know each of us want to ask questions. So thank you so much for your testimony. Yes, sir.

**STATEMENT OF KEVIN KLOSE, PROFESSOR, PHILIP MERRILL  
COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND,  
COLLEGE PARK, MD**

Mr. KLOSE. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for convening this important discussion. Senator Cardin and other members of the committee, I would like to just, first of all, thank you so much for doing this and for bringing us together. I want to say that very few issues that have generally come before the Congress have done so at such a serious time for international broadcasting, and your attention and your concern is very justified.

I would like to say, for reasons I will cite today, that H.R. 2323 is an important step in the right direction for not only consolidating U.S. international broadcasting but actually streamlining it. I support the bill’s major provisions, and I would have only a few minor corrections and changes that I would propose at another time.

H.R. 2323’s core concept of two boards independent of each other actually reflects a decades-long evolution towards assuring the highest professional standards and principles of journalism for U.S. international media by describing and maintaining arm’s length structural firewalls between journalists and foreign policymakers.

Numerous statements about these standards and the defense of them are in the record ever since the very first Voice of America broadcast in 1942, which declared “The news may be good or bad. We shall tell you the truth.”

In the decades since then, the Congress and White House administrations have repeatedly altered the relationships of the news networks and the foreign policymaking agencies. In 1994, they created the current part-time Federal Broadcasting Board of Governors and double-hatted it as the oversight board for the original private grantee RFE/RL and then two more grantees were added in the intervening years, which had to do with creating Radio Free Asia, and the Middle East Broadcast Network.

The two-decade legislation from 1994, now two decades old, contains the so-called firewall provisions still in effect which provides that, “the Secretary of State and the board in carrying out their functions, shall respect the professional independence and integrity of the International Broadcasting Bureau, its broadcasting services, and the grantees of the Board.”

Surely this important statement does belong in H.R. 2323. It adds to the important reform contained in the legislation: creation of a separate board of directors for the newly created consolidated grantee, FNN, the Freedom News Network. The Secretary of State alone under this legislation would be also a member of both the new board and the continuing BBG. All other members of the BBG and the Freedom Network board would not be double-hatted or, quote, “overlapped.”

Creation of this new FNN board would achieve effective separation of foreign policymakers and the private, nonprofit grantees, as I said earlier, the three of them, RFE/RL, Radio Free Asia, and Middle East Broadcasting Network. I support this change.

Such a board is in accordance with a finding contained in a 2013 State Department Inspector General report that observed, “the system of having BBG Governors serve concurrently on the corporate boards of the grantees creates a potential for—and in some cases, actual—conflicts of interest as perceived by many and gives rise to widespread perceptions of favoritism in Board decisions.” I have nothing to support that finding. I just want to point it out to you.

I would refer to the highly successful National Endowment for Democracy as a model for a separate nonprofit board. This would actually streamline and make the relationships between the Federal agencies and the Federal oversight agency board and the grantees much smoother, much more specific, and much more defined.

H.R. 2323 would establish a new position of CEO to run the new Freedom News Network consolidating the private, nonprofit independent grantees. I would support the move to vest operational authority for the new FNN in a single agency head such as a CEO or a director. The purpose here is to avoid the double-hatting of the Federal CEO also acting as the CEO for the newly created private grantee. I think—I really think—that it would seem to provide challenges in the current law, and H.R. 2323 states that nothing in the law shall be construed to make the grantee a Federal agency or instrumentality. That is nice to have. I think it would be a very serious issue of a conflict of interest arising again if we wind up in another double-hatted sequence.

The courts could construe this situation as being in conflict with unforeseeable consequences. A single CEO would undermine the basic grantor-grantee relationship which, as I am sure many of us know, under the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act and its regulations, do not permit, “substantial involvement, unquote, by the grantor in the activities of the grantee.”

I was in my previous time as President of Radio Free Europe disinvited from a number of meetings because of the grantor-grantee prohibitions. And I think this would be much more settled if we could have a separate board that was independent for the inde-

pendent grantees. I support this goal to clarify the distinct missions of the grantees and the Voice of America.

I want to say finally U.S. international media broadly must be consistent with the foreign policy objectives of the United States. We know that. We report and distribute news not to make a profit but ultimately to further free speech, human rights, democracy, freedom, mutual understanding, and peace where there is little or none. There is tremendous cooperation between VOA and RFE/RL. I can cite some of those if there are further remarks.

I want to say that what we do and what has been done by U.S. international broadcasting through objective reporting on key issues is all in accord with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is cited both in current law and in H.R. 2323.

I support the goals envisioned by this effective reforming legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important hearing today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Klose follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF KEVIN KLOSE

Thank you for inviting me to participate in this important event today.

Given the turmoil in the world, and the potential for U.S. International broadcasting, fewer subjects are more important or urgent than what the committee is addressing today. I thank you for doing so.

As you know, I come to the subject having had experience as a journalist for 25 years with The Washington Post, including 4 years as Moscow Bureau Chief; then as President/CEO of RFE/RL (twice), 5 years; Director of the U.S. International Broadcasting Bureau of the BBG, 2 years; and as President /CEO of National Public Radio (NPR), 8 years. I now teach journalism at the University of Maryland. So—I have seen the issues addressed today from a variety of perspectives. I have seen what works, and what does not work.

In my first service as RFE/RL CEO in the mid-1990s, I worked closely with then VOA-Director Geoffrey Cowan to create a coordinated broadcast schedule that brought significant economies to U.S. international broadcasting, without diluting in any way the important complementary nature of the two networks. Similar cooperation continues today between these important, separate services. Most agree that the administration of U.S. international broadcasting needs to be fixed. There is less agreement on how to do so.

I believe for reasons I will cite today that H.R. 2323 is an important step in the right direction. I support the bill's major provisions and would have only a few minor corrections and changes. I would be happy to share these with the committee at another time.

H.R. 2323's core concept of two boards independent of each other reflects a decades-long evolution toward assuring the highest professional standards and principles of journalism for U.S. international media—by describing and maintaining an arm's length structural "firewall" between journalists and foreign policymakers.

Numerous statements about these standards—and defense of them—are in the record ever since the very first Voice of America broadcast in 1942 declared, "The news may be good or bad. We shall tell you the truth."

In the decades since, the Congress and White House administrations repeatedly altered the relationships of the news networks and foreign policymaking agencies, in 1994 creating the current parttime federal Broadcasting Board of Governors, and double-hatting it as the oversight board for the original private grantee RFE/RL as well as a brand new independent grantee, Radio Free Asia (RFA). This legislation contains the so-called "firewall provision" still in effect, which provides that "The Secretary of State and the Board, in carrying out their functions, shall respect the professional independence and integrity of the International Broadcasting Bureau, its broadcasting services, and the grantees of the Board."

Surely this important statement belongs in H.R. 2323. I reckon it should be included. It adds to the important reform contained in H.R. 2323: creation of a separate board of directors for the newly created consolidated grantee, Freedom News

Network (FNN). The Secretary of State alone would be a member of both this new board and the continuing BBG. All other members of the BBG and the FNN board would NOT be double-hatted, or “overlapped.”

Creation of this new FNN board would virtually guarantee effective separation of foreign policymakers and the private, nonprofit grantee networks—RFE/RL, RFA, and Middle East Broadcasting Network (MBN). I support such a change.

Adding such a board is in accordance with a finding contained in a 2013 State Department IG report that “The system of having BBG Governors serve concurrently on the corporate board[s] of the grantees creates the potential for—and in some cases, actual—conflict of interest, as perceived by many and gives rise to widespread perception of favoritism in Board decisions.” I would add that such a separation also strengthens the journalistic independence and integrity of the grantees.

I would refer to the highly successful National Endowment for Democracy as a model for a separate nonprofit board.

H.R. 2323 also would establish a new position of CEO to run the new Freedom News Network consolidating the private, nonprofit independent grantees. I would support the move to vest operational authority for the new agency in a single agency head such as a CEO or director.

Rather than create two separate CEO positions, some commentators may advocate “double-hatting” the federal agency CEO as also the CEO for the newly created private grantee organization. I oppose such an arrangement, as it would seem to challenge provisions in current law and in H.R. 2323 stating that nothing in the law shall be construed to make the grantees a federal agency or instrumentality. A federal employee as the single CEO of all USIM would undermine the important separations intended in H.R. 2323. It would present serious conflict of interest issues such as noted for the board in the 2013 IG report. H.R. 2323 states that nothing in the law shall be construed to make the grantees a federal agency or instrumentality.

But the courts could construe otherwise, with unforeseeable consequences. A single CEO would undermine the basic grantor-grantee relationship which under the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act and its regulations do not permit “substantial involvement” by the grantor in the activities of the grantee.

Placement of a federal CEO over the grantee FNN would undermine the long-standing arm’s length relationship with the Federal Government so necessary for preservation of grantees’ journalistic independence and credibility.

I support the goal of H.R. 2323 to clarify the distinct missions of the grantees and the VOA. Grantees focus on reporting local and regional news for their countries’ Internet, wifi, social media, and radio publics—substitutes or “surrogates” for often malign, local media who are “DIS-INFORMATION specialists.” Unlike the VOA, the grantees do not broadcast editorials which represent the views of the United States Government, or produce much news about the United States.

Preserving the BBG-grantee arm’s length relationship protects grantees and the Department of State from complaints by foreign governments about grantee broadcasts.

After pondering yesterday’s hearing, and discussing it yesterday with two informed and trusted former colleagues who witnessed it, I have concluded that many of the issues relate to the two very different missions of the VOA and the grantees. I was reminded that Senator Cardin had said something to the effect that all the broadcasters have the same mission.

As an aside, I should briefly note first that placing the VOA and grantees together in one federal or private organization is not practical or feasible at least at this time. Attempts to privatize the VOA particularly in an election year would be a non-starter. The unions for federal employees would make every effort to oppose such a move. Attempts to federalize the grantees such as were made in the 1990s would meet with great opposition by the grantees for the reasons discussed below.

The VOA as a federal news agency fulfills its important role in international media by focusing almost exclusively on reporting America’s remarkable story to the world, through comprehensive American news, American events, culture, politics, and lifestyles. H.R. 2323 fully embraces that powerful mission, structure, and operational reality of the Voice of America—strengthened years ago by the Act of Congress that brought to life the carefully worded Charter that shields VOA from pressures aimed at influencing its newsrooms.

Radically different from the VOA and its American-news mission are the trio of independent, private journalism organizations—Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, and Middle East Broadcast Network—that specialize in and excel at the extremely difficult mission of providing fact-based, verifiable LOCAL news to peoples across Eurasia whose repressive governments fear and despise accurate factual reporting to their subjugated citizenry of the leaderships predatory, secretive,

illegal activities of governing authorities. The news reporters, editors, and producers of the FNN well know and effectively probe and reveal to their LOCAL audiences and social media followers the tightly-held Orwellian power structures of Soviet-style successor regimes.

This mission is not that of the Voice of America. This mission is properly the work of the very same independent, nonprofit, journalism corporations that the U.S. Congress has had the sturdy wisdom to create in four different epochs across the decades of the cold war, and the tumultuous years since the U.S.S.R.'s collapse.

H.R. 2323 correctly empowers a rational and intelligent merger of the three "freedom" networks under a new private, corporate board with a majority of members to be drawn from private journalism. This reorganization and new, independent board will save taxpayer money and inspire powerful new forms of multiplatform truth-telling about repressive leaderships.

VOA and the freedom networks powerfully support U.S. national interests though the promotion by professional journalism of the right of freedom of opinion and information, human rights, democracy, freedom, mutual understanding, and peace where there is little or none. They all do so in accordance with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the broad foreign policy objectives of the United States. Yet, the goals and means by which they achieve these broad objectives are strikingly different. These significant differences play a critical role in how they are structured. Furthermore, the differences in mission between the VOA and the grantees have a direct bearing on the discussion of overlapping boards and CEO's.

The critical relationship between mission and structure has been noted by both congressional and executive branch reviews of possible reform of U.S. International broadcasting. In 1991 the Congressional Research Service issued a report entitled "U.S. International Broadcasting: An Assessment For Reform." It stated that "The missions of VOA and RFE/RL also have a determining role in the two radio's organizational structure and consequences for attempting to reorganize them into a single organization."

The report describes the different missions in detail, and states the following: "In contrast [to the VOA], RFE/RL does not require tight policy links to the Executive—in view of many officials, the radios require exactly the opposite to perform their mission. As a result, RFE/RL is constituted as a separate institution, and as such, has been spared the perennial conflicts over its administrative independence from a larger bureaucracy."

Also in 1991, the Report of the President's Task Force on U.S. Government International Broadcasting stated: "Though many of us came to this inquiry with the notion that U.S. International broadcasting should be cast as a single entity, we found the functions of RFE/RL and the VOA were so disparate that whatever path we chose to achieve consolidation had a pronounced artificiality. We were not creating efficiencies."

In 1993, and again in 1997, efforts to sweep RFE/RL under the executive branch were successfully and soundly defeated in Congress due primarily to the efforts of Joseph Biden who was then in the U.S. Senate. Senator Biden wrote the following in a Senate report in 1993: "The simple truth is this: RFE/RL, Inc. have enjoyed credibility for four decades precisely because their analysts and broadcasters have not been employees of the U.S. Government. If the radios now become direct agencies of the U.S. Government, they will maintain neither the appearance nor the reality of journalistic independence."

Does the appearance of journalistic independence really matter? The 1991 President's Task Force on U.S. Government International Broadcasting stated that "It appears to us that BBC enjoys comparative credibility in part because it is not under direct government control—or is not perceived to be."

A fundamental premise underlying H.R. 2323, as well as over 70 years of history, reveal that the VOA and the grantees have very different specific missions that call for separate structures, rules, and ways of operating. Any attempt to meld the two organizations structurally would be seriously detrimental to the successful accomplishment of both of those missions. Both missions are important, and they complement each other.

Since its inception the VOA was charged by law with telling America's story to the world. That fundamental mission has not changed for over 70 years. In 1942 it was part of USIA's mandate under the Smith-Mundt Act to provide for "... The preparation, and dissemination abroad, of information about the United States, its people, and its policies." That broad mandate was not changed by either the VOA Charter or the U.S. International Broadcasting Act of 1994. In 1998, Congress made explicit in law the requirement that VOA include editorials which present the views

of the United States Government, and it also required broadcast by VOA of certain information about the states of the U.S.

The original charter of the VOA drafted during the Eisenhower administration referred to the VOA as “. . . an official radio.” In 1963, the Director of USIA, Edward R. Murrow, wrote a letter containing the following: “The Voice of America . . . represents the U.S. Government in explaining our foreign policies and bringing the news of the United States to these captive countries. Radio Free Europe confines its broadcasts to the captive nations behind the Iron Curtain, speaks to them in their own terms, and produces news of their own countries and their neighbors—news which is denied to them or distorted by the ruling Communist regimes. The combination of Voice and America and Radio Free Europe is much more effective, in the cause of freedom, than either could be individually.”

This succinct declaration by Ed Murrow is as accurate today as when he first wrote it. Indeed, long-established structures of each organization reflect and support each mission. Understandably, given the VOA’s mission, it has been part of a U.S. Government agency. Its employees are federal employees. It has strong links to the Department of State. Of course, being a federal organization, it is governed by governmental regulations relating to personnel, contracting, and others matters. The VOA is perceived by foreign audiences to be what it is—the U.S. Government’s voice abroad which broadcasts news and information, and which “represents America” and “will present the policies of the United States . . .” (VOA Charter)

In stark contrast, the “freedom” grantees do not focus on news or information about the United States, nor do they have official U.S. Government editorials. Instead, they stress local and regional news in the native languages of the countries to which they broadcast. They are in essence substitutes or “surrogates” for private local stations. Appropriately, they are 501(c)(3) private corporations, and they often have local names for their stations. Their employees do not work for the Federal Government. Many of them work abroad. The credibility of these private stations depends on the reality and perception that they are not mouthpieces for the U.S. Government. Furthermore, the grantees often are far more nimble administratively and operationally than the VOA because they are not bound by governmental regulations.

Often the broadcasts of the grantees about local events are more threatening to local dictators than those of the VOA. Thus, when local governments complain to U.S. ambassadors about such broadcasts, ambassadors and State Department can credibly respond that they have no control over the content of the grantees which are private organizations. This arms-length distance provides “plausible deniability” to the State Department.

Testimony was given on November 17, 2015, by BBG representatives that two boards and two CEOs for the VOA and the grantees is tantamount having two coaches for the same football team. This analogy is facile—but dead wrong. As noted by both congressional and executive branch analyses, as well as many others, the VOA and grantees are fundamentally different as to purpose, rules, strategy, preparation, and experience. While they complement each other, they are refreshingly different kinds of teams. A better question is why hire a volleyball coach to coach both the volleyball team and the football team? It does not make sense.

A myriad of problematic issues arise by double-hatting the BBG and grantee boards and CEO’s. Here is a brief summary:

1. Double hatting both the BBG board and the CEO presents clear conflicts of interest. The IG report of January 2013 about the BBG states that “The system of having BBG Governors serve concurrently on the corporate board[s] of the grantees creates a potential for—and, in some cases, actual—conflict of interest, as perceived by many and gives rise to a widespread perception of favoritism in Board decisions.”

2. Double hatting undermines the long-standing legal requirement that nothing in the 1994 broadcasting act “. . . may be construed to make [the grantees] a Federal agency or instrumentality.” Daily governance of the grantees by a federal official would basically render the grantees in the eyes of the law agents for the U.S. Government.

3. Double hatting would undermine the arms-length relationship between the USG and the grantees necessary for the credibility and success of the private grantees. See the discussion above.

4. Double hatting likely would expose both the USG and the grantees to greater legal liabilities. For example, disgruntled employees of grantees could try to avail themselves of the elaborate and time-consuming personnel and contracts appeal procedures of the USG arguing that the grantees are in effect under the “control” of the USG. On the other hand, the BBG likely would also be sued by the same persons under the same theory.



5. Double hatting also would contradict the requirement of the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act and implementing regulations precluding “substantial involvement” by federal grantors in the activities of a grantee.

6. Double hatting could result in application of governmental rules to the grantees, and therefore diminish their advantages as private corporations to be more economical, efficient, and flexible.

7. As already noted, double hatting could diminish the ability of the USG to engage in plausible deniability when foreign governments complain about grantee broadcasts.

8. Double hatting runs counter to the long unfortunate history of the oversight boards (BIB and BBG) to attempt to micromanage operations as well as interfere with broadcasts. See for example the finding in the January 2013 IG report that “Although legislation establishing the responsibilities of the Governors is clear regarding the boundary between supervision and day-to-day management, individual Governors have interpreted the law differently and determined their open fiduciary responsibilities, which has in turn impeded normal management functions.” See also my long history to you in a previous email on this subject.

9. Finally, the argument that double hatting would quicken reallocation of resources during times of crisis is bogus. The BBG board currently has authority “ . . . To allocate funds appropriated for international broadcasting activities among the various elements of the International Broadcasting Bureau and the grantees,” . . . subject to reprogramming notification requirements in law for the reallocation of funds.” Frankly, any significant delays in reallocation usually occur due to stringent congressional oversight during the reprogramming process.

The bottom line is that there has been a long and largely successful history of activity by the grantees. H.R. 2323 builds and expands on that history by creating a separate board for the grantees with relevant experience and expertise to oversee them based on the NED model. H.R. 2323 also is based on the concept of very different missions for the VOA and the grantees, both of which are important. Both important missions would be strengthened, not diluted. H.R. 2323 also ensures ample coordination and cooperation among the grantees, the newly created BBG agency, and the State Department. It wisely does not federalize or bureaucratize the grantees, or subject them to increased governmental operational control.

I support the goals envisioned by this effective reforming legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important hearing.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you both for being here and for your insights having previously served in capacities to understand.

Let me just seek some degree of common ground. The board seems to indicate—the board has indicated that the board itself is functioning in a better capacity than in times past. Would you all agree or disagree with that?

Mr. KLOSE. I would agree with that by my observations dating specifically from 2013 when I returned to Radio Free Europe and spent 14 months as interim president and CEO. Yes.

Mr. WIMBUSH. I am not totally in agreement with that, Senator. And I have to say the hair on the back of my neck goes up every time I hear the last board blamed for some of the problems that this board has encountered. The last board put a radical restructuring plan in place, which has now, much of it, gone into this proposed legislation. The last board proposed the CEO. The last board did lots and lots of good things. What this board has that was unknown in my board is comity among the various members. They like each other. They obviously work together very well. But the structural impediments to making that organization effective are just as bad for them as they were for us, and they are not going to be corrected by all the friendship, all of the putative cooperation that they have described today.

The CHAIRMAN. And I think they have said that. I mean, they said that obviously there are reforms that they support.

You do support the fact that a CEO is on a full-time basis running the entity. Is that correct?

Mr. WIMBUSH. We did. In my board, we realized that the place was so badly out of control that the inability to get economies of scale and to recognize asset sharing and saving across all these different networks was completely out of our hands, that we proposed putting a CEO in place. It took 5 years for one to get there. I mean, that is a good example of just how difficult it is.

The CHAIRMAN. Believe me, all of us have had a lot of concerns about BBG.

So on those issues, we have an agreement. We have agreement generally speaking. I know there are some important details that each of you talked about in your testimony.

The piece that I am trying to understand is this issue that you all have focused on so much in your testimony and that the previous panel disagreed with so much is the grantees themselves—

Mr. KLOSE. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. Having their own board. I am sorry because I am just not internally working at BBG, I am not sure I understand fully the relationships. But if you could expand on that for me I would appreciate it.

Mr. KLOSE. The history speaks for itself to a degree. The radios, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, were created in the late 1940s/early 1950s, and they were specifically created as 501(c)3's chartered in the State of Delaware as private, independent nonprofit corporations. The reason they did that was because they wanted to have, first of all, clarity about what they were doing, secondly, because they wanted to be able to have for ambassadors in countries which were now encountering the truthful surrogate broadcasting being provided by Radio Free Europe and then Radio Liberty—many of those leaders, many of those despots were very unhappy and were very unhappy and wanted to blame the U.S. Government directly make it that kind of a sequence. Ambassadors were allowed—were given the freedom to say we deny it. They have nothing to do with us. They do their journalism, their reporting on their own standards, and we are not responsible. It is not part of our foreign policy writ. They are independent from us. Do not come to us complaining. Go to Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and their headquarters is in the State of Delaware. That is where you will find their corporate place.

Mr. WIMBUSH. Mr. Chairman, from the beginning, these surrogates, the grantees, and the Voice of America, the Federal agency, were two very, very different animals. And they always advertised themselves as very different animals.

With the end of the cold war, it became easier for everybody to do everything in this broadcast environment. And so you began to get a kind of homogenization. Most of the non-English language services of the Voice of America do what they think is surrogate broadcasting. Radio Free Europe and Radio Free Asia and MBN do surrogate broadcasting.

Why do they all do surrogate broadcasting without getting any kinds of synergies or very few kinds of synergies or economies or asset sharing across these boundaries?

I would argue, as I had mentioned in my earlier remarks, that Chairman Shell is wrong on this point. His explanation tended to go in the direction of the surrogates being no longer as valuable as

they were because they are some kind of a historical residue. I would argue that the surrogates right now, because of the way the media environment has evolved, are more valuable than they have been at any time since 1992 or 1993.

Mr. KLOSE. Mr. Chairman, I might add also you can hear people describe the fact that there might be the surrogate service and a Voice of America service to one country or to one region and call that overlap or duplication. I have a different take on that entirely, and I take it from my experience at NPR where there was both national and local, which gave a tremendous depth in terms of its services to those communities. I view these two different services going to one place as parallax. I actually have two headlights that function in my car at night. I need two headlights. I think it is better than one headlight. And I think that the idea of caviling over how much or how little is being spent in these two different services which provide different services to those listenerships, those social media-ships, and the publics that are receptive of both these organizations' parallax presentations gives it depth and meaning that otherwise would not be there. I think it is very important to the authenticity of what the U.S. is doing especially in countries like—

The CHAIRMAN. Well, if I could just briefly because I am going to run out of time and I want to turn to the ranking member.

If you had then the structure that they laid out, are you saying that that would cease and desist those dual—I mean, if they have it the way they have laid it out where they have one board for both, what would happen relative to those two different types of messaging reaching people in these countries?

Mr. KLOSE. Well, in fact, in places like Russia and Ukraine, there is tremendous cooperation between the Voice of America, the Federal media agency, and Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty. And I think there is similar cooperation between Radio Free Asia and the Voice of America in the countries they go to. And I do not think that having two boards is going to make that more difficult. I think it is actually going to make it a lot easier. And I think that the cooperation which goes way back to the original—

The CHAIRMAN. That is not my question. Having one board as they have proposed—would it diminish the concept that you just laid out?

Mr. KLOSE. I think that having two boards underlines the fact that the grantees are independent, that they are not direct government entities, and I think that is important to the double credibility of both organizations. I really do. It enhances it. It streamlines it. It makes it more concrete and real. And I think that the radios, the grantees, the three of them now, have done very well and that they are able to demonstrate their independence in particular ways. They often are much more efficient. They are much quicker. They do not have a lot of the requirements that are required of Federal agencies, which I do not want to get into as a negative. It is just a different setup. They can move faster sometimes than you might imagine.

Mr. WIMBUSH. Mr. Chairman, I have a very different view I have to say, and Kevin, of course, knows this. I think the whole idea of parallax is a colossal waste of the taxpayers' money.

We should be getting, for the most part, the non-English language services that are duplicated by the Voice of America, Radio Free Asia, and Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty—we should be getting them into one organization. That is where they belong. That is where you can get shared assets. That is where you can move resources within an organization much, much faster than trying to move them around organizations.

And a true telling of what happened when the Ukraine crisis broke out and Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and the Voice of America found that they were going to be put on the block to cooperate—the true story of that really needs to be told because it was tough. It was hard. Every board, including the one I served on, insisted on more cooperation. We had cooperation. We had coordination. We had harmonization. We had parallax. And none of it worked.

Mr. KLOSE. I might say—

The CHAIRMAN. If I could—I apologize. I am going to have to move to Senator Cardin. I am way over my time. He will probably give you the courtesy—

Senator CARDIN. I am going to continue in this exact same line. Professor Klose, it is good to have you here.

Mr. KLOSE. Thank you, sir.

Senator CARDIN. I am proud of your work at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism in College Park. We are very much familiar with your work there and very proud of your public service. So it is a pleasure to have you before the committee.

I want to try to simplify this a little bit because I think the question the chairman is asking is very important. I am for reform, as I said in my opening statement. I think we really need to streamline the process and have a clear direction for the CEO.

But let us talk a moment about one board or two boards. It is all public money, if I understand. All of the journalists, whether they work for the government or work for the grantees, must have independence. That is a key factor of the Voice of America or our grantees. They all have a common mission, that is, to get information out that is important to advance U.S. interests. The grantees are more regional and local. The Voice of America is more centralized in its mission.

So let me just play the devil's advocate for one second. Why not go even further? Why not just have one agency here? Why not allow these funds to be fungible so that we can be quickly responsive to the needs of America based upon an independent board with a CEO working closely with Congress so that we can allocate the resources as efficiently and quickly as possible, maintaining journalistic independence, and maintaining the overall mission integrity and accountability through the board to the Congress?

Mr. KLOSE. Senator Cardin, I might just respond. One thing that is not mentioned there is what would that single organization be. Would it be a Federal agency or would it be an independent, private, nonprofit corporation?

Senator CARDIN. Well, it is all governmental money.

Mr. KLOSE. Yes, sir.

Senator CARDIN. We have to understand that. And I understand that the grantees are nongovernmental. I really do understand

that. But we are talking about public funds, and if the concern is the integrity and independence of the grantees, then do we not have that problem with the Federal program, which we brag about its independence as far as its journalists are concerned?

Mr. WIMBUSH. Absolutely, Senator. You are looking at two different beasts here. It is not one company. It is two companies. And they are very different. The single organization solution is the optimum solution. More optimum would be to have it outside the Federal Government, a BBC-like arrangement. But that means that you are going to have to de-federalize some pieces of U.S. international broadcasting, and that is tough. You know that better than I do. But certainly that is the optimum way. Short of that, the proposed legislation to create real pockets of excellence, two boards that do not overlap, two boards that can function efficiently for their separate missions, I think is the best solution.

Mr. KLOSE. And on the grantee side, I do believe that a consolidation would make streamlined and make more coherent what the grantees do. I think it is a matter which I think makes much sense. And I think that the thrust of the legislation in that direction I think is something which—

Senator CARDIN. But I am throwing out a radical change here. I am saying not only bring the three grantees together. Why should there be a difference between the three grantees and the Voice of America?

Mr. KLOSE. I would say, sir, in my history, I have worked for independent, private—almost always—private either for-profit or nonprofit news organizations. And I find that very compatible to the kind of journalism that I am used to doing, being part of, and directing. And that has to do with the private organization.

Senator CARDIN. I just tell you in my experiences with the Voice of America and the people who work for the Voice of America, they are top flight. They are good people. So I do not think it has inhibited them to be a Federal agency.

You may be right. I am not arguing whether it should be Federal or whether it should be private. That is not my issue. My issue is why should there be a differential between the Voice of America and the three grantees.

Mr. KLOSE. I think the core reason from my perspective is based on the powerful history, which is the independence of the grantees gave them a kind of access to people in the broadcast target regions who were very responsive to as much distance as you could get between credible media and the role and the presence of the government in their activities, in their thinking, in their strategies, and in their devotion to independence.

Mr. WIMBUSH. They do very different things, Senator. Especially surrogate broadcasting, which is research-based, requires a very different approach to how one thinks about addressing these audiences especially as the surrogate function increasingly is going to be aimed at local media, below the national media level. The Voice of America has never been configured to do that effectively. So why do we want to keep all of those language services over there, which sort of pretend to be able to do this? Some of them are doing surrogate broadcasting or say they are. Why do we not get the people

who can do surrogate into an organization that does surrogate, give it its own direction and its own board?

I am a businessman as well, and when I listen to the businessmen who were up here prior to our appearance, I am confused by this idea, well, you know, we are just going to have one director and one board looking after a whole bunch of apples and oranges. Why is that efficient? I do not see that as efficient at all. Let us put the organizations that cohere together and invest assets in them that will allow them to hit their target with the sharpest point of their spear.

Mr. KLOSE. Senator, I might add I think that what you are hearing here is we may not realize this but we are actually in furious agreement.

Mr. WIMBUSH. Well, we do agree.

And by the way, the NED example that Kevin has suggested—the National Endowment for Democracy—for the surrogates is a very, very good example. A very good example.

Senator CARDIN [presiding]. Well, I think this debate has been extremely interesting. I think it makes it clear that Congress needs to act. I think that is absolutely essential. We, of course, have what is proceeding through the House of Representatives, and I know the chairman is very interested in trying to get consensus here in the United States Senate. So this testimony has been extremely helpful, and we will look to try to homogenize some of these ideas. There is no question that we all agree there can be greater efficiency and there has got to be greater accountability. And we understand that. We also understand it has to be more nimble and to be able to respond quickly to the challenges that we face, that what other countries are doing is probably more challenging today than at any time in modern history. So the work being done here by BBG is very important to our country.

For the information of members, the record will remain open until the close of business Thursday, including for members to submit questions for the record.

We would ask the witnesses if questions are submitted that you would respond promptly to the questions so they can be made part of the record.

On behalf of Chairman Corker, I want to thank both of you—and me—thank both of you very much for your testimony.

And with that, the committee will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:29 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

#### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

[From the Weekly Standard, July 3, 2014]

#### FIXING U.S. INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING—AT LAST!

(By Dennis Mulhaupt and S. Enders Wimbush)

What return on investment do American taxpayers receive for the money we pay for international broadcasting in 61 languages from the Voice of America and five other USG-funded media organizations? And is that investment effective? The answer to each question is, we believe, not nearly enough.

Having recently spent several years on the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), the presidentially appointed and Senate-confirmed body responsible for oversight of international broadcasting, we have serious reservations about the effective-

ness of the taxpayers' current investment of \$720 million. In our experience, U.S. international broadcasting is run by a dysfunctional organization in pursuit of an unfocused mission attached only tenuously to U.S. foreign policy objectives. This state of affairs is the result of the last round of "reforms" to international broadcasting in the 1990s. It hasn't worked.

Fortunately change is in the air again, this time serious reform that actually addresses U.S. international broadcasting's many challenges.

The BBG—the product of the U.S. International Broadcasting Act of 1994 and the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998—is a perfect storm of unworkable structure, broken governance, and no management. Try to follow this.

Today's BBG oversees six separate international broadcasting organizations. Three—the Voice of America (VOA), the Office of Cuban Broadcasting (OCB), and the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB)—are part of the BBG federal agency, which operates under federal guidelines much like all other federal agencies. The other three organizations—Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN), and Radio Free Asia (RFA) are federal "grantees." This means that they are not a direct part of the federal agency, but rather are set up as non-profit 501(c)3s operating as private companies. Thus the BBG is responsible for reconciling two incompatible governance models, one federal and one private.

These six different media organizations compete for funding to support their diverse missions, with members of the BBG supposedly responsible for adjudicating which organizations get how much and for what. Yet in an obvious conflict of interests, members of the BBG separately and at the same time form the supposedly independent fiduciary board of each grantee. In practice, this means that each BBG board member is actually a member of the board of no less than four theoretically independent and competing entities, while still retaining separate jurisdiction over the non-grantees—the VOA, OCB, and IBB—in the federal agency. Not surprisingly, little incentive exists for the different networks to cooperate by combining capabilities, sharing assets, creating synergistic strategies or shutting down duplication. In fact, they spend a disproportionate amount of time competing with each other for funds and advantage, putting their respective boards squarely in the middle, while important strategic and mission-focused activities often suffer.

The original concept of the board itself abets the dysfunction. The BBG was designed to be a part-time bipartisan oversight group of four Democrats and four Republicans, with the sitting Secretary of State serving *ex officio* as the ninth member. In practice this means that most Governors have outside jobs, often as heads of major corporations or institutions, and little time to oversee six complex media organizations. The chairman has no special powers or authority, just one vote. No one is in charge. And with no management structure—no CEO, COO or even an operational director—the BBG defaults to those individual Governors who may be inclined to interfere directly in the operations of the networks, seldom, in our experience, to good effect.

Confused yet? No one can seriously believe this is a good way to rationalize and manage a complex organization in a fast-changing media environment dedicated to serving hundreds of millions of people across the globe in need of coherent news, perspectives, analysis, and an understanding of American objectives, policies, and attitudes.

The muddle deepens when one considers U.S. international broadcasting's dual purpose. The notional division of labor for U.S. international broadcasting is, first, to support America's public diplomacy by explaining American policy and "telling America's story" to listeners and viewers worldwide while offering a menu of objective news and information. The second function is to provide "surrogate" media services focused on local news, with analysis and commentary, in societies where media are not independent or are easily influenced or intimidated.

The public diplomacy role—explaining American policy and telling America's story—belongs to the Voice of America, or should. The "surrogate" broadcasting role was originated and made famous by Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty during the Cold War, which is the model for the other grantee organizations. But in reality, the division of labor between public diplomacy and surrogate broadcasting is in the eye of the beholder, with the blurring of responsibility most notable at the Voice of America, which duplicates a number of the "surrogate" language services of RFE/RL and Radio Free Asia. At the same time the VOA's broadcasts to some markets, for example to sub-Saharan Africa where it is the only U.S. broadcaster, are mostly "surrogate" by design.

Meanwhile VOA's public diplomacy function is out of favor with many at VOA, who complain that it should be an independent news agency free of compromising associations with U.S. policy. Back to the taxpayers, who might be forgiven for ask-

ing why they should be footing the bill for adding more “news and information” to an saturated global media universe—already exploding from thousands of traditional, new, and social media sources in virtually every corner of the world—without so much as a mention of America’s interests or points of view. What’s the point? Where’s the return on investment?

In early 2011, we were two of three principal authors of a radical plan that addressed all of these issues. That plan called for refocusing VOA’s mission and consolidating the grantee networks into a single organization, where strategic priorities could be set and assets shared; a chief executive officer to manage all U.S. international broadcasting’s day-to-day operations (thereby getting the board out of management); and the elimination of competing broadcasting efforts spread across the five networks. The BBG voted unanimously to adopt the plan. Almost immediately one or two members consistently and successfully blocked efforts to implement it. Today, more than three years later, not much has changed: no consolidation, no CEO, and little progress on ending duplication and waste. And U.S. international broadcasting remains as distant from any connection to our nation’s foreign policy objectives as ever.

The United States International Communications Reform Act of 2014 (H.R. 4490) will change this. It incorporates most elements of our proposed plan and goes one better: it abolishes the BBG. This bipartisan bill, sponsored by Congressman Ed Royce, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and ranking member Elliott Engel, calls for strengthening the congressionally mandated and long-standing missions of the VOA (public diplomacy) and the grantees (surrogate broadcasting), and it creates urgently needed new oversight and management structures for each to implement them effectively.

First, the legislation replaces the BBG with the U.S. International Communications Agency (USICA), which will have direct jurisdiction over only the federal agency, which is over the VOA and the Office of Cuba Broadcasting. (The International Broadcasting Bureau, an anomaly from the earlier reform acts, will be abolished.) USICA will have its own CEO, who will be responsible for day-to-day management of the agency.

Second, H.R. 4490 will consolidate the surrogate Radio Frees—RFE/RL, MBN and RFA—into a single grantee organization, the Freedom News Network, with its own board and CEO apart from USICA. Surrogate broadcasting, a powerful foreign policy soft power instrument, will get a new impetus and stronger strategic connections to broad U.S. foreign policy objectives as well as a new, worldwide mandate.

Pushback on the proposed legislation, which passed out of the House Foreign Affairs Committee unanimously in June, has been light, with even the VOA’s unions in support. Some veterans of VOA have expressed concern that the Royce/Engel reforms could lower the firewall between U.S. international broadcasting and meddlesome policy bodies, especially the State Department.

We believe this concern is overblown. In fact, the new bill reaffirms the important safeguards enshrined in the VOA Charter passed by Congress and signed by President Ford almost 40 years ago. But, the Voice of America is America’s voice, not an independent agent like CNN. No one can plausibly imagine that “political neutrality” is part of its *raison d’être*, nor should it be. And, in fact, our global audience is not naive, they generally are aware of the networks’ U.S. government connections (indeed the U.S. link is continually pointed out by their own government’s propaganda, yet they choose to listen or watch anyway). Research also shows consistent patterns of audiences wanting more discussion of U.S. policy, opinions, and attitudes, not less, on issues of concern to them.

In today’s global media environment, much of it implacably anti-American, presenting honest and objective discussions of American interests, policies and strategies has never been more important. We believe that this, first and foremost, is what American taxpayers expect from their investment in VOA.

The surrogate networks, too, are seeing their historic mission gain urgency. Events in Ukraine are a wakeup call that the competition over local media is a central battleground in the struggle against aggressive states like Russia. Asia and the Middle East are particularly challenging media battlegrounds where surrogate media is critical. The trend of authoritarian regimes to censor local news is growing alarmingly, and the surrogate broadcasters present an existential challenge to these efforts. Most important, the surrogates puncture these regimes’ preferred narratives, which many compliant local media tailor to their regime’s preferences while willfully ignoring evidence of their mendacity. Think of how Russia overloaded local media with pernicious narratives of its motives and actions in Ukraine.

This is a more complex, nuanced, and competitive environment with many more players. Russia, China, Iran, and Middle Eastern states are investing massively to increase their media reach, sophistication, and credibility. We need to face facts: our



competitors are making serious public diplomacy inroads at the expense of American and Western values and interests throughout the world. The Freedom News Network, assuming the legislation passes, will have its work cut out and will require substantial support from Congress. This low cost, high impact competitive instrument should become once again a reinvigorated part of America's soft- and smart-power.

We are engaged in a global war of ideas and U.S. government-funded media can be one of the strongest and most cost-effective means we have to compete successfully. The proposed reforms are badly needed, long overdue, and deserve support. Like all efforts to reform things that have been badly broken for a long time, H.R. 4490 is not perfect. But it is an important—indeed, admirable—effort to set necessary reform in motion. It is also a heartening example of real bipartisan cooperation to achieve important results. From our experience on the front lines of U.S. international broadcasting, this urgent reform cannot happen soon enough.

A 21ST CENTURY VISION FOR U.S. GLOBAL MEDIA  
BY ROSS JOHNSON AND R. EUGENE PARTA



HISTORY AND PUBLIC POLICY PROGRAM

OCCASIONAL PAPER

A 21st Century  
Vision for U.S.  
Global Media

A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta

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## HISTORY AND PUBLIC POLICY PROGRAM

## Occasional Papers

This paper is one of a series of Occasional Papers published by the Wilson Center's History and Public Policy Program in Washington, D.C.

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## Executive Summary

- United States International Broadcasting (USIB) is at a critical juncture as it faces new, 21st century challenges. This paper proposes a new vision for U.S. International Broadcasting in the 21st century: a single, non-federal, congressionally-funded broadcasting organization that unites the current six entities into one with a revitalized mission employing the latest technologies in an "audiences-centric" communications strategy. This reform will be essential to maintain an effective U.S. presence in an often hostile international media milieu to project American and Western values in support of freedom and democracy.
- New challenges facing USIB include transformed geopolitics in an increasingly multi-polar world, a highly complex international media environment with heightened competition from countries that do not share U.S. democratic values, and new technologies that have transformed the way nations and peoples communicate with each other.
- USIB's Cold War role as a highly effective tool of U.S. "soft power" in the national interest has been widely acknowledged. Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RL) all made important contributions to the political, economic and social transformation of Eastern Europe and the USSR away from communist authoritarianism.
- The two-pronged Cold War communications strategy of "telling America's story" (VOA) and providing a "surrogate free press focused on domestic issues" (RFE and RL) is no longer relevant in the new international media environment. Moreover, two USIB organizations, VOA and RFE/RL, have now grown to six (adding the International Broadcasting Bureau, Radio Free Asia, Radio and TV Marti, and the Middle East Broadcasting Network) with overlapping language services, duplicative management and support structures, and largely un-coordinated missions and operations. This hodge-podge of U.S. broadcast organizations, often competing among themselves, can no longer be defended on either mission-related or budgetary grounds and hampers a rational allocation of resources in line with American strategic priorities.
- The audiences-centric mission of the proposed new broadcasting organization is distinct from public diplomacy and from strategic communications. Those useful instruments of American soft power cannot be directly coordinated with USIB if the latter is to be viewed by intended audiences as a credible, objective source of news and analysis and thus justify taxpayer support as enhancing American national security.

## A 21st Century Vision for U.S. Global Media

A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta

**IN ANY GIVEN** week, from North Korea to Iran and across the Middle East, from China to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Myanmar, through Africa and India to Russia, Belarus, Central Asia and Cuba, 165 million people—equivalent to more than half the U.S. population—tune into the radio and television programs of U.S. International Broadcasting (USIB) by satellite, Internet and in some cases cooperating local radio stations. After more than half a century, Congressionally-funded U.S. broadcasting remains the leading edge of American soft power—the principal means by which the United States speaks directly to less free and impoverished nations.

Yet while the content and methods of delivering America's 24/7 conversation with the world have kept abreast with the 21st century, the organization of U.S. International Broadcasting has not. In an increasingly competitive global media environment, USIB remains a disparate and disorderly archipelago of largely separate cold-war-era entities.<sup>1</sup> The overarching collection of these entities—some of them official government agencies, most of them private, Congressionally-funded grantees—is inherently cost-inefficient, unsupple, sometimes duplicative, guided by a multiplicity of inconsistent mission statements, and arguably less attractive than it could be to the talented journalists crucial to its success.

USIB works, but not nearly as well as it could. Its Cold War organizational legacy inherently detracts from its credibility and thus from its potential reach and impact.

USIB is thus at a crossroads. It can through inertia seek to retain its legacy form as it evolved during the Cold War, or it can pro-actively adopt a dynamic new vision and structure attuned to 21st century audiences. Inaction is leading to a diminished U.S. capability to compete in the global sphere of information and ideas and threatens eventual irrelevance as more trusted and dynamic media organizations dominate. Shrinking budgets, a global political environment in flux, and a revolution in communications technology render the status quo untenable and an alternative approach both necessary and attractive. Reform will require abandoning defense of Cold War institutions and a new conceptual and structural approach by practitioners, overseers, the Administration, and Congress.

## I. BROADCASTING IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST

A strong U.S. global media presence serves the national interest since its purpose is:

- To provide accurate, credible news and information to peoples lacking free, reliable, and trustworthy domestic media at a time when global media freedom is—after a hopeful post-Cold War surge—enjoyed by only fifteen percent of the global population, a figure which is on the decline.<sup>2</sup>
- To circumvent censorship, an essential tool for dictatorial regimes.
- To ensure a competitive U.S. presence among international broadcasters in a diverse and often hostile international media climate.
- To support development of civil society and democratic institutions appropriate to local circumstances and to help societies reconnect with positive values of traditional cultures where these cultures are suppressed.
- To encourage respect for universal human rights.
- To improve global understanding of American society and the U.S. role in the world.
- To encourage critical thought in societies threatened by authoritarian governments, fanaticism, and terrorism.

In short, USIB's purpose is to communicate in the national interest with societies where information is controlled by repressive regimes, as well as with transitional societies with media that are partly free but suffer from uncritical, unprofessional, biased, or otherwise incomplete information services. It encourages the emergence of informed publics that are a necessary condition for the advancement of freedom and democracy throughout the world.

## II. COLD WAR SUCCESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The history of USIB is a remarkable success story from the founding of VOA during World War II broadcasting to Nazi Germany, to support of RIAS (Radio in the American Sector) in divided Berlin in the post-war period, to the significant contributions of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty in bringing the Cold War to a successful conclusion.

There are numerous indicators of the impact of the Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe (RFE), and Radio Liberty (RL) broadcasts to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. (BBC, Deutsche Welle, and other stations were important as well.) Large

Today's world and its challenges are very different. Yet relevant lessons can be drawn from the USIB Cold War experience.

audiences were motivated to hear uncensored news, analysis, and features, especially about their own countries where no free press existed. In Eastern Europe, over half the adult populations of Poland, Hungary Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria tuned in at least weekly, while in the USSR about a quarter of the adult population were regular (at least once a week) listeners.<sup>3</sup> These were "quality" audiences, with the highest listening rates among urban educated populations and widespread listening among Communist Party members and ruling elites, especially in Eastern Europe. Although beamed in from the outside by shortwave, Western radio successfully became a vital part of the domestic media scene in these countries from the 1950s onward.<sup>4</sup> East European audiences, especially, looked to the West for inspiration and a model for change. Western radio stations, most notably RFE, played the role of a domestic free press. In Poland, for example, RFE was jokingly but tellingly dubbed "Warsaw 4" (a fourth channel of domestic radio alongside the official three stations). Soviet audiences saw the West less as a change model and more as a "window to the outside world" and a source for information on their own country, especially dissident activities and writings for which Western radio provided a "megaphone" and without which they would have passed largely unnoticed.

Listeners to Voice of America were kept abreast of official U.S. policy, a topic of great interest to many in Eastern Europe and the USSR, as well as wide-ranging programs on American life, democratic practice, international news coverage, and entertainment programs of a genre not carried by their domestic media. VOA jazz and pop music programs were highly popular, especially among the youth of the region, and played an important role in breaking down mental barriers and stereotypes of the West as propagated by the regimes.

Western broadcasts were viewed as a serious threat by the Communist regimes. Party and Government leaders were provided printed broadcast synopses. The broadcasters were widely attacked in the government-controlled media and an extensive (and expensive) technical jamming effort targeted them, especially RFE and Radio Liberty, and to a lesser extent VOA.

No less noteworthy an indicator of impact is the numerous testimonials to the significance of RFE, RL, and VOA given by public figures from the formerly communist countries after the fall of the Iron Curtain. When asked in 1990 if RFE had contributed to the triumph of Solidarity in Poland, Lech Walesa responded "Is the Sun important for the Earth?" East German spymaster Markus Wolf wrote in his memoirs that "of all the various means used to influence people against the East during the Cold War, I would count Radio Free Europe and RIAS as the most effective." Czech dissident-turned President Vaclav Havel affirmed that RFE/RL's "influence and significance have been great and profound." Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn, whose works were broadcast frequently on both VOA and RL, wrote of "the mighty non-military force which resides in the

airwaves and whose kindling power in the midst of communist darkness cannot even be grasped by the Western imagination.”<sup>5</sup> Estonian President Lennart Meri testified to the dramatic impact of the first VOA broadcast in Estonian and later nominated RFE/RL for the Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>6</sup> And Russian President Boris Yeltsin said: “... during the 3–4 days of the [failed 1991] coup, Radio Liberty was one of the very few channels through which it was possible to send information to the whole world and, most important, to the people of Russia, because now every family in Russia listens to Radio Liberty...”<sup>7</sup>

By providing information and analysis unavailable from domestic media sources, USIB helped to shape listeners views on their own societies and on crucial international events. Additionally, and no less important, at the level of civic morale Western broadcasts helped to keep the “hope of freedom” alive behind the Iron Curtain so that when circumstances evolved to the point where change was no longer unthinkable the peoples of Eastern Europe were ready to seize the moment. Western broadcasting by itself certainly did not “win” the Cold War. Communism ended in Eastern Europe and the USSR as a result of myriad complex factors, not least of which were the internal contradictions and failures of the Communist system itself. But Western broadcasting and especially USIB were undeniably an important part of the “mix” of those factors. By denying controlled state media the monopoly of information and discussion they sought, USIB helped keep critical thinking alive and fostered an understanding of democratic alternatives.

Today’s world and its challenges are very different. Yet relevant lessons can be drawn from the USIB Cold War experience:

- A substitute free media is possible through external broadcasting to countries where media freedom has been denied.
- External messages can reinforce and accelerate, but never replace, domestic forces striving for positive political and social change. The impetus for change in the final analysis must come from within, not from without.
- It is essential to avoid “propaganda” of any kind, whether from governments or any other source, as audiences quickly see through it, draining programs of credibility.<sup>8</sup> Credibility is paramount; hard to win but easy to lose. While VOA, RFE and RL were often charged, not only by communist governments but also by some Western critics, as being “propaganda” stations, audience research showed that they were successful not because they were “propagandistic” but because their large audiences found them to be credible, trustworthy and relevant.<sup>9</sup>
- Long-term sustainable resources are required. Political and social change in the Cold War was an extended process. Patience and long-term financial support were critical. USIB funding was significantly increased in the last years of the Cold War, which permitted capitalizing on the credibility it had built up over the years.



### III. THE NEW INTERNATIONAL MEDIA WORLD OF THE 21ST CENTURY

#### A Transformed Media Milieu

As successful as the Cold War Broadcasting model may have been, it is not readily applicable to the current international media milieu.<sup>10</sup> There are important differences between the Cold War situation and the present:

- **Cold War:** Closed target societies, with total regime control of domestic media.
- **Present:** Both government and private media now co-exist in most countries. Total governmental control is rare; even North Korea is becoming exposed to outside information.<sup>11</sup> Private media are widespread, although they often focus on entertainment and steer clear of politics. Digital technologies have created information tunnels to other repressive societies, including Iran, China, and much of the Arab world.

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- **Cold War:** TV, radio, and press were the only media platforms, and of these usually only radio—delivered by shortwave—could be directed from the outside.
- **Present:** Multiple media platforms are the new norm—the Internet, mobile telephones, and satellite TV and radio have joined the traditional platforms.

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- **Cold War:** Word of mouth was linked to Western radio listening, amplifying broadcast content through limited personal networks.
- **Present:** Word of mouth is now electronic and has the potential to become “viral.” Email, social media such as Twitter and Facebook, SMS messaging, ubiquitous mobile phone use, and extensive use of blogs provide new opportunities for lightning-fast content amplification.

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- **Cold War:** A general mistrust of domestic media on many sensitive topics was widespread with somewhat more trust given to foreign media on some key issues, often involving a critique of official policies.
- **Present:** Widespread mistrust of most official media from any source, contrasts with greater trust in peer-to-peer communication and crowd-sourcing using new social media technologies.

- **Cold War:** Strong motivations of publics to turn to outside media sources, usually to available shortwave radio, to be informed on both domestic and international news.
  - **Present:** Less clear motivations in making media choices, with many available options, both domestic and foreign. Radio is a less important platform than during the Cold War in many countries. Internet and satellite technology have now largely supplanted shortwave radio and the special receivers and antennas and listener patience it required.
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- **Cold War:** Frequent heavy jamming hampered shortwave reception but also contributed to a “forbidden fruit” attraction of the broadcasts, strengthening listeners’ motivation to hear information their governments went to great lengths to deny them.
  - **Present:** Most, but not all, broadcast target areas are un-jammed, with China, Cuba, Ethiopia, Iran and North Korea being exceptions. These are the only areas where some international broadcasting still carries a “forbidden fruit” attraction. Little wholesale blockage of the Internet takes place anywhere. Selective filtering is more common, but circumvention technologies and techniques make this increasingly difficult. Regimes that choose to shut down or filter the Internet often have to contend with the costs of collateral damage to other vital systems—e.g., banking, business, security.
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- **Cold War:** No access was possible to domestic media outlets, such as FM radio, for international broadcasters. Short wave (and limited medium wave, AM) transmission from abroad was the only viable platform.
  - **Present:** Growing access worldwide to domestic media outlets, though this access is sometimes unreliable in practice. The best example is the former Soviet Union where the number of VOA and RFE/RL FM affiliates has dropped under government regulatory pressure from 97 to 0. The greater the need for local FM broadcasting affiliates, the less likely they are to be available.
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- **Cold War:** Western radio had a clearly defined niche in a restricted media environment in the broadcast target countries, making it easier to differentiate it from other media to assess impact.
  - **Present:** It is considerably more difficult to gauge the impact of a single medium in a highly complex media environment. Nearly all audiences, including many inside repressive countries, have media choices. A single dish, legal or illegal, can routinely bring in hundreds of TV channels and even Internet connections. New methods for determining audience preferences and assessing media impacts will need to be developed to determine the effectiveness of USIB.

### Multi-Polar Geopolitical Environment

The global geo-political landscape has evolved dramatically since the end of the Cold War. While the United States remains the sole superpower, the world is now in many respects multi-polar rather than bi-polar. There is no more “bloc to bloc” broadcasting, and countering Soviet propaganda is no longer necessary. In terms of U.S. strategic priorities, Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa have overtaken Eastern Europe and the former Soviet space.

Audiences and their expectations have also evolved. If there was a latent sympathy for the United States among peoples in Eastern Europe and a positive curiosity about the U.S. in the Soviet Union, the situation today, especially in the Islamic world, is quite different.<sup>12</sup> Many potential audiences are deeply suspicious of, or even hostile to, the U.S. Ironically this is due in no small part to the availability of extensive media choices in much of the world, which spotlight controversial American policies, advertise less attractive parts of American culture, and distort America’s values and achievements in ways that advance the parochial goals of local actors. USIB faces an uphill struggle in communicating with much of the Islamic world, especially when broadcasts can be readily identified as sponsored by the U.S. government and dismissed as propaganda.

### New Technologies Bring New Challenges

New technologies have dramatically altered media consumption patterns worldwide. Satellite television is now more important than radio in most areas, especially in the high-priority target area of the Middle East. Radio retains importance in Africa and some other areas, but worldwide it is rapidly losing audience to television. Shortwave radio is in steady decline both for broadcasters and listeners, which explains why nearly all of the world’s premier shortwave broadcasters have gone out of business or dramatically downsized. A strategic role for reduced shortwave broadcasting to some areas may be to act as a “force multiplier” by targeting smaller committed audiences that can then move content to digital platforms. Radio’s future in general may lie more in the area of delivering program streams on fixed and mobile Internet where they will share space with video and text content.

Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, are taking on increasing importance for international broadcasters as was seen in the Arab uprisings of 2011–2012.<sup>13</sup> They were successfully employed to mobilize demonstrators. Equally important, they also allowed participants and onlookers to become citizen reporters who recorded dramatic events in video and audio on mobile telephones and posted content on Internet sites such as YouTube. Satellite TV broadcasters could then access them and transmit them back to in-country audiences, greatly amplifying the original message. But “the journalism of verification and the immediacy enabled by social media can sometimes collide,”<sup>14</sup> and their value for providing sustained news, information, analytical perspective as the ingredients of critical thinking appear highly limited.

Social media function as force multipliers in spreading messages from a few activists to many (which can rapidly and exponentially become many to many in a “viral” manner) forming additional and overlapping networks. Communications are no longer one-way but an interactive dialogue between sender and receiver and among receivers on various platforms. While the role social media played in

fostering political change in the Arab uprisings may have been exaggerated, as with all technologies they can be used for good or ill. Just as political activists seeking democratic change can use these new technologies to their advantage, they can also be effectively employed by repressive regimes for their own less noble purposes.<sup>15</sup> Social networks can promote either positive ends, such as undermining a dictatorial regime, or advance terrorist goals, such as those of Al Qaeda.

It is important to remember amidst all of the accolades for so-called “Twitter revolutions” that people make revolutions, not technology. Technology is a useful tool that can facilitate activist efforts to mobilize anti-government activities, but without committed individuals eager to overthrow a dictatorial structure and create a new political system no amount of new technology can bring about political change.<sup>16</sup> This lesson from Cold War broadcasting remains relevant today.<sup>17</sup>

### International Broadcasting is in Flux

There is now a surfeit of global media providers on all platforms and a tendency for users to “channel-surf,” spending only seconds or minutes on a given station rather than attentively following any single broadcaster. Heightened international competition, especially in the area of satellite television broadcasting, has already relegated USIB to the second tier of international television broadcasters. Many countries have expanded their international TV services, including China (CCTV), Russia (RT), Saudi Arabia (Al Arabiya), Germany (DW-TV), France (France24), Qatar (Al Jazeera), Japan (NHK), and Iran (IRIB). USIB lacks a dedicated global satellite TV channel in English, despite the huge surge in English language capability in most parts of the world and a hunger among young people to learn English. In its broadcasts to the tumultuous Middle East, USIB divides its video output among MBN’s Alhurra in Arabic, VOA’s Persian Broadcasting Network (PBN) to Iran, and shorter scheduled VOA satellite and Internet transmissions in English and other languages.

While this expansion of satellite TV broadcasting has been underway, many countries which share our democratic values are cutting back on their overall international broadcast services, especially radio. Radio Canada International, Radio France International, Radio Netherlands Worldwide, BBC World Service, and ABC Radio Australia have all suffered hefty budget cuts in recent years and in many cases elimination of entire broadcast services, especially shortwave.

In addition to satellite broadcasting, numerous international satellite TV services are now disseminated worldwide (and increasingly in the U.S.) through domestic cable systems. In general, foreign TV services have had more success in gaining placement on cable networks than the more limited and diverse USIB TV offerings. On balance, USIB and other Western public broadcasters are slipping behind the competition in terms of global media presence. While CNN International, Fox International, and CNBC International, among others, have had success in reaching international audiences they are commercial services with different content and goals than publicly-funded USIB.

Traditional state-sponsored international broadcasters are today supplemented by other media, including exile-staffed radios targeted at specific countries and financed by governments or privately. Examples are Belsat TV to Belarus (supported by the Polish government and Polish television TVP), satellite TV to Iran from Los Angeles (private), and external radios for North Korea (North Korea Reform Radio,

Two decades after the end of the Cold War, it is no longer possible to justify, let alone afford, two separate USIB content streams, one focusing on America's story and the other on domestic developments in foreign countries.

Open North Korea Radio, Radio Free Chosun, all based in Seoul, South Korea) and Burma (Democratic Voice of Burma based in Oslo, Norway, and also on satellite TV), financed in part by the congressionally-funded National Endowment for Democracy. America Abroad Media has with private funding organized intra-country virtual "town meetings" in Arabic, Turkish, and other languages. There are also numerous religious broadcasters on the international airwaves. While it is unclear what impact these broadcast operations have, they are an added presence in the cacophonous global media milieu.

Complicating the task of meeting the challenge of bringing USIB into the 21st century as a state-of-the-art global media player is the difficult budgetary situation in which the United States finds itself. Financial resources are relatively more limited now than during the Cold War, when both VOA and RFE/RL could rely on generous budget support. In contrast, Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) congressional budget requests (and appropriations) have been falling in recent years in response to Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidelines. The budget request for 2013 of \$720 million is back at 2009 levels, having fallen from an actual \$742 million in 2012 and \$768.8 million in 2011.<sup>18</sup> Even more sobering is the prospect that the OMB guidance for 2014 may be considerably lower. This is at a time when the demands on USIB are expanding and competition is keener, especially in the high-priority and volatile Islamic world.

Moreover, Congress and the OMB are showing less tolerance for multiple legacy broadcast organizations with overlapping activities and management structures. Unlike the Cold War era, where a strong case could be made that VOA and RFE/RL were largely complementary, they and their more recent siblings Radio Free Asia, the Middle East Broadcasting Network (Alhurra TV and Radio Sawa) and the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (Radio and TV Marti) are now often viewed with considerable justification as duplicative.<sup>19</sup> USIB broadcasters produce programs in 59 languages targeted on countries, which, with three exceptions, lack fully free media,<sup>20</sup> and a third of these languages (20) are carried by two of the broadcasters (VOA and RFE/RL or RFA). The different and often competing elements of USIB have strong patrons among America's politicians and pundits, who have little appetite for seeing favored broadcasters reduced, consolidated with the same language service of another USIB broadcaster, or eliminated. Anomalies abound. Funding for broadcasts to Cuba, for example, nearly matches funding for broadcasts to China, which is of major strategic importance, and that funding is divided between VOA and RFA.<sup>21</sup> The current structure impedes allocation of resources according to American strategic priorities.

A changed global political and media environment, new technologies, heightened friendly and adversarial competition, budgetary pressures, and outmoded legacy structures and their political patrons have coalesced to place USIB at a critical juncture. Major institutional reform is essential to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

#### IV. REACHING EXPANDED AUDIENCES WORLDWIDE IN SUPPORT OF FREEDOM

All USIB—if it is to serve the purposes for which it is funded and compete successfully in the fragmented and rapidly diversifying global information market place—must focus on intended audiences and be attuned to their culture, perceptions, and information deficits. It must be more than audiences-focused—it must be audiences-centric. And audiences are plural—within a given society, key elites and other social groups have different information needs from those of the general population, and reliable market intelligence is crucial in determining changing target audiences and communications strategies to reach them.

All audience groups in un-free, information-deprived, or information-biased countries have one thing in common—they search first of all for credible information about their own world, about local developments, that they cannot obtain from controlled or otherwise limited domestic media. Asked why he tuned in to RFE/RL's Radio Mashaal and not Pakistan state radio, a listener in North Waziristan replied that “he just wanted to know what was going on in his surroundings.”<sup>22</sup> News—objective reporting of unfolding events—is a necessary but not sufficient response to this demand, for audiences also seek context that gives meaning to the news: feature stories, moderated discussions, news analysis, and informed commentary. Local perspectives require reports from local journalists, channeled through and edited by a core of in-house journalists with linguistic, cultural, and area expertise. Audiences also seek accurate and reliable coverage of international events, including coverage of the United States, in terms meaningful to them. They seek “empathetic objectivity”—programs that are balanced and objective but are responsive to their information needs.<sup>23</sup>

This need for an audiences-centric approach applies to all USIB. Two decades after the end of the Cold War, it is no longer possible to justify, let alone afford, two separate USIB content streams, one focusing on America's story and the other on domestic developments in foreign countries. That was indeed the original rationale for funding two broadcasters to a given country during the Cold War. VOA covered America and U.S. foreign policy, as part of what would later be termed public diplomacy, along with international events, from the perspective of the United States. RFE and RL as substitute free domestic radios—later termed surrogate radios—focused on developments in the countries to which they broadcast from the perspectives of the audience.

VOA director Henry Loomis once compared this approach to two blades of a scissors working together to create an effective cutting edge.<sup>24</sup> The dual capability was effective and justified during the Cold War, although even then the different missions were sometimes clearer in theory than in practice. The Eisenhower Administration sought to sharpen the distinctions in the late 1950s,<sup>25</sup> but over time VOA language services—which originally broadcast translated programs prepared centrally in English—gained autonomy to create their own programs covering local issues in order to attract audiences. In some cases, such as the Albanian service (the only USIB broadcaster in Albanian), a VOA language service was a unique provider of local news. In other cases VOA duplicated RFE and RL services—occasionally, as with its Czechoslovak service in the late 1970s and early 1980s, providing local news more effectively than RFE. Meanwhile, RFE and RL managers asserted more editorial supervision over their decentralized language services, which had always covered international and U.S.

issues of interest to their audiences. In short, the division between two functions—public diplomacy and surrogate broadcasting—became blurred operationally over time in response to audience demand for local coverage and perspectives.

Given this evolution, and the revolution in global media traced above, it is time to abandon what has become a false dichotomy between public diplomacy broadcasting and surrogate broadcasting and move beyond both terms in public discourse. The need today is to focus all USIB on a single mission—providing information to and facilitating communication in support of freedom with and among peoples in the context of their own situation and perspectives. That purpose is stated or implied in the current mission statements of the BBG (“To inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy”), RFE/RL (“to promote democratic values and institutions by reporting the news in countries where a free press is banned by the government or not fully established [providing] uncensored news, responsible discussion, and open debate”), RFA (“to provide accurate and timely news and information to Asian countries whose governments prohibit access to a free press”), and Radio and TV Marti. It is only partially expressed in the MBN mission statement (“to provide objective, accurate, and relevant news and information to the people of the Middle East about the region, the world, and the United States”) and inadequately conveyed by the VOA Charter, which defines VOA’s mission as “represent[ing] America, not any single segment of American society...present[ing] a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions...present[ing] the policies of the United States...and...responsible discussions and opinion on these policies.” This sole focus on the United States in the Charter diminishes the valuable operations of many VOA language services that provide excellent coverage of local developments.

Providing information to, and facilitating connections among, peoples in support of freedom and democracy in the U.S. national interest is the rationale for public spending on USIB. While the justification for two distinct content streams—public diplomacy and surrogate broadcasting—has faded, what remains as important today as during the Cold War is the indispensability of objective journalism. The first point of the VOA Charter (incorporated in legislation in 1976) required VOA news to be “accurate, objective, and comprehensive.” RFE/RL’s Programming Policy Guidelines issued that same year required “accuracy and objectivity” in RFE/RL broadcasts.<sup>26</sup> Without objective journalism, broadcasts will lack credibility, lose their intended audiences, and will not merit taxpayer funding. As RFE’s first audience research director pointed out in the mid-1950s: “Whatever influence we expect to exercise has to be grounded on credibility. Credibility is the prerequisite for everything else.”<sup>27</sup> Today USIB is required by law to be “conducted in accordance with the highest professional standards of broadcast journalism” and to broadcast news “which is consistently reliable and authoritative, accurate, objective, and comprehensive.”<sup>28</sup> That requirement is repeated in the current mission statements of all the broadcasters.

If USIB is to effectively support freedom and democracy in the U.S. national interest, all of its broadcasts must observe the highest standards of professional journalism in providing information and perspectives that are attuned to the needs and context of the audience. USIB must at the same time avoid four pitfalls.

First, USIB cannot be simply just news, a local news feed. It must complement news on breaking events and issues in the audience countries and the world at large with added value—explanatory

features, discussions, news analyses, and thoughtful commentary relevant to the audiences while avoiding any type of advocacy which would reduce credibility.

Second, USIB must avoid being a channel for public diplomacy, defined by the State Department as intended “to support the achievement of U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives, advance national interests, and enhance national security by informing and influencing foreign publics.”<sup>29</sup> Efforts to use USIB for public diplomacy so understood, and in particular to defend current U.S. foreign policies, will dilute or negate influence gained by effective coverage of local events and drive away audiences not predisposed to accept U.S. government interpretations of international events. U.S. government editorials, currently mandated for VOA, are counter-productive in this context.

This is not to suggest that audiences-centric USIB broadcasts should ignore the United States. Indeed demand for information about the United States exists in most USIB broadcast areas. Covering America has been the essence of VOA’s mission, but other USIB networks are no strangers to the American narrative, despite their focus on local news and trends in their broadcast areas. During the Cold War, one of the most successful programs of Radio Liberty’s Russian Service—“Broadway 1776” (the address of RL’s New York office)—followed the ups and downs of New York’s growing Russian immigrant population as it learned to negotiate markets, a new and vibrant culture, and arcane institutions like local PTAs. It effectively told America’s story through the eyes of its listeners.

Third, USIB must also avoid being a channel for strategic communications, defined by the Administration (in terms that seem to subsume public diplomacy) as “synchronization of our words and deeds and how they will be perceived by others, as well as...programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences.”<sup>30</sup>

This is not to devalue the importance of traditional public diplomacy or new strategic communications that tell America’s story. Both are important tools of American soft power. But they are functions properly conducted by the State Department’s Bureau of International Information Programs, whose mission is to “engage international audiences in sustained, meaningful interaction on the full spectrum of U.S. policy objectives,”<sup>31</sup> and by the Defense Department, and are distinct from audience-centric communication discussed here. They cannot be directly coordinated with USIB if the latter is to keep its distance from the Executive Branch and be viewed by intended audiences as a credible, objective source of news and analysis. Any effort to combine these different functions in a single organization with a coordinated strategy orchestrated by the National Security Council, the State Department, or the Defense Department would doom all of them to failure.

Fourth, USIB should avoid entanglement with commercial media networks, such as CNN International, Fox International and CNBC International. These for-profit organizations do not fill the same function as USIB and should not, in any way, be linked to it. These commercial media networks, despite claims of objectivity, often do present a point of view and broadcast style that would be detrimental were it to be identified with USIB. Co-mingling USIB with commercial broadcast operations would diminish its role of supporting freedom and democracy and compromise USIB’s independent identity as congressionally-funded in the national interest.



## V. REVAMPING OBSOLETE LEGACY INSTITUTIONS

Since the end of the Cold War, USIB has in practice evolved toward a single audiences-centric mission, while proliferating organizations responsible for carrying it out. At the beginning of the 1990s, USIB consisted of two organizations—VOA and Radio Marti as part of the governmental United States Information Agency (USIA) and RFE/RL as a private, non-profit grantee of the Board for International Broadcasting (BIB). In the subsequent decades the two organizations have become seven, the BBG, IBB, VOA, Radio and TV Marti, RFE/RL, RFA, MBN with Alhurra TV and Radio Sawa, “an illogical patchwork, an archipelago of broadcasting organizations lacking clear individual missions and lacking a normal separation between management and oversight.”<sup>32</sup> This proliferation of organizations (described further in the Appendix) resulted from ad hoc responses to foreign policy challenges, funding opportunities, and political compromises at the end of the Cold War and was perhaps unavoidable during a period of transition. It is singularly ill-suited for the challenges of the 21st century and unsustainable in the current U.S. budgetary environment.

The challenge today is to recast USIB as a single organization, funded by Congress but not part of the Executive Branch, that will produce and distribute efficiently on multiple platforms audience-centric programming in the U.S. national interest. This organizational structure would be similar to the BBC World Service (in its former more independent state), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), all of which are funded by government grants but are guaranteed operational independence. Distance from Government—a firewall—is essential to ensure the journalistic professionalism, free from bureaucratic interference, that is crucial to the credibility of the operation. Governance should be provided not by a federal agency (such as the Board for International Broadcasting, which oversaw RFE/RL prior to 1995, or the Broadcasting Board of Governors today) but by a non-partisan board of directors including individuals with journalism and foreign affairs experience who exercise oversight but delegate management functions to the executives it appoints (and rely on management for any staffing needs).<sup>33</sup> NED provides one possible model of governance.<sup>34</sup> Other modes of governance such as those of USIP and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars may be appropriate so long as oversight is separated from management and a structure of non-federal journalism is maintained.

A single new organization, Congressionally funded but non-federal, would avoid the reality and perception of duplication of resources and permit maximizing capabilities devoted to individual countries on a rational basis, reflecting U.S. strategic interests and priorities. It would replace the multiple management layers and duplicative support structures—e.g., finance, administration, human resources, public relations—of the current multiple organizations with a single inclusive structure. As a non-profit entity it would avoid the stigma of “official radio or TV” which other international broadcasters (apart from China and Russia) have avoided or are now abandoning. While VOA has for years provided quality objective journalism as required by its Charter, government broadcasting with civil service journalists has always been problematic. Successfully opposing consolidation of all USIB in a federal agency in 1994, then-Senator Joseph Biden labeled “U.S. Government journalist” an oxymoron.<sup>35</sup> A private organization would also enjoy greater flexibility (within the stipulations of its Congressional appropriation) to staff its

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media operations, redeploy its resources, take on new challenges, and contract for needed external services in response to changing priorities.

The proposed new organization would not abolish language services of the current five broadcasters but would incorporate them as building blocks supported by a central news operation, with the goal after a transition of one language service to a given country using a given technology. For example, the new organization's Middle East division would include RFE/RL's *Farda* radio to Iran, VOA's Persian News Network TV to Iran, and MBN's *Albura TV* and *Radio Sawa* to the Arab world. As these examples suggest, the new organization would preserve, not abandon, respected brands that have acquired equity over time in the broadcast region—the VOA brand in Asia, Africa and Latin America, RFE/RL brands in Eurasia, RFA brands in East Asia, and increasingly MBN brands in Middle East.<sup>36</sup> It is the vernacular identifications, not Washington labels in English, that are important to the audience. Most Afghan listeners to *Radio Azadi* have probably never heard of RFE/RL and it is *Panazit* (a popular VOA TV program to Iran, currently suspended), *OMG: Meiyu* (a VOA program for China), and *Deewa* (VOA to FATA Pakistan) that are meaningful to the audiences. The new organization will need a new “Washington” name to demark it from the past, but that name will be irrelevant to most listeners and viewers.

RFE/RL's institutional history is instructive in this regard. RFE and RL, albeit both based in Munich, functioned as two completely separate organizations with little contact for 25 years. Their consolidation into RFE/RL, Inc., in 1976 did not change the names of broadcast services—Radio Liberty's Russian Service remained *Radio Cooboda*, and RFE's Polish Service remained *Rozgłoszenia Polska Radia Wolna Europa*. Although the consolidation was controversial to some in Washington and traumatic to some of the staffs, it was irrelevant to listeners, who continued to tune in to what they considered to be “their” radio stations.

RFE/RL's history—grantee consolidation in 1976, termination of operations in Munich in 1995, and establishment of a recast downsized organization in Prague—also demonstrates that it is feasible to incorporate in a single structure personnel from different organizations with a variety of workplace practices, pay scales, and benefits. Most challenging, but not unprecedented,<sup>37</sup> will be the transition of current federal employees in IBB, VOA, and radio and TV Marti to non-federal status. Up-front funds will be required for a combination of buy-outs and grandfathering of benefits, with cost savings coming in future years.

The new organization will need to develop meaningful measures of impact so that it can demonstrate to its management, board of directors, the executive branch and the Congress the continuing utility of

USIB. This requirement goes beyond a head-count of listeners and viewers, many of whom are exposed to only brief audio or video clips while channel-surfing on local broadcast carriers. It will require an adequately funded sophisticated audience research program: quantitative survey research to measure audiences and behaviors, qualitative research to better understand them, and market intelligence to effectively target key audience segments. This research effort must be designed to drive a cutting edge USIB geared to differentiated audience needs in an evolving and chaotic global media environment.

The new organization will also require strong analytical research on its broadcast areas to enable it to communicate intelligently on local affairs and avoid a “one size fits all” approach to journalism. Crucial for RFE/RL’s influence during the Cold War was in-depth knowledge of the political, social, and cultural environment of its target countries. While resources will not permit the extensive research capability created by RFE/RL, regional expertise must be provided by staff and links to specialists in academe and think-tanks. This will help distinguish future USIB content from much of the shallow and tendentious journalism pervasive in the global media scene.

## VI. THE PRESENT MOMENT

We advance these proposals not in a vacuum but as a contribution to an ongoing policy discussion among Washington officials, USIB broadcasters, and others on reshaping USIB.<sup>38</sup>

In its Strategic Plan for 2012–2016 the BBG has set as its goal to become the “world’s leading international news agency by 2016” with a weekly global audience of 216 million (up from the current independent audience research estimate of 165 million). It will be impossible to reach that goal without major reform. The Strategic Plan is an important step in the right direction, calling for “impact through innovation and integration” and creation of “one organization, many brands.” It will be critical to marshal congressional and executive branch support for this comprehensive new global media vision, which builds on the successes of Cold War broadcasting but recognizes the inadequacy of the Cold War model for today’s fundamentally transformed political, technological, and media worlds.

Practical considerations may argue for a step by step approach to reorganization, such as first consolidating the three grantee broadcast corporations—RFE/RL, RFA, and MBN—into a single non-profit corporation with a single management structure overseeing their current language services.<sup>39</sup> That step would reduce duplicate management and administration and allow the resources saved to be devoted to enhancing language services. Pilot projects such as the BBG’s virtual Global News Network<sup>40</sup> would improve sharing of scattered information sources. But unless these and other steps result in a single non-federal organization that also incorporates VOA and Marti language services, USIB will remain a house of too many rooms for bureaucratic and not mission-related reasons. Absent a single organization, duplicative managements and duplicative and competing broadcast services to individual countries will remain. It will be impossible to develop an overarching U.S. international communications strategy and allocate resources appropriately. All this will be increasingly difficult to justify to the Congress and the American people.

Once again, the history of RFE/RL is instructive. When RFE and RL were merged in 1976, language services were initially grouped into two separate legacy broadcasting units—RFE Division

and RL Division—which preserved many duplicate functions and perpetuated the misallocation of resources. The RFE Bulgarian Service, for example, remained three times larger than the RL Ukrainian Service for twenty years. It was only the pressure of relocation and downsizing in the 1990s that forced replacement of those legacy divisions by a single Broadcasting Division (and a single research division). The result was sharing and collaboration among all broadcast services and a positive effect on the quality and receptivity of the programs. A new organization today will require regional subunits with executive editors, but these must be truly regional—e.g., a Middle East division, an Asian division—and not extrapolations of the current multiple broadcast organizations, e.g., not a VOA Division or an RFA Division or an RFE/RL Division.

Additional studies and discussion will help fine tune the optimal model for the future of USIB, as well as ideas on how to most effectively implement reorganization. Least helpful in this discussion will be bureaucratic turf wars and lobbying by employees, veterans, or other partisans of the current broadcast organizations who look not to the future but to the past. Perpetuating the status quo is a recipe for dooming USIB.

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Just as there was no “silver bullet” that brought an end to the Cold War, there should be no expectation that a transformed USIB will be sufficient to transform dictatorships or authoritarian states into democracies. That is not its task. But a new U.S. global media vision with a single mission and a corresponding single organizational structure can be a crucial and sustainable element of American soft power. It can effectively support freedom in unfree and information-poor societies precisely because it conveys American values through objective news reporting and analysis but does not try to sell America. Implementing the new vision will assure a U.S. presence and influence in a global information sphere that is increasingly fragmented and often hostile to U.S. interests. Such a new vision and structure for USIB would be an essential component of the U.S. national security objective of promoting a more democratic and peaceful world.

## Appendix

### THE EVOLVING STRUCTURE OF UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING

The Voice of America was established in 1943 as the official United States government radio and first broadcast in German to Nazi Germany. Expanding into a major world broadcaster in English and many local languages, it operated after 1947 as part of the State Department and from 1953 to 1999 as part of the United States Information Agency.

Radio Free Europe began broadcasting to Eastern Europe in 1950 and Radio Liberty began broadcasting to the Soviet Union in 1953, both as substitute free media staffed by exiles. Both were non-profit organizations overseen and covertly funded through 1971 by the Central Intelligence Agency. Thereafter they were funded by open Congressional appropriation through the Board for International Broadcasting, a federal agency established solely to fund and oversee RFE and RL. The two radios were merged in 1976 as RFE/RL, Inc.

Radio Marti was established in 1984 within the United States Information Agency as a substitute free press for Cuba. It later added television broadcasts.

The International Broadcasting Act of 1994 established the International Broadcasting Bureau within USIA, including VOA, Radio/TV Marti, and the transmitter facilities of those stations and RFE/RL. The Act abolished the BIB and created within USIA the autonomous Broadcasting Board of Governors, responsible for the activities of all U.S. non-military international broadcasting.

Congress established Radio Free Asia in 1996, under BBG oversight, to serve as a substitute free press for China and other Asian countries under authoritarian rule.

With the abolishment of USIA in 1999, the BBG became an independent federal agency incorporating the IBB (with VOA and Radio/TV Marti) and also overseeing the non-profit organizations RFE/RL and RFA. Radio Sawa and Alhurra TV, broadcasting to the Middle East, were subsequently established as part of the non-profit organization Middle East Broadcasting Network, also under BBG oversight.

**The BBG's current USIB organizational chart is available at  
<http://www.bbg.gov/about-the-agency/organizational-chart/>**

## Notes

1. Included in USIB are the governmental Voice of America (VOA), the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB—Radio and TV Martí), the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) which provides administrative and technical services, and the congressionally-funded but privately managed grantees Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Radio Free Asia (RFA), Middle East Broadcasting Network (MBN—Alhurra TV and Radio Sawa). All of these organizations are under the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG)—a federal agency headed by bipartisan presidential appointees responsible for overseeing all U.S. Government-sponsored, non-military international broadcasting. Details of this complex structure are provided in the Appendix.
2. *Freedom of the Press 2012: A Global Survey of Media Independence*, Freedom House, 2012 (which notes gains in media freedom in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia).
3. See *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta, eds. Central European University Press, 2010, 142–144.
4. For an analysis of the role of Western radio in the Soviet media environment see R. Eugene Parta, *Discovering the Hidden Listener: An assessment of Radio Liberty and Western Broadcasting to the USSR During the Cold War*. Hoover Institution Press, 2007, 41–46. The case can be made that RFE and other Western broadcasters were even more successful in Eastern Europe than in the USSR.
5. As cited in A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond*. Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 2010, 1, 185.
6. *Congressional Record*, October 19, 1999.
7. As cited in Parta, 2007, xv.
8. The term “propaganda” has become a synonym for “spin,” for biased, nonobjective, counterfactual, dishonest journalism and for disinformation.
9. Parta, 2007, 36–39.
10. See R. Eugene Parta, “Western International Broadcasting: Cold War Impact on the USSR and Current Challenges in Middle East Crisis Areas” in *Building bridges: Security community and partnerships for change*, OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), Vienna, 2011, 29–35.
11. See Nat Krutchen and Jane Kim, “A Quiet Opening: North Koreans in a Changing Media Environment,” InterMedia, Washington, DC, 2012.
12. George P. Shultz, Principal Reporter. A. Ross Johnson, ed. *Communicating with the World of Islam*. Report for the Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnyslands. Hoover Institution Press, 2008.
13. See Philip Seib, *Real Time Diplomacy: Politics and Power in the Social Media Era*. Palgrave/Macmillan, 2012.
14. “Truth in the Age of Social Media,” *Nieman Reports*, Summer 2012, 3.
15. See A. Ross Johnson, “Today’s Liberation Technologies,” *Hoover Digest*, 2011, no. 3; Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*. Public Affairs, 2011. Morozov argues that “to salvage the internet’s promise to aid the fight against authoritarianism, those of us in the West who still care about the future of democracy will need to ditch both cyber-utopianism and internet-centrism...and to opt for policies informed by a realistic assessment of the risks and dangers posed by the Internet, matched by a highly scrupulous and unbiased assessment of its promises...”
16. Shawn M. Powers and William Youmans suggest that international broadcasters can use the new technology to aid the emergence of civil society in failed or failing states. (“A New Purpose for International Broadcasting: Subsidizing Deliberative Technologies in Non-transitioning States,” *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 8, no. 1, article 13).
17. The “Liberation Technology” project at the Stanford University Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law has created a loosely organized global network of tech-savvy individuals exploring and shaping this new communications phenomenon. “Liberation technology” has been defined by Larry Diamond as “any form of information and communication technology that can expand political, social and economic freedom.” (*Journal of Democracy*, 21, no. 3, 69–83). While this definition accentuates the positive, the lively and often contentious dialog on the network (<http://liberationtechnology.stanford.edu>) is equally concerned with threats to Internet freedom from all sides, and the nefarious ends which the new technologies can also serve.
18. USIB budget figures through 2013 can be found on the Broadcasting Board of Governors website, [www.bbg.gov](http://www.bbg.gov).

19. Detailed comparison of program content for a specific week of two services broadcasting in the same language could establish the degree of duplication and the relative strengths of each service.
20. See the chart "BBG Worldwide Impact," *BBG 2011 Annual Report*, [http://www.bbg.gov/wp-content/media/2012/06/BBGAnnualReport\\_LoRes\\_Part1.pdf](http://www.bbg.gov/wp-content/media/2012/06/BBGAnnualReport_LoRes_Part1.pdf)
21. FY 2012 estimated spending for Radio and TV Marti is \$29.3 million; for broadcasts to China, \$17.1 million for VOA and \$16.1 million for RFA (BBG data).
22. "Why Fighting Mullah Radio Is Not Easy," *Express Tribune* (Karachi), <http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/10611/why-fighting-mullah-radio-is-not-easy/>
23. Charles S. Dameron, "To Better Know One Another: The Meaning and Importance of Empathetic Objectivity in Government-Sponsored International Broadcasting," Honors Thesis, Dartmouth College, May 2011.
24. As cited in Gene Sosin, *Sparks of Liberty*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999, 75.
25. Johnson, 2010, 124–126.
26. Memorandum from RFE/RL President Sig Mickelson, December 1, 1976, RFE/RL Corporate Collection, Hoover Archives. The Guidelines specified that "Objectivity requires that information neither be omitted nor slighted in broadcasting because it may seem favorable to the East or unfavorable to the West."
27. Johnson, 2010, 120.
28. 22 USC Sec. 6202.
29. <http://www.state.gov/ci/>
30. "Update to Congress on National Framework for Strategic Communication," <http://mountainrunner.us/files/2012/03/President-response-to-NDAA-1055-of-2009.pdf>, with comment by Matt Armstrong <http://mountainrunner.us/2012/03/national-framework-strategic-communication-public-diplomacy/>
31. <http://www.state.gov/ci/iip/>
32. *Understanding the Mission of U.S. International Broadcasting*, McCormick Tribune Conference Series, 2007, 23.
33. The current BBG structure postulating a collective CEO of part time Presidentially-appointed Governors responsible for both directing a federal agency and overseeing non-profit grantees is widely criticized as dysfunctional. Former BBG Chairman James K. Glassman has depicted the BBG/ collective CEO as "structurally a mess" (comments at the Hudson Institute, September 5, 2012, <http://c-spanvideo.org/event/207761>); Helle C. Dale and Nick Zahn, "Time to Rethink the Broadcasting Board of Governors," Heritage Foundation Web Memo no. 3192, Heritage Foundation, Washington, DC, March 16, 2011, p. 1, [http://thf\\_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2011/pdf/wm3192.pdf](http://thf_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2011/pdf/wm3192.pdf).
34. See David Lowe, "Idea to Reality: NED at 25," <http://www.ned.org/about/history#1>.
35. *Congressional Record*, January 25, 1994.
36. USIB does not compete at a global level with other international broadcasters. It competes in numerous local markets worldwide. Here the brand equities that have been built over the years have significant value that should not be lost. The global audience for USIB is only an aggregate of dozens of local markets. If USIB seeks to establish a global brand to compete at that level with BBC, Al Jazeera, DW, RT, etc. it logically should be in television and in English. The counter-argument is that USIB would then be in competition with commercial US international broadcasters such as CNN International, Fox International, CNBC International, and Bloomberg International.
37. The Department of Energy, for example, successfully defederalized some of its Technology Centers.
38. Contributions include *Understanding the Mission of U.S. International Broadcasting*, McCormick Tribune Conference Series, 2007; Alan Heil, ed., *Local Voices/Global Perspectives: Challenges Ahead for U.S. International Media*, Public Diplomacy Council, 2008; Robert McMahon, "Channeling the Cold War: U.S. Overseas Broadcasting," *Foreign Service Journal*, October 2009, 52–58; Kim Andrew Elliott, "America Calling: A 21st Century Model," *Foreign Service Journal*, October 2010, 31–37; *Impact Through Innovation and Integration*, *BBG Strategic Plan 2012–2016*, [http://www.bbg.gov/wp-content/media/2012/02/BBGStrategicPlan\\_2012-2016\\_OMB\\_Final.pdf](http://www.bbg.gov/wp-content/media/2012/02/BBGStrategicPlan_2012-2016_OMB_Final.pdf); Jeffrey Gedmin, "Turn Your Radio On," *The American Interest*, October–November 2012. The issues are discussed on several on-line forums and blogs, including "BBG Strategy: Discussing the BBG Strategic Plan and the Future of International Broadcasting," published by the BBG Office of Strategy and Development ([www.bbgstrategy.com](http://www.bbgstrategy.com)); the Public Diplomacy Council website ([www.publicdiplomacycouncil.org](http://www.publicdiplomacycouncil.org)); "A Blog on Understanding, Informing, Empowering, and Influencing Global Publics," published by Matt Armstrong ([www.mountainrunner.us](http://www.mountainrunner.us)); "Kim Andrew Elliott Reporting on International Broadcasting" (<http://kimelli.nfshost.com/>); and "USG Broadcasts: BBG Watch," published by anonymous "former and current BBG and VOA employees and their supporters" (<http://www.usgbroadcasts.com/bbgwatch/>)
39. Deloitte Consulting LLP, *Broadcasting Board of Governors Grantee Merger Assessment*, November 10, 2011 (redacted), <http://www.bbg.gov/wp-content/media/2011/11/Deloitte-Grantee-Consolidation-Assessment-Redacted.pdf>
40. <http://cyprome.org/2012/04/bbg-2013.pdf>; <http://www.innovation-series.com/2012/05/18/project-profile-global-news-dashboard/>

REASSESSING U.S. INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING  
BY S. ENDERS WIMBUSH AND ELIZABETH M. PORTALE

## **REASSESSING U. S. INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### This Report

By many accounts, U.S. international broadcasting's mission is unclear, its attachment to U.S. foreign policy strategies tenuous at best, and its organizational structure ineffective. Many see the entire enterprise as broken. In this report we set out to explore the proposition that U.S. international broadcasting is facing multiple weaknesses that policy makers need to address. To do so, we engaged the thinking and analysis of approximately 30 individuals with extensive experience in foreign policy design and strategy, international relations more generally, international broadcasting, commercial media, public diplomacy and the promotion of human rights and democracy. They were asked to address three overarching questions:

- What is U.S. international broadcasting supposed to do, and how should it do it? What kind of strategic instrument is U.S. international broadcasting today?
- What is the nature of the connection between U.S. international broadcasting and U.S. foreign and security policy?
- How should U.S. international broadcasting be organized to optimize both mission and strategy?

The interviewees' assessments of U.S. international broadcasting and its environment included the observations below. Their most powerful and persistent observation was the need to completely re-conceptualize how the U.S. government communicates in support of its foreign policy, starting from the ground up. This may or may not result in some kind of "broadcasting" capacity, but nearly all stressed that today's broadcasting structure—a product of the Cold War beginning in the 1950s—is ill-suited for the complex competitive communications and media environment of today. Shuttering or radically overhauling today's U.S. international broadcasting in favor of a more modern and attuned communications paradigm stands as this report's preeminent insight.

### The World Today and the Changed Media Environment

Competition in the new and emerging communications space—with more differentiated audiences and greater technological power—is more aggressive and more complex than in the era for which U.S. international broadcasting was created. Competitors with anti-US messaging are fomenting an information war—and winning—while U.S. international broadcasting is challenged to keep pace with competitors and changes in the media landscape. In particular, understanding the role and power of social media is essential. Broadcast strategy should be replaced by media strategy.

### **Mission of U.S. International Broadcasting**

U.S. international broadcasting's overarching mission does not systematically address the realities of what is happening in the world. Responding to threats, advancing democratic norms, and conveying U.S. foreign policy interests should be key parts of the mission. Yet, individual missions among the networks are blurred and inconsistent. They require sharpening and realignment.

### **The Great Divide: Public Diplomacy and Surrogate Broadcasting**

The traditional division of U.S. international broadcasting into public diplomacy and surrogate missions should be strengthened and deepened. Both roles are critical but distinctions must be drawn more sharply. Today, however, tension over the public diplomacy and surrogate roles has grown, diluting mandates and creating duplication. The surrogate function should not be jumbled together with public diplomacy. Surrogate broadcasting is likely to gain in importance and strategic influence in the foreseeable future. Increasingly, local media environments in local languages are becoming the main competitive playing field. Broadcasting in each place should be tailored to that audience. Surrogate presence assumes greater importance as regimes monopolize information that really counts.

### **American Values**

Supporting and demonstrating American values should be integral to U.S. international broadcasting's mission. Ideas matter; U.S. international broadcasting should not be an ideas-free zone. Programming should be oriented to give hope. Detractors should be denied an opportunity to tarnish America. The conveying of U.S. values should be consistent but not didactic.

### **Telling America's Story**

Telling America's story and informing audiences of U.S. positions, policies and attitudes is not a side issue but rather a central objective of U.S. international broadcasting, and the Voice of America is its vehicle. U.S. international broadcasting should be the definitive source for news on America. America should be shown in all its complexity, nuance and diversity.

### **Audiences**

The U.S. is engaged in a war of ideas. U.S. international broadcasting should be an essential soft power instrument with key audiences. "Thinking" media consumers should remain the main target audience. Audiences should be differentiated on the basis of local conditions and platform use. Metrics that show influence are urgently needed to gauge how well U.S. international broadcasting effects change. Audience size is an ambiguous measurement of influence.

### **Network Independence, Objective Journalism and Firewalls**

U.S. international broadcasting should use good journalism as its platform. Its networks are not independent news agencies, as if they were CNNs that happen to receive their funding from the U.S. government. To justify the investment, its activities must be tied to America's strategic interests. Purveying "objective journalism" is by itself insufficient reason for U.S. international broadcasting to exist. The journalism "firewall" that has come to characterize the relationship between U.S. international broadcasting and other parts of the government is overblown and frequently counterproductive.

### **Does Broadcasting Connect to U.S. Foreign Policy Strategies?**

U.S. international broadcasting is nowhere effectively linked to U.S. government foreign policy planning processes or structures. Oversight by the Broadcasting Board of Governors is haphazard and diffuse, with little capacity to set broadcasting priorities, which in fact should be set at the highest levels within the U.S. government. Oversight should be redesigned and relocated in government to facilitate its connection to foreign policy objectives and practices. Broadcasting strategies and content should be aligned across all U.S. government communications facilities, except for military efforts, and U.S. international broadcasting's activities should be coordinated with foreign service components in the field.

### **Can it Be Fixed? Possible New Models**

Currently the taxpayer has little idea—or the wrong idea—of what he or she is paying for with regard to U.S. international broadcasting. A number of alternative models for organizing U.S. international broadcasting can be imagined, but all will require political and legislative efforts of considerable weight. This is made more difficult because little strong support for U.S. international broadcasting exists in government, where memory of its successes during the Cold War is weak. Moreover, U.S. international broadcasting is a low-budget item that commands little attention. Alternative models include developing a single broadcasting corporation along the lines of the BBC; funding local media in areas we seek to influence; creating an NPR-like broadcast corporation that could accept corporate sponsorship; transforming today's operations into a much smaller agency that is simply a portal for information and links; creating a national strategic communications agency at the cabinet level or attached to the White House; and merging all of today's broadcasting elements into a 501(c)3 NGO that advocates for freedom, human rights, free markets and media freedom.

### **Why Not Start Over: A New Paradigm**

U.S. international communications strategy should be rebuilt from the ground up. The intellectual model for U.S. international broadcasting was created for the Cold War. It is outdated and ineffectual. The proposed legislative reform is a good patch, but it is not a permanent fix. "Starting over"—abolishing today's "international broadcasting" while simultaneously designing a new communications capability to support U.S. foreign policy that resonates with the realities of today's world and media possibilities—should be given urgent attention. Much of the effort to re-

conceptualize why and how the U.S. should communicate in support of its foreign policy priorities and preferences could take place outside of government, in the think tank, university and NGO communities.

## I. INTRODUCTION

U.S. international broadcasting is a three-quarters of a billion dollar taxpayer-supported operation that currently is composed of five separate media networks and an overarching governing board. The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) is composed of eight governors, with the sitting Secretary of State serving *ex officio*. The Board is bipartisan. The President nominates four members, and the Senate leader from the party not holding the White House selects four members who are then nominated by the President. All governors are confirmed by the Senate for three-year staggered terms. As of 2013, U.S. international broadcasting “is one of the world’s largest newsgathering and reporting operations, with 50 news bureaus and offices worldwide. The five broadcast entities it supervises employ more than 3,500 journalists, producers, technicians, and support personnel full time in Washington, Miami, and Prague. It employs approximately 1,500 freelancers around the world.”<sup>1</sup>

By many accounts, the mission, attachment to U.S. foreign policy aims, and organizational structure of U.S. international broadcasting are unclear, and some see the entire enterprise as broken. A 2013 assessment from the Office of the Inspector General referred repeatedly to governance of this vast broadcasting empire as “dysfunctional,” and the governing body, the BBG, as “failing in its mandated duties.” These shortcomings stem from a virtual absence of strategy and “a flawed legislative structure.”<sup>2</sup>

A coincidental assessment from the Government Accounting Office highlighted how investment in U.S. international broadcasting is wasted through duplicating operational elements, replicating objectives, and a lack of business strategy.<sup>3</sup> An independent auditor’s report of the BBG (November 12, 2014) found “material weakness” and “significant deficiency” in key areas of BBG operations, none of which had been addressed from similar assessments one year earlier.<sup>4</sup> Even former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has weighed in. In her view, U.S. international broadcasting’s contribution to the nation’s public diplomacy efforts is now “defunct,”<sup>5</sup> a theme echoed in further congressional hearings.<sup>6</sup> Senator Richard Lugar’s assessment of U.S. international broadcasting of two years earlier—“U.S.

<sup>1</sup> OIG Report, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> “Inspection of the Broadcasting Board of Governors,” Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of State (ISP-IB-13-07), January 2013. (Hereafter “OIG Report”.)

<sup>3</sup> Government Accounting Office, January 2013. Also Deloitte Consulting LLP, *Broadcasting Board of Governors Grantee Merger Assessment*, November 10, 2011 (redacted), <http://www.bbg.gov/wp-content/media/2011/11/Deloitte-Grantee-Consolidation-Assessment-Redacted.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://oig.state.gov/system/files/aud-fm-ib-15-10.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Testimony to House Committee on Foreign Affairs, January 23, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Hearing: Broadcasting Board of Governors—An Agency “Defunct,” House Committee on Foreign Affairs, June 26, 2013.

International Broadcasting: Is Anybody Listening?”—laments the growing disconnect between the strategy and operation of U.S. international broadcasting and American foreign policy objectives.<sup>7</sup>

Concerned about this state of affairs, many have asked: What happened to U.S. international broadcasting? This once-powerful instrument of America’s public diplomacy is an intimate part of the Cold War’s historical narrative. Transformational leaders like Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel, and Boris Yeltsin lauded the work of Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and the Voice of America for helping to topple communist regimes and usher in democratic processes.

Coming off its Cold War triumphs, many have argued that U.S. international broadcasting was abruptly downgraded as a strategic instrument in America’s foreign policy arsenal, substantially de-funded, and reorganized in a way that impedes effective oversight, diffuses strategic focus, thwarts planning, and deepens inefficiencies while increasing waste and duplication. While individual journalists and some language services often create excellent programs, and the different networks enjoy isolated successes, U.S. international broadcasting has on the whole been on a downward trajectory for nearly two decades. An authoritative study by two international broadcasting veterans concludes that “[i]n an increasingly competitive global media environment, [U.S. international broadcasting] remains a disparate and disorderly archipelago of largely separate cold-war-era entities.”<sup>8</sup>

The period immediately following the end of the Cold War should logically have provoked an intense examination of the mission and objectives of U.S. international broadcasting generally, with a particular focus on where and how this kind of communicating fits into new strategies for enhancing America’s competitive position on a more diverse and dynamic landscape. New challenges to America’s interests were emerging across the globe, articulated through new alliances and relationships, enhanced capabilities, seductive ideologies, and outright confrontations. New technologies—e.g., the digital revolution and the arrival of social media—were poised to reshape the capabilities of international broadcasting’s traditional operations and art.

Yet this strategic re-examination—undertaken mostly outside of government—was arguably piecemeal at best.<sup>9</sup> U.S. international broadcasting essentially doubled

<sup>7</sup> “U.S. International Broadcasting: Is Anybody Listening?” Office of Senator Richard Lugar, June 6, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta, “A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Vision for U.S. Global Media,” Wilson Center Occasional Paper, November 2012, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Several efforts are notable: “Cold War Broadcasting Impact,” Report on a conference organized by the Hoover Institution and the Cold War International History Project of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at Stanford University, October 13-16, 2004; “Understanding the Mission of U.S. International Broadcasting,” McCormick Tribune Foundation (Chicago, 2007); R. Eugene Parta,

down on what was already understood, or thought to be so, based on formative Cold War experience that reinforced its logic. Downsized budgets for public diplomacy and strategic communications that were driven by the “peace dividend” also thwarted a potential re-examination of purpose and objectives. A comprehensive review, had it occurred, would have sought to identify what U.S. international broadcasting did well, where it needed to adapt to new and future foreign policy challenges, and how best to focus its strategic and operational priorities to fit new funding paradigms.

In the meantime, Congress justified a continued role for broadcasting to serve U.S. foreign policy in familiar terms, first to provide a reliable picture of America, its values and policies via the Voice of America (VOA); and, second, via a proliferation of “Radio Frees,” or “surrogate” broadcasters, to deliver targeted local and international news and information to places where local media’s supply was incomplete or inaccurate. To do this, Congress incrementally assigned a byzantine duplicative conglomeration of media networks to tackle these different missions. The VOA and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) remained in place following their Cold War triumphs. After adding broadcasts from Radio Martí to Cuba in 1985, and TV Martí in 1990, Congress created the International Broadcasting Bureau in 1994 (see below). Then came Radio Free Asia (RFA) in 1996 and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN) in 2004, which set in motion Radio Sawa and Alhurra TV. Along the way, several additional semi-networks were incorporated within the larger entities, for example Radio Free Afghanistan within RFE/RL and the Persian News Network (PNN) within the VOA, in response to particular Congressional mandates.

To govern this expanding universe of media companies, Congress created the BBG via the U.S. International Broadcasting Act of 1994, and placed the new board and the newly created International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) in the United States Information Agency (USIA).<sup>10</sup> The IBB was handed jurisdiction over the VOA, the Office of Cuban Broadcasting (OCB), which encompassed Radio and TV Martí, as well as the engineering and technical services to support them. In 1998, the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act merged USIA into the Department of State. The BBG was transformed into an independent federal agency, like the Department of Defense or the Department of Commerce.

At the same time the BBG’s jurisdiction was extended to include all U.S. international broadcasting networks, both within the federal agency and outside it. It was designated to oversee operations and impose on all networks some kind of

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*Discovering the Hidden Listener: An Assessment of Radio Liberty and Western Broadcasting to the USSR During the Cold War* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> The BBG replaced the highly effective Board for International Broadcasting (last Chairman: former congressman Dan Mica), which had had jurisdiction over only Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty from 1973 until its replacement by the BBG.



comprehensive communications strategy consistent with American foreign policy objectives. In addition, the BBG became the funding conduit for all U.S. international broadcasting—via direct appropriations to the networks inside the federal agency (VOA, IBB, and OCB) and via congressional appropriations to the BBG, which the BBG then turned around as “grants” to those networks outside the federal structure (RFE/RL, RFA, MBN).

This proliferation of capabilities, and consolidation under BBG governance, might appear normal to those familiar with commercial acquisitions, where bringing similar industries into a synthetic corporate structure makes good business sense. But U.S. international broadcasting’s disparate pieces were in no sense similar, despite Congress designating all of them as part of U.S. international broadcasting.

Confusion was built in. As part of the federal agency, the VOA, IBB and OCB are subject to federal guidelines and restrictions in everything from human resources policy to budgeting and reporting. In contrast, RFE/RL, RFA, and MBN were created outside the federal agency as 501(c)3 tax exempt non-profit organizations funded by Congress through grants from the BBG. Never part of the federal agency, these “grantees” operate under laws, guidelines, conventions, and restrictions of the private sector, while still accountable under certain guidelines of the Office of Management and Budget. This forced marriage of wholly incompatible parts is at the root of U.S. international broadcasting’s organizational dysfunction, as will be seen. The IBB illustrates another level of confusion entirely. Put into the draft law for unclear reasons and with a legislative sunset provision that would have stripped it out at the request of any member of the Senate prior to a final vote, the IBB survived when no one objected. What role it actually performs and its jurisdiction remain obscure and debated to this day.

#### This Report

The project is intended to contribute to a new conversation about U.S. international broadcasting, drawing on the wisdom and insights of a wide range of senior foreign policy practitioners and strategists, many of whom have direct experience with U.S. international broadcasting and its possibilities. We believe that this effort will also help to establish an analytical architecture for thinking about U.S. international broadcasting’s mission, the connective tissue attaching it to U.S. foreign policy, and its reorganization into an effective instrument, highlighting a range of options for policy.

In the report, we initially set out to explore the proposition that U.S. international broadcasting is facing multiple challenges that policy makers need to address. To do so, we engaged the thinking and analysis of approximately 30 individuals with extensive experience in foreign policy design and strategy, international relations more generally, international broadcasting, commercial media, public diplomacy and the promotion of human rights and democracy. Most of our interviewees possessed experience, skills and interests in a number of these areas and disciplines.

Our interviews were open-ended. We sought to keep interviewees focused on the larger questions, while encouraging them to drill down into questions and issues they understood particularly well. Thus, some interviews focused primarily on the emerging media environment, the strengths and weaknesses of America's public diplomacy or soft power, or the need to represent America more effectively and completely. Others approached the demands on U.S. international broadcasting from the perspective of different geographic, political, or security challenges; for example, addressing repressive regimes in places like Iran or North Korea, or the revanchist policies of Vladimir Putin's Russia. Still others concentrated on where U.S. international broadcasting fits within a broad array of America's foreign policy instruments.

Our selection of interviewees was not "scientific," as one might expect from a public opinion survey, not least because the number of individuals possessing an informed or proprietary interest in U.S. international broadcasting is small. We attempted to avoid the trap of partisanship by selecting evenly wherever possible from the main political camps, that is, to the extent we could determine which camps our interviewees were in. This sensitivity to possible political affiliation paid an early and significant dividend. It quickly made us aware that any partisan approach to U.S. international broadcasting is difficult to discern. To the contrary, with respect to our main lines of inquiry nearly all interviewees had reached similar conclusions, regardless of their affiliations on the political spectrum.

From our own experience at both the operational and policy levels in U.S. international broadcasting, we are aware that most discussion is about incremental change, usually within the confines of existing budgets. In seeking to elevate this discussion in the direction of key strategic concerns or "first principles," we asked our interviewees to address three overarching questions.

First, what is U.S. international broadcasting supposed to do, and how should it do it? What kind of strategic instrument is U.S. international broadcasting today? What should we hope to achieve by using it?

Second, what is the nature of the connection between U.S. international broadcasting and U.S. foreign and security policy? How should U.S. international broadcasting fit within the universe of organizations supporting and informing U.S. foreign policy. Is it intended to be part of the human rights community—a kind of Freedom House with antennae—as some call for? Or should it be an instrument of "strategic communications" or psychological operations, more appropriately coordinated by the Pentagon or the NSC, as others argue? Is U.S. international broadcasting's traditional justification as the source of objective information sufficient to justify the taxpayers' investment in it, especially in an environment overflowing with media claiming both objectivity and comprehensive coverage? What new roles and responsibilities should we anticipate?

Third, how should U.S. international broadcasting be organized to optimize both mission and strategy? Should it remain a honeycomb of media networks that compete for resources, or alternatively a single organization? Should it be subsumed by the State Department or the Pentagon? What kind of oversight and management conventions might enhance U.S. international broadcasting's ability to reflect America's foreign and security policies?

We have opted in the report wherever possible to allow the interviewees to speak for themselves, with our efforts directed mainly toward supplying connections that contribute to creating a clear analytical narrative around their observations without doing violence to these observations or the frame of reference in which they were offered. We have attempted to organize their observations and conclusions into concise discussions of particular issues, which appear as individual sections of the report to follow.

The interviews quickly and repeatedly established the following theme:

*U.S. international broadcasting done well and harnessed effectively to U.S. foreign policy has been and should again become a potent instrument in America's public diplomacy toolkit.*

But support for the converse also was strong; namely, if U.S. international broadcasting cannot be fixed, it is not worth the current investment, which amounts to one half of the current government budget for "public diplomacy." The interviewees' most powerful and persistent observation was the need to completely re-conceptualize how the U.S. government communicates in support of its foreign policy, starting from the ground up. This may or may not result in some kind of "broadcasting" capacity, but nearly all stressed that today's broadcasting structure is ill-suited for the complex competitive communications and media environment of today. Strong support for shuttering or radically overhauling today's U.S. international broadcasting in favor of a more modern and attuned communications paradigm stands as this report's preeminent insight.

Key insights will be fleshed out in the sections to follow. Among these are:

- Competition in the new and emerging communications space—with more differentiated audiences and greater technological power—is more aggressive and more complex than in the era for which U.S. international broadcasting was created. Competitors with anti-U.S. messaging are fomenting an information war—and winning—while U.S. international broadcasting is challenged to keep pace with competitors and changes in the media landscape. In particular, understanding the role and power of social media is essential. Broadcast strategy should be replaced by media strategy.

- U.S. international broadcasting's overarching mission does not systematically address the realities of what is happening in the world. Responding to threats, advancing democratic norms, and conveying U.S. foreign policy interests should be key parts of the mission. Yet, individual missions among the networks are blurred and inconsistent. They require sharpening and realignment.
- The traditional division of U.S. international broadcasting into public diplomacy and surrogate missions should be realigned and deepened. Both roles are critical but distinctions must be drawn more sharply. Today, however, tension over the public diplomacy and surrogate roles has grown, diluting mandates and creating duplication. The surrogate function should not be jumbled together with public diplomacy.
- Surrogate broadcasting is likely to gain in importance and strategic influence in the foreseeable future. Increasingly, local media environments in local languages are becoming the main competitive playing field. Broadcasting in each place should be tailored to that audience. Surrogate presence assumes greater importance as hostile regimes monopolize information that really counts.
- Supporting and demonstrating American values should be integral to U.S. international broadcasting's mission. Ideas matter; U.S. international broadcasting should not be an ideas-free zone. Programming should be oriented to give hope. Detractors should be denied an opportunity to tarnish America, but the conveying of U.S. values should be consistent and not didactic.
- Telling America's story and informing audiences of U.S. positions, policies and attitudes is not a side issue but rather a central objective of U.S. international broadcasting, and the Voice of America is its vehicle. U.S. international broadcasting should be the definitive source for news on America. America should be shown in all its complexity, nuance and diversity.
- The U.S. is engaged in a war of ideas. U.S. international broadcasting should be an essential soft power tool with key audiences. "Thinking" media consumers should remain the main target audience. Audiences should be differentiated on the basis of local conditions and platform use. Metrics that show influence are urgently needed to gauge how well U.S. international broadcasting effects change. Audience size is an ambiguous measurement of influence.
- U.S. international broadcasting should use good journalism as its platform. But its networks are not independent news agencies, as if they were CNNs

that happen to receive their funding from the U.S. government. To justify the investment, its activities must be tied to America's strategic interests. Purveying "objective journalism" is by itself insufficient reason for U.S. international broadcasting to exist. The journalism "firewall" that has come to characterize the relationship between U.S. international broadcasting and other parts of the government is overblown and frequently counterproductive.

- U.S. international broadcasting is nowhere effectively linked to U.S. government strategic foreign policy planning processes or structures. Oversight from the Broadcasting Board of Governors is haphazard and diffuse, with little capacity to set broadcasting priorities, which in fact should be set at the highest levels within the U.S. government. Oversight should be redesigned and relocated in government to facilitate its connection to foreign policy objectives and practices. Broadcasting strategies and content should be aligned across all U.S. government communications facilities, except for military efforts, and U.S. international broadcasting's activities should be coordinated with foreign service components in the field.
- Different models for organizing U.S. international broadcasting should be considered. Currently the taxpayer has little idea—or the wrong idea—of what he or she is paying for with regard to U.S. international broadcasting. A number of alternative models for organizing U.S. international broadcasting can be imagined, but all will require political and legislative efforts of considerable weight. This is made more difficult because little strong support for U.S. international broadcasting exists in government, where memory of its successes during the Cold War is weak. Moreover, U.S. international broadcasting is a low-budget item that commands little attention. Alternative models include developing a single broadcasting corporation along the lines of the BBC; funding local media in areas we seek to influence; creating an NPR-like broadcast corporation that could accept corporate sponsorship; transforming today's operations into a much smaller agency that is simply a portal with information and links; creating a national strategic communications agency at the cabinet level or attached to the White House; and merging all of today's broadcasting elements into a 501(c)3 NGO that advocates for freedom, human rights, free markets and media freedom.
- The proposed legislative reform of U.S. international broadcasting is a good patch, but it is not a permanent fix. U.S. international communications strategy should be rebuilt from the ground up. The intellectual model for U.S. international broadcasting was created for the Cold War. It is an outdated and ineffectual paradigm. "Starting over"—abolishing today's "international broadcasting" while simultaneously designing a new communications capability to support U.S. foreign policy that resonates with the realities of today's world and media possibilities—should be given urgent attention.

Much of the effort to re-conceptualize why and how the U.S. should communicate in support of its foreign policy priorities and preferences could take place outside of government, in the think tank, university and NGO communities.

## II. THE WORLD TODAY AND THE CHANGED MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

- Competition in new and emerging communications space is more aggressive and more complex than in the era for which U.S. international broadcasting was created.
- U.S. international broadcasting is challenged to keep pace with well-funded competitors and changes in the media landscape.
- Competitors with anti-U.S. messaging are fomenting an information war—and winning.
- Some regimes continue to exercise a monopoly over the information their citizens receive even in a globalized information world.
- Social media deserves special attention in any U.S. media strategy.
- English-language capability creates new opportunities for broadcasters to reach targeted audiences.

As several interviewees stressed, any discussion of what U.S. international broadcasting is doing or should be doing must be predicated on the question of what is happening in the world today and the direction in which things are likely to go. At the end of the Cold War, a sense of promise for peace and the ushering in of liberal democracies prevailed, at least for a period in the 1990s. But since then, and particularly after 9/11, significant areas of the world have become more dangerous and unstable. The U.S. has often been caught off guard and largely reactive to events, the latest being ISIL and Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Many interviewees also expressed the view that U.S. international broadcasting, too, has largely lagged behind in anticipating where extremism and anti-Western elements would likely develop and proliferate. Funding has been flat in areas most in need of U.S. international broadcasting, while non-priority areas receive duplicate funding, and the criteria for determining priorities has itself been short sighted and disconnected with realities on the ground. As one interviewee said, “we need to step back and define the world we live in today.... What is out there that might influence us?.... It is a range of countries that are not democratic that are extremely hostile to the United States and to the values it represents; and are influencing the way they think about those values and think about us. That is a BIG problem.” “Information from bad regimes is vile and bold, but people still believe it,” cautioned another.

***“Information from bad regimes is vile and bold, but people still believe it.”***

The implication of his point, which was shared by others, is that any strategy must be clear-eyed in confronting the inconvenient truth that the U.S. has formidable foes who wish to see it back on its heels and in retreat. As a first step, U.S. international broadcasting must restore clarity in looking at how the world is. “It’s not the way we would like it to be, and we have to face it the way it is.” Indeed, one very effective

strategy imposed by adversaries to ensure their own survival is to paint the U.S. as an enemy.

A consensus view emerged that a new vision of how the United States communicates in support of its foreign policy objectives is more necessary now than it was several decades ago, despite the explosion of information sources and platforms in most parts of the world that might make one think that efforts to impede or restrict flows of information or to spin and target them for narrow purposes could not succeed. The pattern of media development in many countries that have undergone political or social transitions in the last few decades, noted a former ambassador, has gone from “closed to open to corrupt.”

The greater availability of information has done little, he and others remarked, to erase the way authoritarian regimes and media-savvy non-state actors control access to information or tailor it in service of strategies supporting their preferred political outcomes. These regimes and groups have become serious communications competitors, offering, for example, highly produced television programming and their version of news on state-run outlets, which remain most popular with audiences. They have also, by extension, consolidated their virtual monopolies on information by disseminating content across digital platforms and borders, thus reaching and influencing consumers to whom they wish to target their propaganda. The results—from China to the Balkans to Russia to Syria—range from thwarted peaceful, democratic transformations to full-fledged conflicts and wars.

***“The media ‘revolution’ in much of the world has gone from closed to open to corrupt.”***

In other words, the communications revolution has encouraged regimes not just to wall off information in predictable ways—for example by restricting or denying the Internet through technical means, as happens in China, Iran or North Korea. More subtle but effective strategies are on the rise. Several interviewees whose organizations wrestle with the problem of states controlling information observed that, in many places, what one might call “hybrid regimes,” have emerged. In these, the state controls media and uses it as an instrument to maintain power. Such states effectively have a monopoly over the information their citizens receive, and what citizens receive from other sources is essentially marginal.

Growing competition from point-of-view media at the global level is also a problem, for example Al Jazeera in Arabic or Iranian broadcasts in the Middle East or Russia’s RT and its local stations, as is regimes’ practice of saturating local airways with “information” and “analysis” that is tendentious, distorted and blatantly mendacious, as one sees clearly in Russia’s unfolding communications strategy toward Ukraine and its other neighbors. Observed a long-time student of Russian affairs, “The scale of disinformation and outright lies on the part of the Russian government and the Russian media, I think, exceeds anything we saw in the Soviet period.”



Both global and local communications strategies increasingly rely on the integration of old and new technologies. “The interface between various platforms in an age where people are getting news off smart phones, those who know how to integrate well are the ones succeeding,” observed a senior diplomat among our interviewees, noting further that the State Department is not alone in being especially weak on the use of Twitter and other social media platforms. Old consumption patterns for information are dying, especially among younger people. “The way people are getting information, for example from BuzzFeed, has changed, it’s moving fast. This is the future for news. Email is passé.” The diplomat cited his own children’s preferences in this regard, pointing out that they never turn on TV for information any more, which they get from other platforms, mostly social media. Radio for them is practically a prehistoric concept. “Saudi women now download Anchorfree, Whisper, etc., platforms we need, because this is our target market,” noted another. “We need to be very, very current about what is going on and what is changing and what technology is being sold to other governments.”

***“We are a long way from the era when the battle was simply RFE versus Radio Moscow. Therefore, ‘broadcast strategy’ must give way to ‘media strategy’ in a broader sense.”***

A public diplomacy strategist argued for “more explicitness about how the rise of social media has changed the nature of the competition for audiences that broadcasters once could assume would be their own. Broadcast strategy and social media strategy must be tightly linked.” He and others noted growing trends around the world of people relying more on social media, and trusting them more, than on “traditional information providers,” and they cited the example of ISIL and other radical groups using social media effectively in targeting their audiences. Observed this strategist: “We are a long way from the era when the battle was simply RFE versus Radio Moscow. Therefore, ‘broadcast strategy’ must give way to ‘media strategy’ in a broader sense.” And the paradigmatic shift to “media strategy” with its focus on new platforms, new technologies, new audiences and their more specialized information consumption preferences “needs to be institutionalized, not *ad hoc*.”

On the supply side, several interviewees argued that journalistic standards for information gathering have declined, and that fewer foreign correspondents and bureaus “result in an ant’s view,” with no good overall picture. This decline is attributable in part to the absence of good journalism training and mentoring, and the lack of career paths for young journalists. Another interviewee—a former foreign correspondent—disagreed. In fact, there are more foreign correspondents than ever, he argued, “just not ours,” and he went on to discuss how the “business model for investigative journalism and foreign correspondence is broken.” In this environment, the BBG, which operates a global network of journalists, would seem to enjoy a distinct advantage. One interviewee cited a recent State Department approach to offer workshops on the empowering potential of media tools

themselves in efforts to build more open societies. “This should be a continuing priority for U.S. broadcasting and related programs.”

A continual theme in the interviews was prefaced by universal acknowledgement that the media environment into which the United States now seeks to communicate in support of its foreign policy preferences may now be unrecognizable to the media strategies built on “broadcasting” as the BBG and State Department currently understand it. Indeed, in a complex and dangerous world, U.S. international media has largely been reactive, lacking a global, proactive strategy to encourage and help shape more hospitable environments and counter threats, ideally before they happen. Most interviewees questioned whether we can succeed on a competitive communications landscape working from a blueprint prepared in the 1950s. “How do you get a message across?” was asked repeatedly.

Several interviewees went so far as to recommend that U.S. international broadcasting concentrate solely on helping to remove barriers to global consumers’ access to the cascade of information produced beyond the U.S. government, for example by concentrating investment on the development and distribution of anti-internet-circumvention technologies, or by having dedicated Twitter feeds with informational links to other information providers, wherever they might originate. The reasoning behind this recommendation is straight-forward: Technologies have given birth to a fluid marketplace of ideas in which users can judge for themselves what is valuable and what is not. But they are often not directed to information that is curated to present an accurate view of what the United States is really all about.

Another development in the media environment, especially since the end of the Cold War, should influence broadcasting strategy on both the demand and supply sides: the growing use of English. The globalization of media has underlined the importance of English use in business, international affairs, the arts, culture, even sports. Few regimes are able to wall off their populations from massive intrusions of English-language content, whether via news, music or movies. Our interviewees pointed to the rapidly growing number of English-capable young people in places like the new states of the former Soviet Union, the Middle East, and Asia generally. They argued that the rise of English as the global language—and efforts by young people to participate at this level—serves as a natural connection to America and its narratives. Not surprisingly, they noted, some adversaries increasingly target not just Western audiences but English-capable non-Western ones with their own sophisticated English-language media: a clear admission of the language’s magnetic powers. Many interviewees argued that few things facilitate the entry of diverse audiences into the world of Western ideas and values better than command of English; and at the level of strategy, attracting English-capable youth would go far in any broadcasting effort to focus on audiences of critical thinkers. And they expressed dismay that English-language broadcasting at the VOA has recently been reduced and that English-language programing on local themes for “surrogate” audiences has yet to be attempted in a serious way. These commissions and

omissions were attributed to the weakness of a compelling overarching strategy for U.S. international broadcasting.

### III. MISSION

- U.S. international broadcasting needs a sharper, more coherent mission that actively *promotes*, rather than simply supports, democracy; addresses and combats competitive threats; and advances U.S. interests, goals, and values.
- U.S. international broadcasting must contest an information space of renewed ideological warfare.
- The U.S. is increasingly ceding the information space to adversaries.
- U.S. international broadcasting should exist within the realm of public diplomacy in a more official sense.
- Missions among U.S. international broadcasting's networks are blurred and inconsistent.

The mission of US international broadcasting, revised by the BBG in 2010, is: "To inform, engage and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy." If U.S. international broadcasting's *raison d'être* is to support freedom and democracy, one might expect a narrower definition of who and where it should be targeting its efforts—that is, places where democracy and freedom are unknown or under siege and where these deficits create threats to the U.S. or to the global community.

Nearly all of our interviewees stated that U.S. international broadcasting's mission should be about much more than what it purports to be. They spoke to the need for a sharper, more coherent mission that actively *promotes*, rather than simply supports, democracy; addresses and combats competitive threats; and advances U.S. interests, goals, and values in the most constructive ways possible. The first step in articulating these, or any other tactical goals, they argued, was to understand the new media environment, both in terms of technologies, competitors and audiences, and where U.S. international broadcasting fits within that context. As the president of a democracy-promotion NGO put it: "You have two separate problems—how to understand what are the problems that arise from the world we live in, and, second, to understand how the U.S. international broadcasting mission is related to that. We have always operated within the assumption of a strong West, international stability and so forth, which are not there today."

Many took this a step further in arguing that U.S. international broadcasting should exist within the realm of public diplomacy in a more official sense. "Broadcasting is inextricable from the larger public diplomacy issues...not as something independent but as part of a broader and larger and deeper U.S. use of cultural means to engage with the world," one said.

Understanding the new media environment and the need for more flexible, nimble models for media, brought to the fore the priority most interviewees felt was lacking in U.S. international broadcasting's mission: the ability to communicate U.S. foreign

policy preferences, interests and values where they are increasingly under threat. Part and parcel of these aims is the promotion of democracy but in a more targeted sense, that is, in regions that are both dangerously anti-democratic and using anti-American narratives as a means of indoctrinating populations to support their cause. These threats were seen as much more potent and threatening to America's own interests and that of the peaceful democratic order.

***"You have two separate problems—how to understand what are the problems that arise from the world we live in, and, second, to understand how the U.S. international broadcasting mission is related to that. We have always operated within the assumption of a strong West, international stability and so forth, which are not there today."***

One common view held by interviewees was that U.S. international broadcasting has very clear adversaries, such as Russia and ISIL, in an information space of renewed ideological warfare. This, they said, must be at the forefront of U.S. international broadcasting's efforts. As one scholar put it: "We are now beginning a long-term fight against radical  *jihadism*. This will be the unifying message of our foreign policy from Morocco to Pakistan for as far as the eye can see. Broadcasting should be in this light. There are lots of different ways to do it, but if you are not in this mindset it's not going to happen." Other interviewees underlined that broadcasting/media should be used to counter violent extremism, particularly in terms of undercutting extremists' recruiting efforts. "The U.S. [broadcasting] product is reactive and is not integrated within the larger public diplomacy and foreign policy context," argued a public diplomacy strategist. Further, he argued, this mission should not be mainly the preserve of our military's communications efforts, for example those of some combatant commands.

A former senior diplomat said: "We [should be] using U.S. international broadcasting to achieve the national interest. That's the end game. We're looking at things we want to get done in the world.... We want more countries to be free because that makes us safer. Broadcasting helps in that by helping nations become freer because it provides a free press to places that don't have a free press, and it helps explain American foreign policy."

There was significant concern among interviewees that the U.S. was ceding the information space to adversaries, and was simply not a presence when it most needed to be. Description of this phenomena included U.S. international broadcasting's defensive posture in having to resort to debunking of lies about the U.S. or its policy, rather than assuming a proactive stance. While countering disinformation and attacks on the U.S. is important and should be an official function, one also noted that: "We need to be more aggressive than just stating policy, what we do in the world. I think we take it for granted that everybody understands it or

that it doesn't matter. That is definitely not my view." Another stressed that U.S. international broadcasting should be more confident in "explaining our foreign policy and cannot just rely on intermediaries to do it for us, whether Russian news, NBC, anybody."

Others said that as long as the U.S. is influential, audiences and information consumers will want to know what it stands for. Not being a strong presence leads to a weakened posture in the realm of ideas, to the extent that "silence implies consent." One interviewee said, "It's not a war of ideas, but it is entering that arena and being a presence there is critical because the default option, it seems to me, is that then we are not at all playing in that game. And I think more harm would be done. A lot of other people are in the game, and if you pull out of it, then people will listen to others. Does that mean they will do certain things? I don't know. But do you want to take that chance?"

The discussion of what a renewed mission for U.S. international broadcasting should encompass and how such a mission should be prioritized and structured in extraordinary times would not be complete without a more granular look at the missions of the five networks at the heart of U.S. international broadcasting. As the networks produce content and carry out programming, they should theoretically have a more nuanced understanding of what it is they are doing and why, and what their audiences need and want.

***"A lot of other people are in the game, and if you pull out of it, then people will listen to others. Does that mean they will do certain things? I don't know. But do you want to take that chance?"***

However, there remains much confusion and fuzziness over how these individual missions are carried out despite what may be written in their corporate statements of purpose and role. The statements themselves are not clearly aligned. Some of the objectives of the networks stress the "promotion of," rather than simply "in support of" democracy through the provision of a free press or objective news and information; part of one statement is to serve "America's interests with reliable information that presents the policies of the United States clearly and effectively." A third focuses primarily on the provision of news and information. One stresses radio but does not mention the plethora of other platforms being used around the world, which calls into question the engagement piece of U.S. international broadcasting's overall mission. By way of illustration, one interviewee pointed to a seeming disconnect within the mission of a single network: "When Middle East Broadcasting was set up, there was already by then a mushing of the two missions. All you have to do is go online, you read the two different purposes written there, and they are kind of contradictory."

Questions often arose in interviews as to how effective these missions were, whether they are contradictory, complementary, or duplicative at the operational

level, and whether they are in sync with the mission of U.S. international broadcasting at all. The consensus among interviewees was that little attention has been paid to this issue, resulting in what one decried as “complete mission drift and mission creep. When did it happen? Who knows? Three, five, seven, nine years ago, but it has been *happening*.”

#### IV. THE GREAT DIVIDE: PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND SURROGATE BROADCASTING

- **Tension over the public diplomacy and surrogate roles has grown, diluting mandates and creating duplication.**
- **Both roles are critical, and distinctions must be drawn more sharply.**
- **The public diplomacy role and the surrogate role should not be jumbled up; these are separate functions that should be addressed separately.**
- **Surrogate media are likely to gain in importance and strategic influence in the foreseeable future. Local media environments in local languages are becoming the main competitive playing field.**
- **Surrogate presence assumes greater importance as regimes monopolize information that really counts.**

The traditional distinction between the Voice of America and U.S. international broadcasting's other networks—Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Middle East Broadcast Networks, Radio Free Asia and the Office of Cuban Broadcasting (Radio and TV Martí)—is supposed to be straightforward. The VOA, as its names indicates, was intended to be responsible for describing America to a global audience in all its wonder and complexity in a variety of languages. It was indeed “America’s voice” with its emphasis on “us.”

The other networks—“surrogate” broadcasters in today’s parlance—were designed to provide what are essentially credible local broadcast services in local languages for the audiences in countries that either forbade or restricted such services or offered their citizens misleading, tendentious or mendacious information and commentary intended to defend the domestic regimes’ power and to support their narratives and objectives. Programming from the surrogate broadcasters for the most part eschewed “doing America” in favor of deep and penetrating broadcasting about the local issues through factual reporting and provocative discussions. Surrogate broadcasting, in contrast to the VOA’s being “about us,” for the most part, was “about them.” Both the VOA and the surrogate stations developed strong journalistic standards and accountability as the platforms for their broadcasts.

Tension between the VOA model of “official” or “public diplomacy” broadcasting and the surrogate model of “local” broadcasting is long-standing, beginning almost at the creation of Radio Free Europe (1950) and Radio Liberty (1953) for the specific purpose of undermining communist rule in Eastern Europe and the USSR. For the most part, the surrogate stations avoided the VOA’s mission of presenting America to their audiences, although a few exceptions existed. Many VOA language services, on the other hand, operated as mostly surrogate stations. By the time the USSR collapsed in 1991, duplicate language services with strong surrogate orientations proliferated across the networks, with overlap being particularly pronounced between the VOA and Radio Liberty. Overlap multiplied with the creation of Radio Free Asia in 1996, as both RFA and the VOA broadcast similar “local” programming



to a number of Asian countries. Noted one interviewee possessing deep experience in U.S. international broadcasting, who argued for the VOA's dual mission:

*The view that was always claimed about VOA, and maybe this should have been the view, that VOA was broadcasting [only] about America to the world—it's not true.... If there is a function for VOA, you have to do some local reporting, or people don't listen to you.*

Yet disquiet over the VOA's investment of resources into surrogate services where they are already provided by other U.S. government networks has grown in recent years as official public diplomacy is increasingly seen to be failing. Surely the VOA, this view goes, should be a powerful public diplomacy instrument in support of U.S. foreign policy objectives, but it is now too far out of its lane to maximize its effect.

***"For the [public diplomacy] function, addressing the disinformation, that really is a more official function. And the U.S. has to begin to take that function seriously, which it has not done until now. And it needs to. But it is not going to take it seriously if it is jumbled up with the other thing [surrogate]. My advice on structure and strategy and substance is that you have two separate problems which should be addressed separately."***

A strong consensus exists among the interviewees of this project that both roles—the public diplomacy role played largely by the VOA and the surrogate role of the other networks—continue to be critical, and that the role of each needs to sharpened. One interviewee cautioned against the continued blending of the two roles. "For the [public diplomacy] function, addressing the disinformation, that really is a more official function. And the U.S. has to begin to take that function seriously, which it has not done until now. And it needs to. But it is not going to take it seriously if it is jumbled up with the other thing [surrogate]. My advice on structure and strategy and substance is that you have two separate problems which should be addressed separately."

Interviewees pounded home the message that surrogate broadcasting is likely to be an increasingly valuable communications instrument on unfolding landscapes where America's vital interests are challenged. Clearly Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of parts of Ukraine, and Iran's resolute march toward developing nuclear weapons heightened many interviewees' sense of urgency in this regard, but beefing up surrogate broadcasting generally was cited as a need from Cuba to North Korea. Surrogate media in these contexts should exist to confront internal, or domestic, realities, for example, the crushing of moderate pluralistic elements in Russian society and elsewhere.

"It [surrogate media] does have to do with providing the audiences—the people who follow these issues, the people who are active in trying to have a more open society, people who are under great, great pressure today—the kind of information that would be extremely difficult to get in a systematic way," said one interviewee. "I do believe that that function is still necessary in a larger number of countries than you might think. Certainly, most of the former Soviet Union but probably beyond that in a lot of countries."

The surrogate media function must not be conflated with the public diplomacy function, he added. The surrogate dimension is "very different from what kind of information the United States as a country should be trying to project to the world, not only about itself, but to counter what is today a very, very dangerous international information environment. This has nothing to do with, or is very indirectly related to surrogate broadcasting, but it has to do with the fact that certainly Putin, but not only Putin, is projecting messages not only through his own messages but through RT, China through CCTV, Iran, etc."

***"After the breakup of Soviet Union, we tried to bring notions of Western journalism, but now that is being undermined. The whole situation cries out for a more coherent American response."***

Broadcasting in each place should be tailored to that audience. "We say there is a lot of media out there, but people are really watching limited channels for news," noted a long-time Russia specialist. "And they want it in Russian or in their own language, but Russia's media is still dominant. None have developed channels as sophisticated as Russia's [in the post-Soviet space]."

Another key role for the surrogates is to provide a model for independent indigenous media where corruption and media manipulation are rampant. This function must be stressed to a greater extent, said one analyst. "After the breakup of Soviet Union, we tried to bring notions of Western journalism, but now that is being undermined. The whole situation cries out for a more coherent American response. And it is politically significant with what is now going on in eastern Ukraine with people getting totally different accounts of what they think is going on with what we know to be the case."

Deepening the surrogate presence assumes greater importance as regimes monopolize information that really counts. As much as it may seem that media pluralism and choice are abundant owing to new technologies, this is not actually the case. As one interviewee said: "The trajectory is clear: the degree of political control tracks with the relevant available political information in Russia. If you are motivated, savvy with technology, educated, you can find anything. But if you are a monolingual Russophone struggling to stay afloat financially you're probably watching RTR or Channel 1. So it's more the question of how you use the elements of pluralism to get the information that matters and counts to the right audiences. A

monopoly might be too strong a term, but effective control of news that counts is probably close to it.”

*Proposed legislation pending at the time of this writing is focused primarily on forcing the VOA back into its public diplomacy lane and out of the surrogate lane, with some exceptions. The International Communications Reform Act of 2014 (HR 4490) at this writing has been passed by the House of Representatives and is awaiting action by the Senate. The ICRA reflects the bipartisan concern of many members of congress and senators, diplomats and strategists that America’s international broadcasting capability has diminished significantly since the end of the Cold War, and that emerging situations like Georgia (2008), the Arab Spring (beginning in 2010) and Ukraine (2014) are precisely the kinds of “soft power” responses for which U.S. international broadcasting was created. The proposed legislation addresses three problems specifically: the tension between U.S. international broadcasting’s public diplomacy and surrogate missions, its dysfunctional organization, and its link to U.S. foreign policy.*

*With regard to the first, the legislation is aimed at adjusting what its authors argue is the dilution of the critical distinctions between U.S. international broadcasting’s twin missions. The legislation, therefore, seeks to reinforce the public diplomacy/surrogate distinction. If HR 4490 becomes law, the VOA will be refocused on a public diplomacy role cooperating closely with the Department of State. This role includes, in addition to carrying news and information, the traditional responsibility to “tell America’s story” and explain U.S. official policies. It will also be charged with combating false information about the U.S. circulating in its broadcast regions. Significantly the VOA will enjoy only limited license to engage in surrogate broadcasting (for example in Africa where the VOA is America’s only broadcaster). The State Department, by design, will play a significant role in determining where the VOA will operate and where it will not, and it will be a strong voice in how the VOA exercises its public diplomacy function.*

*And U.S. international broadcasting’s surrogate function will also be strengthened. Surrogate broadcasters will be consolidated in a new Freedom News Network [FNN]. The mission of the FNN’s networks is defined rigidly in the legislation as “surrogate broadcasting,” with emphasis on local news and information, culture, society, history, arts, and religion; democracy building; and training of journalists. Put differently, the FNN’s surrogate stations will be responsible for none of the VOA’s public diplomacy mission.*

## V. AMERICAN VALUES

- **Today's audiences frequently question the applicability of concepts like democracy, rule of law, a free press, free markets and human rights, and they discount the freedom and individualism at the heart of Western beliefs.**
- **Ideas matter. U.S. international broadcasting should not be an "ideas free zone."**
- **Orient programming to give hope. Understanding how the values we seek to promote align with the needs and yearnings of countries requires a level of sophistication and nuance that is hard to achieve.**
- **Deny detractors an opportunity to tarnish America.**
- **The conveying of U.S. values should be consistent but not didactic.**

In today's world, core American values routinely are dismissed by representatives of political and religious cultures in many parts of the world who advocate rejecting them wholly or specifically as offensive, imperialistic or inappropriate. For U.S. international broadcasting, this poses an unfamiliar challenge from the days of Cold War competition, when it was generally believed that American democracy and the values inherent in it were powerfully appealing to the nascent desire for freedom among people who were not free. In contrast, today's broadcast spectrum increasingly is composed of audiences who at the very least question the applicability of concepts like democracy, rule of law, a free press, free markets and human rights to their own societies; and they frequently reject them in favor of forms of governance, social justice, communications, economic organization and community norms that discount the democratic ideals at the heart of Western beliefs.

As the U.S. international broadcasting environment has focused increasingly on areas of the world where criticism or outright rejection of American values, as they are understood, is more common, broadcasters have questioned the threshold at which support for American values becomes unappealing to listeners or is seen simply as "propaganda." Broadcasting to the Islamic world has underlined this challenge, where criticism of what Americans really stand for is fueled by the pervasive negative influence of ubiquitous American popular culture.<sup>11</sup> One interviewee recalled a discussion he had had with an imam in Afghanistan. "The imam asked me if Americans can understand two things being true at the same time. The imam argued:

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<sup>11</sup> Martha Bayles, *Through a Screen Darkly: Popular Culture, Public Diplomacy, and America's Image Abroad* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2014). See, also, A. Ross Johnson and George P. Shultz, *Communicating with the World of Islam* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2008).

*I am opposed to the Taliban, I want girls to go to school, I think TV and painting should be permitted...I oppose stoning of women. But Southern California is not a model for my Afghanistan for a long list of reasons. Can you understand that both are true at the same time?*

We asked our interviewees how U.S. international broadcasting should address the “American values” issues in its programming, anticipating that some would argue for ideas-free programming in this often skeptical environment. Yet not a single interviewee supported such a position; if anything the strong consensus among them was for more and stronger support for core American values across the entire spectrum of international broadcasting. American values are an indispensable ingredient—indeed, an underlying platform—of what we have to say and how we say it. American values, truths and ideals “are imbedded and inherent in everything we do.” Moreover, simply engaging with audiences in a neutral way—for example, by just presenting news and information as a kind of media service to the world—is not enough to justify the effort to communicate. “If we are not founded on some absolute truths,” observed one interviewee,

*what do we have to tell people? Or are we just supposed to be ‘expressing our interest’ and [therefore] to be seen as manipulating people to serve our own interests, which is what is happening now? U.S. international broadcasting should be an important vehicle to establish your own moral legitimacy and undermine the moral legitimacy of those who oppose the principles by which we seek to live.*

***What are we telling them, what truth do we have to share that is so important that we need to do it, both because it represents ourselves and explains ourselves to the world, but that it also gives hope?”***

In this sense, underlining American values in programming has both “offensive” and “defensive” elements. Articulated effectively, values in a public diplomacy strategy can uplift and inspire audiences. “Everything we do,” noted a long-time public diplomacy specialist, “should be oriented to give hope” to listeners and viewers. To emphasize this point, this interviewee quoted Abraham Lincoln:

*The sentiments of the Declaration of Independence gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope to the world for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weight should be lifted from the shoulders of all men and that all should have an equal chance. This is the sentiment embodied in the Declaration of Independence.*

“Well, of course that’s what Jefferson thought,” he continued. “Insofar as the VOA was supposed to reflect U.S. principles and institutions, I think that was the idea. What are we telling them, what truth do we have to share that is so important that

we need to do it, both because it represents ourselves and explains ourselves to the world, but that it also gives hope?"

This sentiment—that America “still has truth to tell” and that this truth spreads hope—was dominant throughout the interview sample, regardless of the interviewees’ generation, political identification or affiliation. “It is in the DNA of our country to think of ourselves as offering an example for the world,” added another interviewee. If we ignore or cede this role, or if it is seen as illegitimate, then the world is worse off, he and others concluded, underlining that U.S. international broadcasting has an important role in maintaining American legitimacy by operationalizing the powerful ideals that sustain it. And audiences can be expected to respond positively to this evocation of American values, even if more explicit visions of American popular culture or particular American policies are not welcome. Observed another:

*In many places in the world they may not want American-style democracy for a variety of reasons, but the basic principles of American freedom resonate. People like accountable government of some sort, people tend not to like arbitrary rule and tyranny generally, people like to decide their fate on their own or with their families or communities.*

What is U.S. international broadcasting’s operational role in supporting and defending American values? U.S. foreign policy, several observed, is a tricky balance between interests and values. With regard to values, “we are not Amnesty International,” simply pursuing altruistic goals. On the other hand, “we are not pure un-distilled realism either.” Understanding “how the values we seek to promote align with the needs and yearnings of countries, without going over the top...requires a level of sophistication and nuance that is hard to achieve.” Observed another, “The disconnect between ideal and actual policy looks like hypocrisy to the rest of the world. Policy should aim for ideal results but take a pragmatic view in particular countries.” This level of sophistication and nuance, several emphasized, will be unachievable if American values are presented didactically, that is, as a recitation of moral instructions. “The idea of beating them over the head with our ideals is the wrong approach,” concluded a long-time public diplomacy professional in a summary that captured the overwhelming sentiment of our interviewees.

***“The biggest message that America has is that it is an open society, that it helps the democratic aspirations of other people, that it has a democratic structure in itself.... When broadcasters reflect a multiplicity of views, there is a hike in audience. Because America is about pluralism, open society and opportunities.”***

A winning strategy for U.S. international broadcasting, therefore, is to describe and demonstrate America’s openness. American values are on display best when we show America’s complexity. “We should offer a narrative about ourselves that

represents ourselves in the most complicated and vibrant and contradictory and boisterous way possible, because that's the only way to show the reality of ourselves." Interviewees pointed out repeatedly that Americans bring certain frames of mind to bear on crises. They gravitate toward rational, dispassionate voices capable of articulating broad diversity in opinion while identifying options for action. Embedded in this frame of mind is a vision of how world problems should be solved. A typical comment: "The biggest message that America has is that it is an open society, that it helps the democratic aspirations of other people, that it has a democratic structure in itself.... When broadcasters reflect a multiplicity of views, there is a hike in audience. Because America is about pluralism, open society and opportunities."

## VI. TELLING AMERICA'S STORY

- The America narrative has been badly diluted over time and needs to be restored. America's story is no less attractive or compelling today than previously.
- The America narrative has suffered because Americans' own belief in the narrative has been fractured.
- Show the complete America with nuance, complexity and diversity.
- U.S. international broadcasting should be the definitive source for news on America.

*"Aren't we the advertising agency, the PR agency of the U.S. government to the people of the world, even in the darkest places? Why don't we do that?"*

A dominant theme of the interviews was that the most important function of the VOA, and increasingly of MBN (Alhurra TV) is to "tell America's story." Giving listeners "the sense of America" was cited repeatedly as the essential ingredient of VOA and MBN programs, including news and information programs. "You want people around the world to have an appreciation of America that they would otherwise not have, a sense of American institutions and values that are important," noted one. At times, he continued, this can "require doing things in the journalistic enterprise that may not be perceived as in the interest of the governing power," but the attachment to the "sense of America" cannot waver. Another interviewee captured a prevailing attitude in our sample in describing the instructions of a famed BBC broadcaster: "There are 20 different ways of reporting a story, and your job is to find the one that best serves the British Empire." And: "Report the news, and if it doesn't make us look good, okay, but we don't have to do warts and all for the purpose of accentuating the warts."

A senior media executive argued that these networks' goal should be "to seize control of the strategic narrative." America's narrative, his and others' observations underlined, should be aimed directly at the competing narratives of our adversaries, for example those from Russia's RT and broadcast from Iran.

But the consensus view of these interviewees is that the America narrative has been badly diluted over time. In part, this is the pernicious effect of the spread of American popular culture, which offends many whose morals or cultures reject the violence, sexual license and social conventions portrayed as common to America. But interviewees could point to no strategies or even efforts to form strategies within U.S. international broadcasting to counter these effects and push back. "The pop culture draw isn't as powerful as it used to be," noted a former ambassador. "And there is a lot about pop culture that is challenging not just to the bad guys but makes the good guys feel uncomfortable.... The message comes across that if you are not living in America in 2014 you are retrograde and repressive." Telling America's



narrative effectively should be a potent antidote to this message. “The Chicago Symphony is also America,” said a former ambassador, “not a Hollywood export. We need better ways of showing this.”

In part, it is the signal sent by America’s leaders. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s public rebuke of U.S. international broadcasting in a congressional testimony as “defunct” and lacking the ability to tell America’s story was seen as particularly damaging. “Whether or not it’s analytically true,” observed a scholar and strategist with deep ties to broadcasting, “it’s not something you want the Secretary of State to be saying. There are times when analytical truths should be left to the think tank community, and the political message should be something else.” Another interviewee criticized President Obama’s choice of Al Jazeera over the VOA or Alhurra to communicate to Middle Eastern audiences shortly after being inaugurated for the first time as the wrong signal to send audiences we seek to attract to America’s strategic narrative. “A huge, huge mistake.”

One public diplomacy strategist disagreed. “The White House made a wise decision: Al Jazeera had or has a far larger and more influential audience than any U.S. government broadcasters. The credibility of the audience’s own media should not be underrated.” He went on to argue for a more integrated media strategy for advancing U.S. foreign policy interests that includes using non-American media more effectively. This question—How do we take advantage of local media capabilities and expertise to advance our interests?—was raised frequently in our interviews. “We need to understand,” this strategist argued, “the fact that the most credible way for American policy to be delivered to foreign publics is through the foreign publics’ own voices.... This is public diplomacy by proxy.”

In part, the America narrative has suffered because Americans’ own belief in the narrative has been fractured. A number of interviewees observed that we are less comfortable these days telling our own story. A strategist described what he sees as the prevailing irony: “We have in mind this artificial distinction, this idea, that if we are doing it we are not doing it so well, and so we shouldn’t want to disadvantage our own people because it will be a waste of time and effort, which is itself kind of an obscene self-fulfilling prophecy.”

In fact, none of our interviewees bought the notion that America’s story is less attractive or compelling today than previously. Indeed, they argued, it is in many ways more attractive, especially to those educated and engaged audiences we seek to attract with our programming. Noted a retired diplomat: “Pretty simple: if you open up lines at any embassy and said ‘free visas’ that line would be endless.” America continues to represent opportunity, freedom, liberty, independence and education: “a bundle of aspirations and practical attributes that the U.S. represents even if it is not selling them. It exists at the street level, rather than over the airwaves.... We, too, have to believe that narrative.” “Why,” asked another, “is it that America is the number one desired destination in Iran? If people don’t like what America has to offer, they won’t come.”

MBN's Alhurra TV has done laudably well in Iraq, argued a specialist of the Middle East. No surprise here, he noted, as Iraqis want to understand America, and "they have no truck for the Al Jazeera story of the world." We should double down on the America narrative, he argues:

*If you are an Arab and you want to understand America, this [Alhurra] should be your first stop on the dial...the reportage of what we are doing in the Middle East should be second to none. We should be light years ahead of everybody.... If we get that right, which is essential, then we can be really objective reporters about events, trends and developments in the Middle East.... We may not do so well as others in reporting what happened in Cairo yesterday, but that is not our comparative advantage. Our comparative advantage is the America piece, and we should be winning that battle hands down.*

Dominating this market—anyone with anything to do with America—is essential, and much more should be done at the VOA and MBN on America. He noted that the operational management of MBN seems to understand this, but there is a tug in the opposite direction when it is translated down to line producers. Others observed that at critical services, like VOA's Persian News Network, resistance to the America narrative is strong.

***"I would want to spend the majority of the money on simply doing great objective reporting on all aspects of American society. I think that is incredibly powerful!"***

What should the America narrative say? "A good representative of America is not someone who shouts for or against America. A good representative of America is someone who represents the sophistication and nuanced view of America." This view from a senior scholar of the Middle East was repeated often in our interviews. America's story should not be "preached" or proselytized, it should be "explained." Further, added a former ambassador, "Making our libertinism the center piece of the way we present American culture is not our strong suit right now.... We need a way of telling the American story that makes it clear how comfortable one can be in America if you are a religious believer or traditionalist. It's complicated to capture the whole story of America and make it an attractive product." "Explain and show confidence in U.S. institutions with arguments and open discussion," advised a senior foreign service officer with extensive experience in wartime posts. He described how this kind of confidence pays significant dividends, a "multiplier effect even in places with a poverty of civil society."

The America narrative should capture the complexity of American life; it is not mainly about "having little portraits of small town America," a kind of Norman Rockwell vision of American goodness, but America's story is not only about Washington and what goes on there. "Washington is a bad place to do international

broadcasting from, increasingly,” observed a business executive with deep foreign policy experience. “It’s more effective if it comes from America as a whole. Especially as so much of government comes from localities and states, while Washington is way behind the curve.” “America is like baseball,” is how a leading academic described it. “It’s complicated. You can be fooled by its simplicity. The game within the game is the best metaphor.”

***“Washington is a bad place to do international broadcasting from, increasingly. It’s more effective if it comes from America as a whole. Especially as so much of government comes from localities and states, while Washington is way behind the curve.”***

Interviewees returned repeatedly to the theme of the America narrative providing “a lot of detail. It should provide information on every aspect of American society without trying to promote it.” “When in doubt, explain. Present arguments on both sides, let people decide. Explaining is what we do.” Another argued that America’s shortcomings and the debates that flow from them translate into attractive and compelling strengths.

*There is a narrative to be built on how this country is based on the distrust of power..... There is a role in educating outsiders who don’t know the U.S. system and how it works...the role of money in politics, interest groups. Tell our story warts and all, civil rights, women’s movement—how far we’ve come, changes and challenges overcome, along with mistakes made. Discuss the debate on income inequality. If we don’t discuss these things we aren’t credible.... Soft power has to be credible.... Show the American experience. What have been the titanic struggles, but show that we have done a lot of things very successfully.*

“Concerning journalistic standards,” noted another, “careful thought needs to be given to how self-serving the U.S. product should be.

*For instance, the torture report—how should it be covered? It cannot be ignored or whitewashed; there are too many alternative information providers that offer detailed coverage. Would it be “anti-American” to have a debate on VOA about the report’s content, with one side defending “enhanced interrogation” and the other describing the practices as being contrary to American values? The debaters need not be government officials; law professors might be good. Such a program would be controversial, but this kind of approach is the only way to capture the attention of a skeptical audience. That Americans are willing and able to broadcast such an open debate has value in itself.*

Observed a well-known strategist: “We want soft power to translate into the most honest, realistic presentation of who we are as a society because there is a very powerful narrative that tries to depict the United States in very unflattering ways.

People listen to that message. There is such a thing as anti-Americanism. It's very real." Another concluded that a good offense is the best defense:

*We have a story to tell, it's a kaleidoscope. There is a lot in our story. Tell our story! My view is, if people want to hate America, let them hate the reality, let them not hate the fantasy. We are not going to stop people from hating America if they choose to hate it, but let them hate what exists, not some figment in their imagination.*

Noted yet another: "We win if the ideas and the merits of the country are powerful and stand up on their own.

*And all we need to do is actually present them. All we need to do is to stop those ideas from being manipulated and twisted by other people. For me that means a lot of public interest stories, a lot of objective understanding, it also means a willingness to have debate, willingness to look at some of the issues that frankly are more American for the U.S., and I think there is strength in being able to do that.*

The interviewees' unambiguous insistence on the overwhelming importance of telling America's story—of getting the America narrative right—and making it compelling by emphasizing different understandings of the diversity of the American experience cannot be overstated. Summed up a veteran foreign policy specialist: "I would want to spend the majority of the money [allocated to U.S. international broadcasting] on simply doing great objective reporting on all aspects of American society. I think that is incredibly powerful!

## VII. AUDIENCES

- **The U.S. is engaged in a war of ideas. U.S. international broadcasting should be an essential soft power instrument.**
- **“Thinking” media consumers should remain the main target audience.**
- **Audiences should be differentiated on the basis of local conditions and platform use.**
- **Metrics that show influence are urgently needed to gauge how well U.S. international broadcasting effects change.**
- **Audience size is an ambiguous measurement of influence.**
- **The advent of social media poses new challenges to media strategy and target audience selection.**

Historically, U.S. international broadcasting has sought to attract a better educated and informed audience through a provocative interplay of news, commentary and features. While some of its programming intentionally sought mass appeal—for example, through music and sports programming—by and large the intended audience contained societies’ opinion formers and shapers, and especially those elites aspiring to move their societies in the direction of liberal democratic values and institutions. “Wars of ideas are fought by people who think,” argued a former network director,

*and therefore you orient your programming toward people who do think, because they will influence the people who don’t think. And to try to influence the people who don’t think is an exercise in futility and a waste of resources when you only have a certain amount of money and you can’t reach everyone. So the people who think are the multipliers, and those are the ones you try to influence.*

The networks’ focus on attracting this “force multiplier” elite audience was most intense at the surrogate broadcasters, which had been created for precisely this reason, but the VOA also used its broader mandate to transmit ideas and values intended to help local elites—and increasingly youth—to promote freedom, human rights and democratic norms in their countries.

Our interviewees generally accepted the proposition that we should aim the force of our broadcasting efforts toward those who can shape societies and not toward mass popular audiences. But they also observed that the explosion of digital communications, the internet and, especially, social media has blurred the elite-popular dichotomy. These days, observed a former broadcasting and public diplomacy executive, “there is no one answer to measuring an audience. I’m not sure a smaller elite audience is the way to go, it’s not the Iron Curtain era. Blogs are filling an elite niche, key audiences are in certain places.” Others noted how the new media landscape has made being “discriminatory about audiences and differentiating in markets” essential ingredients in any communications strategy. “Everyone has their

own eyes and ears at this point,” observed a prominent expert on public diplomacy. “They want to see their own lives through their own eyes,” which strengthens credibility. Moreover, “People expect to talk back.” This is a very different model from U.S. international broadcasting’s historic role to inform and provide context.

Today’s networks’ successes are measured largely by the size of their audiences. The BBG routinely publishes new statistics of audience size. Several interviewees expressed doubt about the quality of BBG’s audience research. One with deep roots in the Middle East placed no credibility in any of the BBG-commissioned audience research, regardless of network. He noted that the science of measuring viewership in Arab countries is weak. “How do you measure viewership if a large number of people are getting their TV by watching what’s on at the coffeehouse?... We have no useful effective measure. We get impressionistic things.”

But the larger problem, as a number of interviewees pointed out, is that audience size does not necessarily translate into influence. What has broadcasting actually achieved, and how has it done it? These questions have never been answered satisfactorily, perhaps because impact or influence is hard to identify and, therefore, resists measurement. One interviewee went so far as to challenge a central underlying premise of U.S. international broadcasting, noting that there is little empirical evidence to show that free media leads to more consideration of alternative views that encourage people to be more moderate and tolerant, a theory put forward by philosopher John Stuart Mill, among others. Mill, he argued, “assumed that with open media everyone will participate, which will result in the better truer idea rising to the top. Maybe this happens, maybe not.... When? How often? Under what conditions? There is very little research.... Is there actual evidence that addresses the mechanisms? What are improvements of press freedom and freedom of expression supposed to be doing that lead to outcomes that are moderate, stabilizing, democratic, smart?”

***“Freer media is supposed to make for a more informed citizenry. Does it?”***

The search for “influence,” in this view, is critical, especially in an environment flooded with social media, which has dramatically changed information content, form and flows; and altered consumption patterns. Trying to study people’s understanding of democracy and what it means has always been tricky, several interviewees observed. It is a very subjective endeavor, where questions are not consistent over time and differ across countries. Opinion research firms that measure the size of the audience lack basic data sets; moreover no one has bothered to ask whether media has improved people’s political knowledge. “People are happy to go along with their liberal assumption on this rather than examining it empirically.”

Another interviewee pointed to the lack of data for understanding this question more fully, but wondered if it really matters. “I would challenge the assumption that there is not a shred of evidence that [free media promotes more democratic outcomes]. Some things can be true without evidence for it. The possibility exists. But I would be up front about the methodological problems. There are many other places that one can look. For example, people come here to the U.S. for reasons other than economic. Some things are not provable.”

Nonetheless the “what moves the needle” question will become increasingly critical as new trends in media consumption, especially among younger audiences using social media, swell audience figures. “At BBG, a lot of audience measurement exists,” noted a communications strategist, “but we are no closer to the answer to the question of how much more likely are Iranians to support U.S. foreign policy, or how many Iranians have we convinced.” Observed another: “Measuring influence is difficult. So many variables, the game is figuring out what to measure.”

A former network executive cautioned that while understanding how social media fits into a more integrated and comprehensive media strategy, we must beware of falling into the trap of equating large audiences with success. “Technologies drive up the audience,” he observed. “Popular reality shows are largely content free, but my God are they cost efficient, and they are scoring big with audience share. But that’s not the game we breathe. The outcome of the Cold War took decades.” He cautioned that getting into the “did it move the needle” syndrome might lead to larger audiences, especially via social media, but these may not be the audiences we seek to attract. And he agreed with others that the attachment of social media to the pursuit of U.S. foreign policy goals requires a great deal of study and experimentation.

Interviewees cited a number of examples of how understanding the audience—not just its size but what moves it, what constitutes influence—is a compelling priority for U.S. international broadcasting. Competition with resurgent Russia was cited repeatedly, in this regard. A number of interviewees pointed to the sophistication of Russia’s communications strategy, noting that it has been successful in coopting much of the “elite” audience that typically would have been aficionados of U.S. international broadcasting. “Putin has been clever in identifying the American hostility to tradition as something that gives him a tool for pushing back. He’s not a dictator, he’s a defender of Russian traditional norms.” His edge over U.S. international broadcasting is his recognition that people want to address conflicts in their own terms. “Young people, unfortunately, seem to be one of the stronger supports of the regime,” noted another. “Putin plays them pretty well. He’s a tough guy and understands the popular culture.” Added another, educated urbanites aged 15-30, a distinct minority, will likely decide the future of Russia after Putin. “We assume wrongly that they are on our side. Our focus needs to be on them, to help them develop the capability to question assumptions about their leadership, to stimulate their critical thinking. If we engage just these people effectively, we can change things.”

Other interviewees remarked on U.S. international broadcasting's approach to Islamic audiences, which most saw as ineffective. A specialist of the Arab world argued that patronizing treatment of Islamic audiences does them no service, and it fails to advance U.S. foreign policy goals. "We don't treat Islamic populations seriously enough, maturely enough," he argued. "We treat them like kids, actually like other people's kids. We don't talk about serious issues with the depth they deserve. We also project in many ways the way we think people would like to see certain things, rather than the way they are."

A former ambassador summed up the importance of understanding influence: "With the renewal of ideological warfare and the assertion by Putin [and other adversaries] of a contrary world view, it's clear why you want to be in the arena and pushing back and arguing our side of the story. But a lot has also changed in the world that makes it less obvious how you do it in a way that represents real added value." This is because it is no longer so hard to get information or news; it is not the scarce resource it was in the past. Now more than ever, it is essential that U.S. international broadcasting experiment to try to determine influence. "You have to make mistakes if you want to be in the game."



## VIII. NETWORK INDEPENDENCE, OBJECTIVE JOURNALISM AND FIREWALLS

- U.S. networks are not independent news agencies, as if they were CNNs that happen to receive their funding from the U.S. government.
- Journalism is U.S. international broadcasting's operational platform, but "objective journalism" is by itself insufficient reason for U.S. international broadcasting to exist.
- Journalism is not a strategy, but the means to achieve other strategies.
- VOA or the surrogate broadcasters must not be turned into propaganda instruments that slant or twist information to support tendentious policies, preferences or points of view.
- The "firewall" that has come to characterize the relationship between U.S. international broadcasting and other parts of the government is overblown, limiting U.S. international broadcasting's ability to support U.S. foreign policy.

Little support existed among our group of interviewees for the idea that the VOA or any of the surrogate broadcasters is just another independent news agency, a kind of CNN that happens to receive its funding from the U.S. government. All agreed that accuracy and comprehensiveness in reporting are critical, as is the attractiveness of all programming; independence—in the sense that these stations' association with the American government and its role in promoting U.S. foreign policy are masked or unacknowledged—is not.

In this vein, a number of interviewees sought to address what they described as a persistent tension in recent years, especially in the VOA newsroom, between journalists' sense that being both "independent" and employed by the American government are incompatible. This tension mirrors a larger one, discussed elsewhere in this report, surrounding the attachment of U.S. international broadcasting to U.S. foreign policy. The journalists' concern is that too close or too obvious a connection between broadcasting and its affiliation with the U.S. government compromises the credibility of their work, especially if their mission is to support U.S. policies and positions.

The interviewees in our sample were unsympathetic to this view. "They don't understand who they are working for," noted one who had had extensive interaction with the VOA's newsroom. "Some of them see themselves as entirely neutral with respect to anything having to do with U.S. foreign policy. How can that be? Intuitively, why would one wish to pay for that, and why wouldn't you want to go and work for Fox or CNN anyway? It's a great conceit and indulgence that has taken place over time."

Most interviewees held an unambiguous view of journalism as U.S. international broadcasting's operational platform: "Objective journalism" is by itself insufficient

reason for U.S. international broadcasting to exist. Several argued that exporting good journalism in and of itself was more within the purview of NGOs like International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) or Internews. There was broad agreement that keeping journalism standards high sends the right message to those we seek to influence because it enhances American credibility. But journalism unhooked from general or specific foreign policy objectives is not what the taxpayer believes he or she is paying for.

***“Really good journalism directed at a particular goal is actually a really powerful tool.”***

Journalism “is not the end, it’s the means. The end is national interest, foreign policy goals. This is the means to it,” was a common refrain in interviews. Journalism is a convention that U.S. international broadcasting should direct toward winning the information war, most noted. One observed that “one way of putting it is, really good journalism directed at a particular goal, is actually a really powerful tool.” Another added that U.S. international broadcasting should be carried out with “a journalistic frame of mind,” but it should not be unhinged from U.S. policy objectives. Journalism is not a strategy, but the means to empower other strategies. Journalism “should be seen as a foreign policy tool to achieve specific ends. So that if the policy goal is to discourage Iranians from getting a nuclear weapon, broadcasting can play a clear role in that, absolutely.”

“Objective journalism” in any case is an elusive standard by which to measure U.S. international broadcasting’s achievements, just as it is elusive for measuring the journalism of CNN, Fox News or *The New York Times*, argued several participants. “How much objective journalism is there?” asked an interviewee once responsible for a major journalistic enterprise:

*Subjective judgments are made at all levels—what to cover, what to put in, what to leave out, what illustrations to use, which interviews, what to emphasize—that it is hard to think of “objective” journalism as some kind of activity like a natural science, like we are down in the lab like a bunch of chemists, when really it is more like a social science where a lot of judgment is involved. Those who say “objective journalism” are hiding behind something that is not real. Accurate, yes. Reliable, yes. Well contextualized, yes. But we are always...making judgments that are all highly subjective.*

One interviewee acknowledged his understanding of what the VOA’s journalism is supposed to achieve. “I never think of VOA as objective journalism,” he noted. “I do interviews with them because I want to support the U.S. But I never think people will listen to it the way they would to the BBC. It is clearly the U.S. official presentation.”

“Journalism is only part of [U.S. international broadcasting],” concluded another senior diplomat, summarizing the views of most interviewees.

*These programs, whether it's VOA or the surrogates, should be involved in cultural programming, in presenting alternative ideas, in presenting accurate, not revisionist, history, religious programming for people who have been denied religious freedom. The cultural programming includes music. And that's because this isn't simply news, this isn't simply journalism. Journalism is one of the half dozen missions of these broadcasters, the others are to connect in different ways with the publics with which we are dealing."*

A renewed and more focused purpose for journalism in U.S. international broadcasting would be a means to realizing the mission, whether combatting false narratives, creating conditions for accurate information to help shape democratic societies, or articulating the U.S. position on policy. One put it this way: Within confines of good journalism, you are "countering the enemies of freedom who are newly empowered and resurgent and making it a priority to silence opposition media in their own societies."

No one in our sample argued for turning the VOA or the surrogate broadcasters into "propaganda" instruments that slant or twist information to support tendentious policies, preferences or points of view. U.S. international broadcasting is not "a messaging machine," one said. Nearly all interviewees offered some version of "people have a good nose for propaganda," or "we're not going to win if it's a propaganda game," or "we would be idiots to transform these networks into purely propaganda stations...because audiences are too sophisticated." Propaganda is recognized and rejected quickly. But caution is necessary. "With democracy promotion as the overarching idea, then the argument that we are not going to be a propaganda station is less compelling."

The quest for "objective journalism" has also had the adverse effect of widening the gap between the networks and foreign service operations where both might benefit. Several interviewees recalled that this kind of thinking arose at the VOA in the mid-1980s after foreign service officers were excluded from the network newsrooms where they had been detailed to familiarize themselves with journalistic protocols and broadcasting conventions in advance of taking up assignments in the field. This information drew a rebuke from a former ambassador: "It's not propaganda to have sitting U.S. officials participate, it's part of their job!" Their departure and other measures supported the insinuation of a so-called firewall between the broadcasters and government agencies, especially the Department of State. A senior foreign service officer recalled that this separation was reflected in his training at the Foreign Service Institute. There he and his colleagues received a single hour's description of the importance of what U.S. international broadcasting was and what it was meant to accomplish. "Our ambassadors were not seeing the instruments of U.S. power in full array."

The same senior officer described how, later in his career, he was posted to a country then receiving two separate American international broadcasts, one each

from the VOA and RFE/RL. He said that he never knew what either station was transmitting, and even though he was the senior public diplomacy officer for his region, no one from either station ever stopped to consult with him. This diplomat lamented that the firewall thus prevented two unique payoffs to U.S. foreign policy: first, opportunities for him to leverage his operations to the messages the stations were broadcasting; and, second, information and insights that he might feed back to the stations about conditions on the ground that might improve their programming. "I had no desire to control their programming," he explained, "but my efforts to strengthen our foreign policy objectives in the region would have benefitted from knowing what was in it." Moreover, he observed, a strong probability existed that at some moment the broadcasters would be sending messages or information contradicting his own efforts to communicate officially via his consulate.

The BBG, noted a senior diplomat with roots in both State and broadcasting, was constructed first and foremost with the idea of preserving the journalism. Part of U.S. international broadcasting's dysfunction stems from conflict between those who believe it is a foreign policy tool and those who believe it is a journalistic institution. He asked: "Can it be both, and if it is, which takes precedence? It is very difficult to square this circle." The BBG, he and others observed, is largely "out of the loop" with respect to interagency cooperation on foreign policy and security matters. Not surprisingly, continued this diplomat, "BBG seems to be proudest of the firewall. Yes, it gives you a greater sense of importance being attached to established journalistic standards, but this is not real journalism...."

"Whatever the purpose of the firewall was," offered a senior diplomat with experience in international broadcasting,

*the BBG members mostly misunderstood the spirit of it, because it is strange to hear people contend that the firewall was there to assure that the broadcasts in substance and form were wholly independent of U.S. foreign policy aims, and kind of neutral as a commercial broadcaster like CNN would be. But that then begs the question, well, then, we already have CNN, so why would the taxpayers be paying for a second kind of CNN, which has the greatest allergy to anything U.S. foreign policy related?*

## IX. DOES BROADCASTING CONNECT TO U.S. FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGIES?

- Structural flaws hamper the BBG in setting U.S. media strategy. The BBG should be redesigned and relocated in government to facilitate its connection to foreign policy objectives and practices.
- U.S. international broadcasting's priorities should be established and reviewed at the highest level within USG.
- Broadcasting strategies and content should be aligned across all U.S. communications facilities, except for military efforts.
- U.S. international broadcasting's activities should be coordinated with foreign service components in the field.

Does U.S. international broadcasting have a connection to U.S. strategy and foreign policy? If so, what is it?

*"We approach U.S. international broadcasting backwards. We start by asking which [networks] are doing what and how could they do it better, rather than by assigning a strategy, then slotting in the instruments to achieve it in the most effective way. Is Radio Free Europe doing this, or is the VOA doing that is important. But it's a sideshow."*

The strong consensus of the interviewees was that U.S. international broadcasting is largely unhooked from U.S. strategy and foreign policy making and implementation. "We spend \$1.5 billion on public diplomacy, half for broadcasting and half for everything else," argued a well-known strategist. "No one, in my experience, has ever looked at this as a coherent whole.... Nobody at State has ever wanted to look at broadcasting as an integral part of public diplomacy.... This is a huge mistake. What an asset!" Added another: "We had an instrument that no one in charge of the war knew about." "We approach U.S. international broadcasting backwards," argued another. "We start by asking which [networks] are doing what and how could they do it better, rather than by assigning a strategy, then slotting in the instruments to achieve it in the most effective way. Is Radio Free Europe doing this, or is the VOA doing that is important. But it's a sideshow." Added a another: "None of the questions [of what to broadcast and where] is done with strategic intelligence. It's the mindlessness of this process that amazes me.... It goes well beyond the BBG. I don't think anyone anywhere is giving intelligent strategic consideration to these questions. To get intelligent strategic consideration and analysis to these problems you need some people who care about it and who understand."

A senior ambassador who served in several war zones described his displeasure that U.S. international broadcasting in no way connected to his mission in a particularly difficult trouble spot:

*It always seemed kind of bizarre to me that we had no relationship at all and no interaction [with U.S. international broadcasters]. We had a good cordial relationship, but they had a different mandate and they saw it that way. It was very frustrating that [the embassy's] point of view was not getting out into society, where we were in [information] combat every day.*

Interviewees repeatedly returned to the failure of the U.S. government to play any role in creating narratives that can be advanced through U.S. international broadcasting. “We are losing the battle of narratives,” was a continual refrain in these interviews. No such narrative creation or design function exists in the U.S. government, in this regard. “Add to that,” argued another, “the preternatural approach of any American-trained journalist, which is an adversarial relationship to the institutional structure, and you have the perfect makings for what the Chinese and Russians can leverage.”

Today U.S. international broadcasting simply does not figure in American foreign policy strategies as a consequence of firewall sensitivities and structural problems within the national security framework. A number of interviewees had served in government in the last 20 years or so, but when asked if they could recall an instance when U.S. international broadcasting was factored in as part of overall U.S. strategy on any issue, none could cite one. “BBG is out of the loop, it is only voluntarily part of things,” argued a former national security planner. “There are attempts at interagency cooperation, but U.S. international broadcasting is not in the chain of command.” “The more contact with policy and State, the better,” concluded another, echoing a strong sentiment throughout the interviews. “If BBG is supposed to have some kind of effect on achieving American interests in foreign policy, then being isolated from the foreign policy apparatus—and being proud of it—I don’t think that is the answer.”

Interviewees described a chicken-egg situation, where U.S. international broadcasting’s enforced distance from the foreign policy apparatus reinforced policy makers’ ignorance or lack of interest in communications’ place in a comprehensive foreign policy. A persistent theme in these interviews was a variant of “no one is thinking about it, no one cares.” And the small group within the foreign policy community that does understand broadcasting “doesn’t think about it from a strategic point of view.” Recent turmoil in Ukraine was cited often as an example of U.S. international broadcasting’s absence from foreign policy strategies: “Events in Ukraine scream for a long-term strategy to include energy and military strategy as well as communications strategy.”

But where should strategic focus be developed? Who should be in charge? And how should U.S. international broadcasting connect? On these questions no clear consensus emerged from the sample, with interviewees advancing a number of options.

Some argued for centralizing the function in government. “Those broadcasting about our policy have to be coordinated, and the White House is the obvious place,” argued one. “There is no advantage to pluralism or competition if we are trying to get across a clear message.... It can’t be the general has one message and the president has another. That’s very dangerous.” The budget needs to be controlled, not subject to a level of particular preferences. Decisions, by this reckoning, should be made at the cabinet level so that they align with policies and strategies with enough lead time to ensure implementation. U.S. international broadcasting “needs to fall in line with policy...just the way decisions are made in Russia and China: at the cabinet level.”

Others argued that foreign policy makers should set U.S. international broadcasting’s priorities, and that alignment with strategic priorities should be revisited every four years, not unlike the national security statement the president puts out. Such a review would allow the government to “articulate its strategic view. This doesn’t mean that everything is done hook, line and sinker, but at least it forces them to think about the issue, it forces them to define their preferences.” Or, as another put it: “We can’t do everything. There will be tradeoffs.... Government can make such decisions, but you need an understanding as to what aims are.”

Others were less enthusiastic about this degree of centralization, arguing that there should be “no top-down command and control.” The White House had few defenders, in this respect. “Frankly, I wouldn’t be comfortable putting [the broadcast function] in the NSC,” argued one in a frequently repeated sentiment. Several interviewees favored creating a “cluster unit” at State. Participants were less outspoken—and perhaps less certain—about what an alignment mechanism might look like.

Nonetheless, a strong consensus emerged on four points.

First, the BBG, U.S. international broadcasting’s oversight body, was universally rejected as the appropriate place for this kind of strategy making, with many interviewees arguing that any board sitting behind a firewall will present problems. “It’s hard to align an institutional structure that has a level of independence to it,” was a common theme. The BBG is structurally flawed and has been from the beginning was another common theme: a randomly chosen group of part-time political appointees, some with no foreign policy experience, who are widely dispersed in the United States and, indeed, around the globe; a chairmanship with no vested powers that changes frequently; and no senior executives actually in charge of the day-to-day operations of U.S. international broadcasting. Such a hodgepodge, nearly everyone argued, should not control a strategic function vital to American interests. Interviewees did not rule out the possibility of some other kind of board—perhaps along the lines in the proposed U.S. international broadcasting reform legislation—but only if it aligns with other parts of government in “a dialogue about strategic aims and, within that, narratives.” That said, no support existed in this sample for any board configuration being a part-time function.

Second, strong support emerged in the sample for communicating cross-agency, and especially for forging a closer and tighter alignment between U.S. international broadcasting and the official public diplomacy function at the Department of State. It is essential that “everybody knows what everybody else is doing.” Still, a balance needs to be struck with caution. “The organization of U.S. international broadcasting is different from public diplomacy, at times you may want plausible deniability,” argued a former senior executive from international broadcasting. Finding a way for U.S. international broadcasting to support—and be supported by—“country teams” was cited by a number of interviewees. Several former foreign service officers described the confusion that could arise when U.S. international broadcasting personnel with no responsibility to the country team arrived to manage their own operations in their theater.

Third, securing the support and commitment of the Secretary of State to U.S. international broadcasting is essential. In the current BBG structure, the Secretary is an *ex officio* member, and he/she designates the sitting Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs to participate in BBG deliberations. In fact, this seldom happens. “The Under Secretary should take full responsibility, recognizing that there are other black boxes out there...but none of them has played even to the letter of the law, in this regard.” Moreover, these under secretaries typically leave government after no more than 18 months or so. The BBG’s connection to the Secretary him/herself is even more tenuous, with interactions reduced to extremely rare photo-ops for board members. Noted one: “The connection to State that seems organic through the Secretary’s membership on the BBG has never happened.”

***“It is reasonable to carve out armed forces broadcasting as a separate operation.”***

Fourth, efforts to coordinate U.S. international broadcasting with communications operations by the U.S. military—for example, with the combatant commands or psychological operations—should be avoided most times. A strong sentiment among the interviewees was that military communications should remain “hived off” from U.S. international broadcasting operations, and that “military support for public diplomacy”—a recently created office in the Pentagon—should not be allowed to intrude on mainline public diplomacy efforts, including those employing U.S. international broadcasting. (Several interviewees described how the Office of Military Support for Public Diplomacy was intended as a coordinator, but that “there was nothing to coordinate.”) As one suggested, we should think about strategic communications as hardware (e.g., DoD) and software (State), with the latter thinking more holistically about what outcomes we seek from the application of soft power. In fact, no interviewee was aware of dialogue currently between military and non-military communicators. Most, however, cited the importance of information sharing, “so that large strategic aims are consistent among entities operating in the same theaters among the same audiences.” A former ambassador with a strong national security background recommended that, at a minimum, a



senior military officer should serve on the BBG or whatever oversight structure eventually is determined. That would at least pay lip service to the notion of coordinating across agencies, and, indeed, some positive synergies might result.

***“None of the questions [of what to broadcast and where] is done with strategic intelligence. It’s the mindlessness of this process that amazes me.... It goes well beyond the BBG. I don’t think anyone anywhere is giving intelligent strategic consideration to these questions. To get intelligent strategic consideration and analysis to these problems you need some people who care about it and who understand.”***

Even if strategic narratives that specified operational priorities existed, translating these priorities to U.S. international broadcasting operations is an equally daunting task. Many interviewees argued that international broadcasting is by nature a long-term endeavor, that it takes years to develop credibility among suspicious audiences. “You can’t turn it on and off like a faucet,” observed a senior strategic planner. “Soft power doesn’t automatically translate into concrete support for particular things,” noted another. “But it is not ultimately about that. It is about trying to get across to people who are attracted to ideologies and beliefs that have real consequences for us. And it is a long-term project.” “The principles guiding programming should not change,” added another, “because it takes a great long time to establish and maintain credibility.”

Yet a strong consensus existed in this sample that the BBG, which today is nominally responsible for deciding where to broadcast and in which languages, fails its strategic task. “The BBG acting as a normal board should decide strategy, priorities and not micromanage. The Board should understand its basic functions,” said one with long experience dealing with the BBG. Instead, he and others noted, it has no strategy, cannot set priorities effectively, and frequently meddles in the operations of the networks under its supervision.

No one in our interview sample believed that the BBG could meet these essential criteria because of its flawed structure. Several cited the duplication of language services that had accreted over time—at last count 23 out of 84—that no recent board has either consolidated or abolished with the goal of redirecting investment elsewhere. The investment in “legacy” language services are like impossible-to-eliminate entitlements, often driven by ethnic politics in Congress. Action on adding new language services to address emerging strategic challenges is slow or non-existent. A former director of a major network described his experience:

*I did things that I thought were right, and one could argue I should not have had the power to do them. But a bureaucracy would have made it impossible...I didn’t go to State.... You don’t want bureaucrats in these jobs. You need the*

*entrepreneurial spirit.... I don't know if I had the power, but I did it. I believe there should be a process by which network heads talk to people. But if I had to ask State, I never would have done things.*

Several interviewees cited a current example of the BBG's inability to prioritize. Unable to anticipate and to respond rapidly to Russia's aggression in Ukraine by refocusing U.S. international broadcasting's existing Russian language services—one in the VOA, a second in RFE/RL—the BBG accepted a one-time \$1M grant from State to produce a half-hour Russian-language news program with mostly new people, effectively working around the existing Russian language services. Several well-known Russia hands among the interviewees expressed incredulity that U.S. international broadcasting was incapable of freeing and focusing existing resources for a more robust response. That it was able to muster only a single half-hour program against Russia's saturation of the strategic communications space—and this a year late while awaiting additional investment—was seen as emblematic of the BBG's failure.

No one believed that the BBG could overcome its structural flaws, which is why considerable support emerged in this sample for creating a strong CEO position under any oversight board, with far-reaching executive power to manage and coordinate the operations of the different networks with the assistance of a strong staff, which was cited often as essential to make the CEO position effective. The CEO would articulate and enforce investment priorities and rationalize budgets, and determine—working with other parts of government and with the engaged think tank community—which languages U.S. international broadcasting should embrace and which it should remove, replace or avoid. [At this writing, a CEO had just been appointed by the BBG, assumed office, then rapidly departed. This after nearly four years of debate and delay.]

## X. CAN IT BE FIXED? POSSIBLE NEW MODELS

- **Little strong support for U.S. international broadcasting exists in government because memory of its successes is weak and because it is a low-budget item. Any reform will be difficult.**
- **The proposed legislative reform of U.S. international broadcasting may represent the limits of the possible.**
- **Alternative models for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of U.S. international broadcasting are available.**

Interviewees described why fixing U.S. international broadcasting as we know it is a large task. First, only a “vague memory” of VOA’s and RFE/RL’s success during the Cold War tends to inhabit the public’s consciousness. No popular demand for reform or restructuring has yet arisen. Second, by Washington standards, its investment of three-quarters of a billion dollars in U.S. international broadcasting is a piddling sum, which, a number of interviewees suggested, is the reason it never gets fixed. “No attention is paid to communications by senior policy makers,” observed an influential insider, “and it’s not given public attention by political figures in major campaigns. Who’s going to fight over three-quarters of a billion dollars? That’s just not significant enough to figure in domestic politics.” Most interviewees pointed, by contrast, to the vast sums—in the many billions of dollars—that adversaries like Russia, China and Iran invest.

***“No attention is paid to communications by senior policy makers, and it’s not given public attention by political figures in major campaigns. Who’s going to fight over three-quarters of a billion dollars? That’s just not significant enough to figure in domestic politics.”***

Interviewees almost unanimously took the position that the current poor return on investment from U.S. international broadcasting should not detract from America’s pressing need of a capability to communicate effectively with foreign audiences. Indeed, a clear consensus existed that it is worth doing in principle. No one argued that communicating with these audiences is an expensive strategic irrelevance. To the contrary, the *leitmotif* of the interviews was that communicating is a strategic priority that is badly underfunded, on one hand; and, on the other, what is funded is not working.

Nearly every interview featured some variant of this assessment: The model we currently have works poorly. It is cumbersome, thwarts creativity, is mired in budget and bureaucracy constraints, is consumed by competing equities and overlaps, is out of touch with new realities or unable to address them, and suffers a waning connection to both changes in the audience and the concerns of foreign policy planners. Several interviewees argued that the current model might be made

to work if roles were clarified, the BBG's functions were re-defined, and the operations it supervises were rationalized and streamlined, but the number supporting such a view was very small. Nonetheless, this small group made it clear that it saw "fixing" the current model as the only viable approach because scrapping it or reinventing the international communications function would be fraught with too much upheaval, impossible because of vested interests in Congress, and probably beyond the imagination of government generally. These interviewees generally favored the reform legislation currently proposed (HR4490) largely because they believed it represents the outward limits of possible reform.

Interviewees were asked specifically to describe alternative models of organization, operations and governance for U.S. international broadcasting, of which the below are examples:

- Develop a BBC-like corporation by combining all current broadcasting networks into a single non-federal broadcast company. This would require de-federalizing the VOA and the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, which participants acknowledged would find a tough road through Congress. But "de-federalization is a fight worth having," argued a former ambassador. A leading strategist endorsed the BBC model as "more credible." Another recommended "not only to collapse all into one, but also develop a range of outside partner organizations."
- Fund local media in the areas we seek to influence. "Let's give the Estonians the money," argued one by way of explaining that the most powerful influence going forward would be that generated by sympathetic local media communicating with local populations. The U.S. could support this proxy approach through funding, training and editorial assistance. Funding, support and governance would be channeled through an organization like the IREX, Internews, or the trust elements of the German Marshall Fund, which already fund media as a basis of their operations.
- Create an NPR-like broadcast corporation that could accept corporate sponsorship. "Corporate sponsorship is something the U.S. government is culturally adverse to.... We should include in legislation that we encourage private sector involvement," argued a former ambassador. A public diplomacy and technology expert likewise advocated a public-private market-based organization that accepts funding from commercial underwriting while providing tax incentives. Yet another advocated joining with NPR to produce and market good programming.
- Transform today's broadcast operations into a much smaller agency that is simply a portal of information and links. In this view, there is little reason for U.S. international broadcasting to be creating "content" when so much is already available from other sources. This would result in making the VOA a

technical “voice” only. One described the model this way: “Create a portal to connect people to real information that they can’t get. For the new generation of change agents. There are now 400,000 million bloggers in China. How do you find a niche in this space via an American portal? Branding and competing in that space would be unique, not traditional reportage.... Radio’s days are probably over.” This new operation would also fund and distribute anti-circumvention technologies.

- Create a national strategic communications agency that is attached to the White House at the cabinet level. “Either State or possibly White House and NSC, or some new organization...should be in some chain of command that leads to the President.” This agency would have responsibility for all communications by the U.S. government, including public diplomacy, surrogate and military. Argued one: “This is so cheap in national strategic terms that it ought to be funded according to national strategic need. My recommendation is to create a defense and foreign affairs budget where all of this is melded into one big budget where soft power and hard power and diplomacy can be funded according to national strategic need.”
- Merge all of today’s broadcasting elements into a 501(c)3 NGO that advocates for democracy, human rights, free markets and media freedom. The National Endowment for Democracy was cited by several interviewees as a possible model, which was lauded frequently for the quality of its leadership and governance. However, others pointed out that U.S. international broadcasting probably is too far an operational reach for NED or any other existing NGO.

Some of these models are radical, some more incremental in their adjustments to U.S. international broadcasting as we know it. They suggest opportunities to add, swap, or share different elements to achieve considerable transformation.

## XI. WHY NOT START OVER: A NEW PARADIGM

- The intellectual paradigm for U.S. international broadcasting was created for the Cold War. It is outdated and ineffectual.
- The taxpayer has no little idea—or the wrong idea—of what he or she is paying for.
- The proposed reform legislation is a good patch, but not a permanent fix.
- U.S. international communications strategy should be rebuilt from the ground up.

Today the taxpayer has little idea of what return on investment in U.S. international broadcasting might be available for his or her tax dollars. There is negligible public sense of what U.S. international broadcasting is and what it is supposed to accomplish. "Taxpayers think they are paying for something completely different from what is actually happening," observed a senior diplomat and communications specialist. "Which is why they are in a state of shock when they are informed of the real situation," added a former network director. "The trend has been to give the audience what it wants," argued a former ambassador, "whether or not it advances a U.S. interest. Why would the taxpayer want to pay for this?" "At the very least," argued another, "there should be a sunshine law.... If the body as a whole can't be persuaded that we're important today, even if we once were, we shouldn't be kept on for nostalgic reasons. I don't think that this is the function of the U.S. government." Noted a specialist of the Middle East:

*Whether this is a viable enterprise, or it is a viable enterprise are two different questions. The idea that the U.S. would not have a presence in the realm of ideas, and the republic of ideas, so to speak, and compete with local bullies and compete with Deutsche Welle and BBC in presenting the U.S.'s vision of the world and of itself is, to me, a non-starter. Obviously, a power like the United States needs that kind of a presence. So, it is, in my view necessary. But whether that it is this, is a very different question.*

***"I would blow the whole thing up and start over."***

Nearly all interviewees concluded that today's U.S. international broadcasting is not the "it" we should strive for. Several interviewees approached this question retrospectively. A prominent strategist offered this assessment:

*It still remains a very good question if this is the best way to spend the money. As you know, that is rarely the question that is asked...usually it's how do we improve what we have, how do we tinker on the margins, how to make sure that there is balance and objective reporting and projecting American interests...that's the usual set of questions. But if someone were to write a check for \$750M could we create a profoundly more effective system? I am sure the answer is yes.*

Indeed, those interviewees familiar with the proposed reform legislation for the most part favored it, some enthusiastically so. But the general consensus was that no reform would likely go far enough to fix U.S. international broadcasting's myriad challenges because the communications paradigm has changed. "We are not doing it right. If we try to readjust along old lines, it's a tremendous waste of money," argued an authority on public diplomacy.

A strong consensus for doing something much bolder emerged from these interviews: re-conceptualizing and redesigning from the ground up how the U.S. communicates for foreign policy purposes, beginning with the abolition of the current U.S. international broadcasting structure. "I would blow the whole thing up and start over," argued a specialist of public diplomacy in a sentiment repeated frequently in these interviews. "If I were to start all over," said a former diplomat and broadcaster, "I would not create this...we don't need to construct this giant apparatus in this media age." Yet another argued that this would be hard to do. "You can't overlook the historical process, that's not the way life is. The question is: Given what you have, how do you turn a sow's ear into a silk purse?" Most interviewees expressed their agreement that starting over would not be an easy thing to achieve, but there remained considerable support for undertaking such a laborious effort.

***"We are not doing it right. If we try to readjust along old lines, it's a tremendous waste of money."***

Advocates for starting over based their arguments on two intersecting arguments. First, the existing BBG-headed structure has failed. Noted a specialist of institutional dynamics: "The BBG is an interesting case study in mis-governance. Usually these boards are meant to insulate organizations from politics, and this one did the opposite." Second, the operational environment for U.S. foreign policy demands a more sophisticated and adaptable communications function that transcends the paradigm of "broadcasting." Observed a noted strategist: "I would call for just starting over from scratch. It is such a different world ideologically, politically, technologically. I would stop it all, take a breather...start all over but really fresh, asking what world do we live in, how do we get information, how do we reach the change agents. How does it connect to strategy and foreign policy...."

Interviewees returned repeatedly to the theme that the intellectual model for U.S. international broadcasting was designed and implemented during World War II and at the beginning of the Cold War. It was predicated on, first, the nature and urgency of bipolar geopolitical competition; and, second, on the availability of that era's dominant analog technologies. In 2014, many noted, the way we think about international broadcasting has scarcely changed, despite the diffuse and diverse character of America's strategic challenges and the emergence and operational sophistication of technologies that in 1950 could not even have been imagined. Indeed, we still speak of "broadcasting"—and the primary American oversight

board is still called the Broadcasting Board of Governors—although communicating through traditional broadcast media represents an increasingly small share of where sophisticated media consumers obtain their information.

Can added value be squeezed from the existing idea and structure of U.S. international broadcasting? Many interviewees were doubtful or outright dismissive of such a proposition. “I would like to see a top to bottom overhaul of the foreign broadcasting,” argued a long-time practitioner of U.S. international broadcasting, “and maybe there wouldn’t be a VOA that came out of that.... We need an entity that looks at the whole and assesses where we should be in the internet age and asks, why should they listen to us.” “If it doesn’t connect to American international interests, we shouldn’t be doing it,” said another. “But it may be that those interests are best served by the people not being ‘government journalists’.”

***“I would call for just starting over from scratch. It is such a different world ideologically, politically, technologically. I would stop it all, take a breather...start all over but really fresh, asking what world do we live in, how do we get information, how do we reach the change agents. How does it connect to strategy and foreign policy....”***

The interviews multiplied and amplified this particular sentiment—why not start over?—many times. Obviously, creating a new model is not a short-term project, and no one advocated for simply shutting down U.S. international broadcasting without a suitable replacement. Meanwhile, the current proposed reforms of U.S. international broadcasting, assuming they are enacted into law in some sense resembling their initial drafting, are very likely to improve the current state of America’s strategic communications, though only by affirming the assertion that “broadcasting” as we know it is the right instrument with which to support our foreign policy.

But is the U.S. international broadcasting paradigm as we know it where we should be investing scarce human and financial resources, or should we be thinking beyond “broadcasting” toward new paradigms of communicating with and influencing strategically pivotal audiences? This project did not set out to answer this question—indeed, the authors were repeatedly surprised at how fervently our interviewees argued for a communications capability that transcends today’s “broadcasting” to resonate with a far more complex human and technological landscape. But the concept deserves serious consideration.

For obvious reasons, government probably is not the place for such an exploration, though it should certainly be part of it. The world of think tanks, universities and foundations would seem the natural place to launch such an effort. It will take time, it is not a short-term project. And it will require contributions of the deep expertise—some represented in this report—the U.S. possesses on how to think about the role of communications in support of America’s foreign policy. If done well,



the results will almost certainly strengthen the instruments of that policy, and, importantly, its chances for success.

## APPENDIX: INTERVIEWEES

Interviewees for this project included the following:

**Dr. Michael Auslin**, Resident Scholar and Director of Japan Studies, American Enterprise Institute

**Mr. Donald Bishop**, President, The Public Diplomacy Council

**Dr. Ian Bremmer**, Founder and President, Eurasia Group

**Mr. Geoffrey Cowan**, Chair, USC Annenberg School Center on Communication Leadership and Policy; President, Annenberg Trust at Sunnylands; former Director of the Voice of America

**Dr. John Dunlop**, Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution

**Mr. Douglas J. Feith**, Senior Fellow and Director, Center for National Security Strategies, Hudson Institute

**Dr. Francis Fukuyama**, Olivier Nomellini Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies (FSI); resident in FSI's Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, Stanford University

**Dr. Jeffrey Gedmin**, Chairman of Global Politics and Security, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service; former President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

**Mr. Carl Gershman**, President, National Endowment for Democracy

**Mr. Robert Gillette**, Former Director of Broadcasting, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty; Member, Board of Directors, InterMedia

**Amb. James Glassman**, Chairman and CEO of Public Affairs Engagement, LLC; Visiting Fellow, American Enterprise Institute; former Chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors

**Ms. Barbara Haig**, Deputy to the President for Policy & Strategy, National Endowment for Democracy

**Mr. Glen Howard**, President, The Jamestown Foundation

**Dr. A. Ross Johnson**, Senior Scholar, Wilson Center; Visiting Fellow, Hoover Institution; former Director of Radio Free Europe; former Acting President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

**Mr. Markos Kounalakis**, President and Publisher Emeritus, Washington Monthly; journalist, the *Sacramento Bee*; Visiting Fellow, Hoover Institution

**Mr. David Kramer**, former President, Freedom House; Senior Director for Human Rights and Human Freedom, McCain Institute for International Leadership

**Dr. Gail Lapidus**, Professor of Political Science, Emerita; Senior Fellow Emerita, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University

**Dr. John Lenczowski**, Founder and President, The Institute of World Politics

**Amb. Michael McFaul**, Director, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies; Peter and Helen Bing Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University

**Dr. Rajon Menon**, Anne and Bernard Spitzer Chair in Political Science, City College of New York/City University of New York; Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council

**Dr. Abbas Milani**, Hamid & Christina Moghadam Director of Iranian Studies and Co-Director of the Iran Democracy Project, Stanford University; Research Fellow, Hoover Institution

**Hon. Marc Nathanson**, Chairman, Mapleton Investments; Board of Trustees, The Aspen Institute; former Chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors

**Mr. Arch Puddington**, Vice President for Research, Freedom House

**Mr. Robert Reilly**, Senior Fellow, American Foreign Policy Council; former Director of the Voice of America

**Dr. Robert Satloff**, Executive Director and Howard P. Berkowitz Chair in U.S. Middle East Policy, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

**Hon. George P. Shultz**, Thomas W. and Susan B. Ford Distinguished Fellow, Hoover Institution; former Secretary of State

**Mr. Philip Seib**, Vice Dean, USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism; Professor of Journalism, Public Diplomacy, and International Relations, USC

**Amb. Stephen Sestanovich**, Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Professor for the Practice of International Diplomacy, SIPA, Columbia University; George F. Kennan Senior Fellow in Russian and Eurasian Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations

**Dr. Jack Snyder**, Robert and Renee Belfer Professor of International Relations, Department of Political Science; SIPA, Columbia University; Fellow, American Academy of Arts and Sciences

**Amb. Kurt Volker**, Executive Director, McCain Institute for International Leadership; Senior Fellow, Center for Transatlantic Relations, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.

**Mr. Christopher Walker**, Executive Director, International Forum, National Endowment for Democracy

**THE AUTHORS****S. Enders Wimbush**

S. Enders Wimbush was nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate as a Governor on the United States Broadcasting Board of Governors, where he served from 2010-2012. From 1987-1993, he served as Director of Radio Liberty in Munich, Germany, overseeing transformative change in U.S. international broadcasting during the period featuring the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the USSR.

**Elizabeth M. Portale**

Elizabeth M. Portale has nearly twenty years of operational experience in international affairs and media with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) in Munich, Prague, and Washington, D.C. As Vice President and Chief of Staff based in Prague, she was the President's key deputy overseeing the daily operations and management of 500 multicultural staff operating in 28 languages, and she played an instrumental role in devising and implementing innovative strategies and structures to meet the evolving needs of audiences in 21 countries across Eurasia, the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

