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Whither Strategic Communication?

A Survey of Current Proposals
and Recommendations

Christopher Paul

This report results from the RAND Corporation's continuing program of self-initiated independent research. Support for such research is provided, in part, by donors and by the independent research and development provisions of RAND's contracts for the operation of its U.S. Department of Defense federally funded research and development centers.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available for this publication.

ISBN 978-0-8330-4685-7

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Published 2009 by the RAND Corporation
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Summary

Countless studies, articles, and opinion pieces have announced that U.S. strategic communication and public diplomacy are in crisis and are inadequate to meet current demand. There is consensus that such capabilities are critical and that they need to be improved. This paper reviews contemporary thinking regarding the advancement of U.S. strategic communication, cataloging recent recommendations and identifying common themes and the frequency with which they are endorsed. Based on the recommendations put forth by the 36 selected documents and articulated in more than a dozen interviews with stakeholders and subject-matter experts, findings indicate that four core themes capture consensus recommendations: a call for “leadership,” demand for increased resources for strategic communication and public diplomacy, a call for a clear definition of an overall strategy, and the need for better coordination and organizational changes or additions. This paper also discusses specific recommendations for strategy elements or resource targets that made frequent appearances in the literature and during interviews.