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A Civil Affair: Past US Government Efforts to Generate Civilian Capacity

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Piecing Together Past Efforts

The American public has expressed greatly increased interest lately in improving the capacity of the US government to deploy civilian personnel abroad. A recent survey identified 22 major studies on the issue, with recommendations in 30 broad categories of potential steps to strengthen the civilian international affairs agencies.¹ Most of these studies are oriented toward prospects for future action, as they should be, but little attention is given to the history of US efforts in this area. The past is sometimes remembered nostalgically, with general references to the numbers of civilians that USAID deployed to Vietnam, for example, with meager understanding of the context that shaped these programs and scant assessment of their weaknesses and limitations, as well as their strengths.

This paper seeks to fill this gap by examining prominent past examples of US civilian agencies and programs that operated overseas. We assess the ways in which they organized themselves to do their work—rather than focus on the substance of the work itself—to identify common trends, patterns, and challenges in generating civilian capacity. Though history offers many pertinent cases, we chose four: the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA), which administered the Marshall Plan in Europe from 1948 to 1951; the United States Information Agency (USIA), which conducted information activities abroad from 1953 to 1999; the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which was established in 1961 and continues its global development activities today; and the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program, which coordinated civilian and military pacification efforts in Vietnam from 1967 to 1973.

A number of factors differentiate these organizations from one another: the historical circumstances that prompted their creation, their substantive missions, their

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locations within the bureaucracy, and the conflict environment with which they had to contend. Yet they shared remarkably similar challenges in generating civilian capacity: bureaucratic infighting and lack of interagency coordination, difficulties recruiting and deploying qualified staff, resource limitations, and adjusting to a changing international environment. The timelessness of these problems should be for a warning to those who seek to improve civilian capacity today. It suggests that the problems have deep roots that may not be susceptible to piecemeal reforms.

The European Cooperation Administration and the Marshall Plan

The Marshall Plan was a proactive attempt to prevent the collapse of the European economy, after initial postwar growth turned into inflation and decreased production.² Secretary of State George Marshall and his advisors saw a need for urgent action to bolster the United States' traditional trading partners and forestall a potential chain reaction of downward economic trends, political instability, and Communist sympathy. On June 5, 1947, Marshall announced a new program for economic aid to Europe during a commencement speech at Harvard. Less than one year later, on April 3, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed legislation to create the European Cooperation Administration (ECA), which would administer the \$13 billion in assistance of the European Recovery Program (ERP), now widely known as the Marshall Plan.

Deep debates ensued about whether the ECA should be established as an independent agency or an administrative unit of the State Department.³ Those who favored an independent agency argued that the State Department lacked the experience and personnel necessary to fulfill the ECA's operational responsibilities and that a separate agency would be more flexible and, thereby, more attractive to senior managers from the private sector. There were also concerns that congressional hostility to the State Department would make it hard to secure funding and might even jeopardize the enabling legislation. Those who favored placing the ECA within the State Department countered that this approach would be the only way to ensure a coherent foreign policy and that

an independent agency might undercut the president's authority over foreign affairs. After many debates and congressional hearings, the final legislation established the ECA as an independent agency, led by an administrator with cabinet rank and reporting directly to the president.⁴

Once founded, the ECA set up two headquarters—in Washington and Paris—and 16 country missions, yet succeeded in remaining fairly unbureaucratic.⁵ It borrowed the US military's decentralized theater command concept, which gave decision-making authority to staff in the field rather than at headquarters in Washington.⁶ In contrast to the inertia of existing government bureaucracies, the ECA could concentrate its attention on a single task and, with a lifespan of less than four years, the agency encouraged creativity and rapid progress rather than careerism.⁷

The ECA was a small and elite organization with a passionately dedicated staff. Many staff members were hired through personal connections. But there was also an open application process which generated, in just the first six months, 70,000 applications for 350 positions.⁸ The organization drew its staff from a wide cross-section of professional backgrounds—government, business, labor, agriculture, education, and the media—and Congress had to revise several laws in order to give the ECA the flexibility it needed to hire such personnel.⁹ Furthermore, all hiring was strictly nonpartisan.¹⁰ The ECA remained a small agency, with a peak staffing level of 2,400 personnel. One former ECA employee, Herbert Simon, later wrote: “The agency as it finally evolved was certainly spectacularly smaller than any federal agency carrying out a task of comparable magnitude.”¹¹

ECA's ties with the private sector were strong, reflecting the New Deal era emphasis on public-private cooperation. The senior leadership of ECA, both at home and abroad, consisted primarily of corporate leaders rather than career public servants. Many of these private sector officials, though, had served in wartime agencies during World War II, which gave them an understanding of how the government functioned.¹² Prominent leaders from the business and financial sectors also served on the ECA administrator's private

advisory boards for overseas development, reparations, and fiscal and monetary issues. Other economic constituencies, such as labor unions and farm unions, were represented on these boards and in the ECA itself, but to a lesser extent.³

The government made a concerted effort to cultivate domestic support for the Marshall Plan. In late 1947 and early 1948, officials from the State Department and other executive branch agencies compiled detailed economic country studies in order to build support in Congress, and particularly to convince isolationists to vote for the authorizing legislation.¹⁴ In late 1947, the bipartisan Harriman Committee issued a report supporting the plan. The committee deliberately included members from business, labor, and academia in order to overcome congressional distrust of the State Department. Averell Harriman and Marshall both went on nationwide speaking tours in support of the plan, not only in major cities, but also in smaller cities and towns with isolationist traditions.¹⁵ In October 1947, Marshall Plan supporters established a bipartisan nongovernmental organization called the Citizens' Committee for the Marshall Plan to Aid European Recovery (CCMP). Led by a diverse collection of business leaders, labor leaders, and former government personnel, the organization spread the State Department's message through ads, press releases, newspaper editorials, radio broadcasts, and public speeches throughout the country. These efforts paid off: by February 1948, only 29 percent of Americans had not heard of the Marshall Plan, and 56 percent of those polled supported it.¹⁶ Long before the term was even coined, the Marshall Plan's architects executed what must be considered an impressive strategic communications plan.

The ECA faced two bureaucratic and organizational challenges. First, recruiting good people became difficult after the initial years. Few new recruits possessed the desired qualifications, particularly as the agency had to compete with the newly established North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and, after 1950, service in the Korean War. The ECA was no longer the glamorous assignment that it had been at its inception. Second, interagency rivalries reemerged. ECA had experienced difficult rela-

tions with other agencies from the outset, since it depended on them for expertise—and, in some cases, for the disbursement of aid—but it acted independently and often did not coordinate with others.¹⁷ There were also notable coordination problems between ECA country missions and other US government agencies, including local governments and, in the case of West Germany, the US military government.¹⁸

The ECA was originally planned to exist for four years, but its life as an independent agency was cut short by several months. After the start of the Korean War in 1950, concerns about the defense of Western Europe meant that the United States, the European participants, and the ECA itself focused more on questions of rearmament than on its original economic and political objectives. Congress shut down the ECA in October 1951 and folded its mission into the new Mutual Security Agency (MSA), which became responsible for supervising all US foreign aid programs.¹⁹ Two months later, on December 31, 1951, the Marshall Plan officially concluded after 45 months in operation.²⁰

United States Information Agency (USIA)

The origins of the United States Information Agency (USIA) can be traced to the early months of American involvement in World War II. In June 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order that created the Office of War Information (OWI), with the mandate of conducting information programs.²¹ The State Department was tasked with providing policy guidance to this new agency, but lacked sufficient staff and resources to oversee the large daily output. OWI personnel were drawn largely from the media and advertising industries and generally had limited overseas experience, but they quickly built up an impressive infrastructure. By the end of the war, OWI was transmitting radio broadcasts in 40 languages from the newly formed Voice of America (VOA) to hundreds of millions of listeners around the world. It also operated a press service that sent 100,000 words a day to 60 overseas posts and was responsible for the operation of numerous US Information Service (USIS) posts abroad.²²

Two weeks after the Japanese surrender, President Truman abolished the OWI. The remaining

operations were scaled back dramatically—the VOA retained only 10 percent of its 13,000 personnel, for example—and transferred to the State Department in a new International Information Administration (IIA). Yet escalating tensions with the Soviet Union in the late 1940s revived interest in ideological operations abroad, which led to increased appropriations for the State Department and VOA.²³ When the Eisenhower administration took office, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles sought to remove the IIA from his department.²⁴ After much debate about its future, the administration decided to establish it as an independent agency, though the State Department would continue to provide overall policy guidance. The United States Information Agency was officially established on August 1, 1953.²⁵

During the Cold War years, USIA had “the most extensive overseas presence of any Washington agency,” in the words of one author, with a “geographic reach [that] has never been matched by any other US government agency then or since.”²⁶ At its peak, it operated more than 300 information and cultural posts in more than 175 countries.²⁷ Its programs included:

- Operating the VOA radio network, whose English and local language broadcasts reached 100 million people each week.
- Publishing magazines, books, and pamphlets in over 100 languages and producing documentaries, newsreels, and television programs.
- Establishing a global library network, which introduced open-shelf libraries in 150 countries.
- Sponsoring a large program to teach English and to train English teachers.
- Promoting exhibits on American life.
- Managing international exchange programs, including the Fulbright awards.²⁸

These activities, combined with USIA’s extensive geographic reach, made it “the biggest information and cultural effort ever mounted by one society to influence the attitudes and actions of men and women beyond its borders.”²⁹

USIA was far from the only agency involved in public diplomacy. More than a dozen major federal agencies and many smaller ones conducted overseas information programs in their areas of expertise, with combined staffs and resources much larger than those of USIA. The Department of Defense, for example, sponsored the Armed Forces Network (AFN), which beamed radio and television broadcasts to US forces stationed around the world. The signals reached many listeners in these countries who tuned in to AFN, even though they were never its intended audience, and in some areas it reached larger audiences than VOA did.³⁰ Similarly, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) helped establish Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), which broadcast to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, respectively, and focused more on domestic news in those countries as a counter to Soviet propaganda.³¹ International outreach on this scale was bound to affect how foreign officials viewed the United States.³²

Relations with the State Department remained uneasy throughout USIA’s existence. There was no lack of clarity over lines of authority; State was responsible for setting policy guidelines. There were even structural steps to harmonize the two organizations. USIA officers frequently engaged their counterparts at State, and USIA reorganized its bureaucracy to align itself with the Department of State’s different geographic and functional bureaus. But the organizational cultures of the two agencies remained quite different. State was more of a top-down enterprise, with an elite cadre of foreign service officers who sought to control the message the United States presented to the outside world. USIA was staffed by media professionals who sought as much openness as possible, and who weren’t sure how to transmit official US policies that were deliberately ambiguous.³³ USIA was also hampered by the fact that its personnel were reserve officers under limited contracts until 1968, when USIA officers were granted permanent career status within the Foreign Service. Despite these obstacles, the two agencies developed good coordination at the working level, though higher levels posed more of a problem due to USIA’s lack of representation on the National Security Council.³⁴

During the Cold War, the ideological confrontation with the Soviet Union (and to a lesser extent with China) provided an ongoing justification for USIA's activities. Decolonialization of much of Africa and Asia in the 1950s and 1960s spurred USIA to counter Soviet influence there.³⁵ During the 1960s, USIA became actively involved in the Vietnam War, where its emphasis shifted from broad ideological and economic programs to tactical support for the military effort. In April 1965, the USIS post in Saigon was expanded into a large Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) that coordinated all psychological operations in theater.³⁶ As US involvement in Vietnam began to decline during the Nixon administration, JUSPAO was shut down and USIA reinvested in its programs around the world, once again increasing its presence in Africa and Asia.³⁷

USIA faced a host of challenges after the Vietnam War. For example, the Carter years proved to be a difficult time for USIA, just as it was for foreign policy more broadly, in a time of escalating energy prices and the Iran hostage crisis. With the arrival of the Internet, people around the globe gained access to much more information about the United States; cheaper telecommunications and travel had a similar effect. As President Ronald Reagan emphasized the ideological confrontation with the Soviet Union, USIA became a significant beneficiary. By the end of Reagan's second term, the agency's budget was \$881 million—double what it had been when Reagan took office—and many of its personnel losses from the 1970s had been restored.³⁸

Just as the start of the Cold War marked an important turning point for USIA, so too did its end. The collapse of communism posed a serious challenge for USIA—undercutting much of its core mission. Absent the East-West standoff, with the associated ideological competition, many questioned the need for government-run information activities.³⁹ Debates on this issue continued throughout the 1990s, particularly as private media organizations established a greater presence around the world.⁴⁰

The decision to abolish USIA as an independent agency resulted from a set of political calculations, rather than from a systematic assessment of

its strengths and weaknesses. The proposal to abolish USIA had been discussed for a number of years, and a bill to do so was introduced in 1995, but failed to pass. In April 1997, the Clinton administration announced a plan to fold most foreign affairs agencies, including USIA, into the State Department.⁴¹ This plan was part of a larger political compromise with Senator Jesse Helms, the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a longtime critic of USIA and other foreign affairs agencies. In exchange for this plan, Helms agreed not to block other Clinton foreign policy initiatives—including the funding of overseas abortion clinics and paying back dues to the United Nations. Congress passed the reorganization plan in October 1998 and, on October 1, 1999, USIA officially ceased to exist. Most of its functions were moved to the new office of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs or into the regional bureaus,⁴² where they received much less attention and emphasis than previously.⁴³

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

During the 1950s, the US government established a number of different foreign assistance programs that emerged as integral to the Cold War competition with the Soviet Union.⁴⁴ These included:

- The Mutual Security Agency, established in October 1951, which incorporated the remnants of the Marshall Plan.
- The Foreign Operations Administration (FOA), established in 1953, which was an independent agency tasked with promoting economic and technical assistance around the world. In 1954, the FOA was reorganized into the International Cooperation Administration (ICA), which became a part of the State Department.
- The Development Loan Fund (DLF), created by Congress in 1957, which provided concessional credits to developing countries around the world.⁴⁵

None of these organizations focused on long-term development, however, and they subsequently gained reputations for disorganization and inefficiency.⁴⁶

What these proliferating aid programs lacked was an overarching structure to coordinate their various efforts. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy gave high priority to reforming the foreign aid structure. He argued that a new approach was needed because:

No objective supporter of foreign aid can be satisfied with the existing program—actually a multiplicity of programs. Bureaucratically fragmented, awkward and slow, its administration is diffused over a haphazard and irrational structure covering at least four departments and several other agencies. The program is based on a series of legislative measures and administrative procedures conceived at different times and for different purposes, many of them now obsolete, inconsistent, and unduly rigid and thus unsuited for our present needs and purposes.⁴⁷

Congress supported the new president's initiative by passing the Foreign Assistance Act in September 1961. Kennedy also changed the way that aid programs were structured in the executive branch. In November, he established the new United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which combined the two main existing aid programs, the DLF and the ICA.⁴⁸

There was considerable debate about where USAID should be situated within the government bureaucracy. Some suggested that it be an independent, cabinet-level agency, but others voiced concerns that such an arrangement would undermine coordination with the State Department and reduce the diplomatic leverage of aid. Others proposed that it be placed within the State Department under the supervision of an under-secretary. However, opponents of this idea argued that aid would become *too* much an instrument of diplomatic priorities. In the end, the final decision found a middle ground: USAID became a semi-independent agency at the subcabinet level, whose administrator would take direction from and report to the Secretary of State and the president. This arrangement was intended to facilitate independent development decisions while ensuring a degree of coordination with broader US foreign policy goals.⁴⁹

Since its founding, USAID has been the main foreign assistance agency of the US government, but it is far from the only one. The State Department administers a number of assistance programs, which are managed by at least seven assistance coordinators and 215 staff. The Treasury Department oversees contributions to the World Bank and regional development banks, the Agriculture Department is responsible for food aid, and many other agencies in the executive branch carry out technical assistance programs in their areas of expertise. USAID estimates that there are as many as 50 other federal organizations that provide some form of overseas aid.⁵⁰

Despite President Kennedy's efforts to streamline this highly fragmented system, there is still no single agency to oversee the totality of US foreign aid. USAID's position as a subcabinet agency means that it is a relatively weak bureaucratic actor, excluded from many of the interagency policy debates over how the various elements of foreign assistance fit together. While it has been fairly successful at influencing policies directly related to its own programs, it has modest influence, at best, over other aid programs or broader foreign policy issues, such as trade, that affect development.⁵¹ Additionally, some of USAID's programs are funded through specific congressional or State Department allocations to serve broad US foreign policy objectives beyond—and sometimes at cross-purposes with—developmental criteria.⁵² This often creates a double bind for the agency, which nonetheless is criticized for the lack of development results.⁵³

Efforts to reform the foreign aid structure began almost as soon as it was created, and were often ensnared in broader debates about the purposes and effectiveness of foreign aid.⁵⁴ President Lyndon B. Johnson sought to reform the foreign aid architecture, even while USAID was still in its infancy. He established the Perkins Committee to examine reform options, and it recommended channeling more US aid through multilateral development banks to insulate aid allocations from diplomatic considerations. Yet these recommendations came very late in Johnson's tenure and were not enacted or acted upon. In 1970, President Richard M. Nixon established a similar panel, whose Peterson Report reached the same

conclusion for the same reason. Nixon then proposed to abolish USAID and replace it with three separate US government agencies, but Congress resisted such a sweeping reorganization, and Nixon declined to press the matter.⁵⁵

In 1978, Senator Hubert Humphrey proposed his own idea to restructure the foreign aid bureaucracy. He proposed replacing USAID with an International Development Cooperation Agency (IDCA), whose director would report directly to the president, thereby resulting in a more unified and powerful organization. Existing agencies predictably opposed this initiative, which was defeated in Congress. Instead, President Jimmy Carter created by executive order a weaker IDCA than had been proposed, with a mandate to coordinate all aid programs appropriated by Congress. Lacking authority over the aid organizations, whose actions it was supposed to coordinate, IDCA was never able to fulfill its mandate. IDCA continued its ineffective existence until it was eliminated under President William J. Clinton.⁵⁶

During the Cold War, foreign aid remained a consistent US foreign policy priority. The end of the Cold War, however, deprived foreign aid of one of its most compelling rationales. Its slide from the top of the foreign policy agenda had three significant consequences. First, aid budgets became more vulnerable to cuts. Having emphasized the need to reduce the federal budget deficit, President Clinton made substantial cuts to foreign aid in his proposed budgets for 1994 and 1995. Congress made further cuts when Republicans won control of the House of Representatives on promises to shrink the size of the government. Many of the newer and more conservative members of Congress harbored a deep ideological aversion to foreign aid.⁵⁷

Second, to adjust to declining budgets, USAID changed the way that it provides assistance. USAID maintains a large number of field missions around the world to tailor aid projects to local needs and circumstances. The combined pressures of declining budgets and increasing global responsibilities forced USAID to do more with less. Both of these trends preceded the end of the Cold War, but intensified in the 1990s.⁵⁸ Total foreign aid appropriations declined steadily throughout the

late 1980s and 1990s and, by 2001, the federal foreign aid budget was half its mid-1980s level.⁵⁹ This led directly to reductions in USAID's personnel, which was cut by 30 percent between 1993 and 1996 alone.⁶⁰ By 2004, USAID had only 2,227 direct hire personnel—fewer than half of whom were career foreign service officers—with responsibility for providing support to 100 different countries.⁶¹ To put this figure in context, the total number of USAID direct hires in 2004 was less than the number of personnel the agency deployed just in Vietnam in 1968.⁶²

The agency's strategy for coping with these trends was to transform itself from an agency that carried out its own activities into one that issued and managed contracts. In effect, USAID no longer implements aid programs itself. Instead, it contracts with local, regional, international, and private partners to devise programs and execute them—in some cases the partners serve as administrators for multiple subcontracts.⁶³ This trend became self-reinforcing over time: as personnel with project management skills became more valuable to USAID than those with technical expertise in development, it lost much of its capacity to conduct its own projects, which then led to an even heavier reliance on contractors.⁶⁴

Third, the reduced priority of foreign aid reopened the debate about the proper bureaucratic location for USAID. In 1994, Secretary of State Warren Christopher asked Vice President Al Gore to weigh the merits of merging USAID into the State Department as part of Gore's broader review of the organization of the federal government. After much debate and opposition from USAID, Gore recommended that it remain an independent agency, but with a reporting relationship between the USAID administrator and the secretary of state. The idea of merging USAID into State continued to be promoted in the late 1990s by Senator Jesse Helms, though President Clinton resisted this pressure.⁶⁵

Starting in the 1990s, USAID's influence became further diluted as other agencies within the executive branch started establishing their own programs abroad. These programs were not always called foreign aid, but many had similar objectives. Some administrators viewed them as

an alternative to working through USAID, which had developed a reputation as ineffective and difficult.⁶⁶ Perhaps the most direct challenge to USAID came in March 2002, when President George W. Bush announced the establishment of the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA).⁶⁷ MCA funds would be used for development programs in countries which met a set of defined criteria of good governance and agreed to be held to related indicators of performance.⁶⁸ The new \$5 billion in funds would not be administered through USAID, but instead through an entirely new organization called the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). This decision was apparently made because the Bush administration did not trust USAID to administer the funds as they were intended.⁶⁹

The most recent effort to reform the foreign aid bureaucracy came in January 2006, when Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice created a new position of director of foreign assistance, who serves concurrently as the administrator of USAID. In announcing this new position, Rice echoed the themes that had motivated previous restructuring efforts:

After a comprehensive review of our nation's foreign assistance, I have concluded that we must become better organized to meet our overseas development challenges. The authority to allocate foreign assistance is too fragmented among multiple State Department bureaus and offices, and between State and USAID. This makes it more difficult to plan coherently, and it can lead to conflicting or redundant efforts. Multiple lines of authority make accountability more elusive and impede our efforts to integrate our foreign assistance with our broader foreign policy objectives.⁷⁰

The director, who holds a rank equivalent to a deputy secretary, has authority over all State Department and USAID foreign assistance programs and is charged with ensuring coherence across them. It is too soon to judge whether this reform effort will have the desired result, though one early positive sign was the submission of State and USAID's first joint budget request for fiscal year 2008.⁷¹ Still, some within USAID view this move warily as a precursor to efforts to absorb

their agency into the State Department, as has been repeatedly proposed throughout its history.⁷²

The Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) Program

The Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program is often cited as a major success in generating a sizeable deployable civilian corps to complement a military operation. Indeed, its experience in Vietnam offers a telling example of how the US government established and staffed an organization to coordinate pacification efforts. Although it overcame a number of bureaucratic obstacles and integrated civil and military pacification efforts under one command, the military components always vastly outweighed the civilian components of the effort.

In a sense, CORDS was the result of several earlier failed attempts to coordinate civilian and military pacification efforts. The United States first began sending aid to Southern Vietnam in 1954 through the ICA and DLF and administered by the United States Operations Mission (USOM) in country. In addition to funding extensive assistance programs to strengthen the local economy, USOM was also responsible for supporting the development of the local security forces.⁷³ However, since the local security forces fell under the Ministry of the Interior rather than the Ministry of Defense—which is always the partner ministry for the US Military Assistance Program (MAP)—the local security forces received relatively little attention compared to the conventional forces until it was brought under the Ministry of Defense in the late 1950s.⁷⁴ As a result, difficulties in coordinating US military and civilian programs were a challenge from early on. In fact, the largest single police training program of the Eisenhower administration was conducted in Vietnam by an advisory group from Michigan State University, not by USOM or any other US government agency.⁷⁵

US assistance to South Vietnam continued to grow in the 1960s, with Southern Vietnam receiving the largest share of total foreign aid between 1962 and 1975, peaking in 1967 at \$550 million.⁷⁶ As discussed above, the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act and the establishment of

USAID were designed to address the fragmented aid structure and dominant military role, which in Vietnam “contributed to its over-militarization by facilitating the predominance of the GVN [Government of Vietnam] and US military.”⁷⁷ The military’s upper hand was reflected in the appointment of Maxwell D. Taylor, retired general and former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as ambassador, tasked with coordinating US government efforts in Vietnam. He created what he called a “mission council” to share information among all the civilian and military agencies operating in country, but stopping short of effectively coordinating or managing their activities.⁷⁸ At the time, US aid efforts in South Vietnam largely followed the “country team” concept, whereas the ambassador was responsible for the overall performance, but the agencies were still closely tied to their counterparts back in Washington and any restrictions imposed by Congress. However, as US efforts in Vietnam increased, many began to question whether this model could handle the growing number of programs, agencies, and personnel.⁷⁹

The deteriorating security situation in South Vietnam, coupled with the collapse of the government after President Ngo Dinh Diem’s assassination in November 1963, prompted Congress to grant President Johnson widespread authority to respond. The first combat troops were deployed to the region in March 1965. Meanwhile, the civilian agencies in the country continued to operate their own structures programs. Oversight responsibility for JUSPAO and the field offices of the CIA and USAID, was given to Ambassador William Porter, deputy chief of the US mission in Saigon, but coordination problems remained.

After the start of US military operations, the CIA played an important role in reviving pacification efforts in Southern Vietnam. The agency established the Revolutionary Development (RD) program, a military-led effort to coordinate pacification programs. Within the RD program, USAID provided support to the New Life Development program.⁸⁰ In November 1966, the Office of Civil Operations (OCO) was set up within the embassy to organize the efforts of the civilian agencies in-country, and has been described as “essentially the offspring

of AID,” which supplied most of the human and financial resources.⁸¹ However, the OCO faced a number of challenges, including inter-agency rivalry between the field offices of USAID, CIA, and USIS; inability to overcome competing bureaucratic reporting lines back to Washington and integrate the civilian programs locally; and recruiting and retaining qualified personnel.⁸² Furthermore, the OCO remained in a separate chain of command from the military. As a result, the OCO’s overall impact remained limited.⁸³ To solve this problem, in 1967 OCO programs were merged with the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) and RD program to create what would be henceforth known as CORDS.⁸⁴

CORDS, which lasted from 1967 to 1973, was created at the request of President Johnson who wanted “a pacification program that would complement Westmoreland’s war of attrition.”⁸⁵ The primary role of CORDS was to assist and coordinate pacification efforts in the region. It brought personnel and programs from USAID and the Departments of State, Commerce, Treasury, and Agriculture under a common command structure. Civilian advisory teams were established throughout the region, with provincial advisory teams at each of the country’s 44 provinces and district advisory teams in each of its 250 districts. However, despite the increased emphasis on building up civilian efforts to counterbalance the large military presence, CORDS was essentially run by the military. Even so, the two efforts complemented each other. The majority of CORDS funds went toward training and equipping the local security forces—the regional forces (RF) and popular forces (PF)—which required the support of the US military. Therefore, the growing civilian presence strengthened the emphasis on pacification and brought in more financial assistance, while the military counterpart was essential for helping to execute the actual programs, of which the work with the security sector was paramount⁸⁶

President Johnson had given General Westmoreland full responsibility for pacification, and Robert Komer, also handpicked by Johnson, was selected to be Westmoreland’s civilian deputy in charge of managing the efforts.⁸⁷ This position gave Komer

authority over the combined pacification effort and, most importantly, direct access to Westmoreland. Within CORDS chain of command, Komer oversaw four deputy commanders for pacification who were in charge of each of the four regions. Advisory teams served at the provincial and district levels and reported up through this chain of command. Many of the advisory teams were divided into functional areas, and the district advisory teams were also in charge of assessing pacification efforts using quantitative data collected through the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES), a questionnaire derived by the US Marine Corps.⁸⁸

Roughly 4,000 military personnel and 830 civilian advisors staffed CORDS when it was established.⁸⁹ In addition, the Department of Defense created several hundred Foreign Service Officer (FSO) positions to fill MACV advisory positions and established the Vietnam training center.⁹⁰ Prior to deployment, the Department of Defense sent both military officers and civilian personnel to the Vietnam training center for six months to one year to take classes on the Vietnamese language, history, and culture.⁹¹ These developments reflected a greater commitment by the US government to integrate military and civilian efforts.⁹²

At its height in 1969, the total US advisory effort in Southern Vietnam included over 16,000 Americans. Yet it is important to note that the vast majority of the CORDS staff was military personnel, not civilians. In 1969, CORDS consisted of 6,500 military officers and 1,100 civilians.⁹³ By January 1972, staff levels in CORDS had shrunk to 2,670 military officers and 730 civilians.⁹⁴ While these personnel levels represented a substantial commitment by the United States, it is important to bear in mind the scale of their mission. These advisors were responsible for supporting over 900,000 Vietnamese (including RF/PF forces and civil servants). So, even at the peak of the US advisory effort, there was roughly only one advisor for every 56 Vietnamese personnel, and most of these advisors were in uniform.

By 1968, CORDS was largely viewed to be making headway in Southern Vietnam pacification efforts, especially as assessments of the insurgents' strength decreased.⁹⁵ At the same time, however, the decrease in insurgent strength was followed by

an increase in the number of attacks targeting pacification efforts, especially the RF/PF forces.⁹⁶ Regardless, the success CORDS was able to achieve in its limited existence has generally been attributed to its ability to unify civilian and military advisory efforts and structures. As Komer noted, "Compared with any previous US advisory effort, that in Vietnam has been unprecedented in duration, extent, and the depth to which it went in the field."⁹⁷

In the end, CORDS was an organization established to meet a wartime need. As a result, once the war ended, so too did CORDS. From the onset, CORDS felt pressure from agencies looking to regain their staff and programs or from its critics in Congress, and this pressure continued through the end of the program. In 1971, for example, a National Security Council study assessing the future of CORDS recommended that it be retained until 1973, but that a number of programs either be phased out or returned to their original agencies.⁹⁸ Without the support from the agencies, CORDS simply could not function. In a sense, CORDS was a hollow organization, relying on "supplies, equipment, and personnel through other agencies, which had an understandable reluctance to provide another organization with funds for which they were accountable."⁹⁹ Furthermore, the backlash from Vietnam left many with little interest in repeating such an operation.

In retrospect, the history of CORDS highlights a number of obstacles to any attempt to integrate military and civilian efforts, particularly in the context of stability and reconstruction. For one, CORDS shows the difficulty in merely getting military officers and civilian personnel to work together effectively, even at the most senior levels.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the demands that the war places on civilian agencies proved to be an adjustment. Komer noted a frustration over obtaining equipment that "it was estimated in 1966 that it took around 18 months for supplies ordered through AID machinery to reach Vietnam."¹⁰¹ Each of these issues hindered the mission of pacification and assistance.

Despite the fact that CORDS was established as a corrective to traditional US military operations, in

many ways it never served as an effective counterbalance. Even though there were benefits to working with the military, a fundamental challenge remained: pacification was not the priority. So while the military's support for the pacification effort was unprecedented and noteworthy, its foremost priority remained war fighting.¹⁰² Finally, CORDS highlights the inherent limits of US advisory efforts. Even if CORDS had faced no bureaucratic challenges, its ability to achieve progress and success would still have been contingent on the host nation government's own capacity and commitment to implement change.¹⁰³

Common Challenges in Generating Civilian Capacity

Although the cases examined in this paper occurred at different times and addressed different substantive problems, they faced a remarkably consistent set of challenges in generating civilian capacity. These include bureaucratic and organizational challenges, staffing challenges, changing views of public service, resource limitations, and (in two cases) the effects of the end of the Cold War.

Bureaucratic and Organizational Challenges

These cases demonstrate that the bureaucratic and organizational challenges of developing and deploying civilian capacity abroad are nothing new. These functions have never been concentrated in a single US government agency responsible for this mission, with the result that no existing organization built durable infrastructure in this area. It is often assumed that the State Department, as the main diplomatic agency of the US government, will take on this role when necessary. Yet it is telling to see a record as far back as 1947 of strong concerns over the State Department's ability to manage an operational program abroad. The ECA and USAID, for example, were established as independent agencies after proposals to place their functions in the State Department were rejected. And CORDS, which is often cited today as a major success in deploying civilian capacity abroad, at its peak involved six times as many military personnel as civilian personnel and could not have functioned outside the military structure of which it was a part.

Interagency competition and coordination challenges are also nothing new. The fact that there

are numerous agencies involved in different aspects of civilian activities abroad has led to inevitable competition and policy incoherence. Some of the challenges that the ECA faced in administering the Marshall Plan, for example, sound eerily reminiscent of problems facing the US government today. Its relations with other government agencies were difficult because the ECA relied on others for substantive expertise, but did not coordinate its activities with them. These problems were replicated in the field and compounded by coordination problems between the ECA missions and local and national governments. Similar problems with interagency coordination and competition for resources were exported abroad in the Vietnam case too. Such problems should have been easier for USIA and USAID, since the State Department had the statutory authority to set policy guidelines for both agencies, but that hardly settled the matter.

Staffing Challenges

Generating civilian capacity depends on getting the right people for the job. Recruiting qualified personnel and developing attractive incentive packages to retain them has been a challenge for decades. As far back as the 1950s, the government had difficulty recruiting experts to fill critical positions. The government was fighting an uphill battle in trying to attract individuals already well established in their field to work for the government. Even the ECA, which had such initial success in recruiting experts from the private sector, found it difficult to find qualified replacements once they left. Furthermore, the full cost for anyone considering such a position went beyond any associated cut in pay. USAID has difficulty recruiting personnel, for example, because:

American technical experts were mostly fully occupied with their work in the United States and were on career tracks within universities, other government agencies, or private companies. Taking a leave of absence to accept an interesting foreign assignment often removed an expert from consideration for promotion or other opportunities...¹⁰⁴

The government faced similar staffing challenges during the Vietnam War. Despite having a sizable pool of government employees, the system itself

lacked the proper mechanisms to meet the personnel needs of the war effort.¹⁰⁵ Finally, both military officers and civilian personnel were reluctant to sign up for positions they thought might hurt their careers.¹⁰⁶ This reluctance had broader implications, ultimately undermining the commitment of the agencies and organizations for the war.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, whether the issue is recruiting the right people or providing the right incentives to those already in government service, past efforts indicate how intractable some of these challenges can be.

Changing Views of Public Service

The staffing challenges described above have all been exacerbated by more general trends in American society regarding the perceived value of public service. Many of those who came of age during the Great Depression and World War II believed deeply in the importance of public service and in the power of the government to protect and improve the lives of its citizens. During World War II, millions of Americans had direct experience with the government, not just by wearing the uniform, but also through the other wartime agencies as part of the broader economic and national mobilization. The public service ethic continued in the postwar years, when it was common—and sometimes even expected—for high-level business executives, media experts, professors, and other private sector leaders to spend some time in government during their careers. Their sense of service was nicely expressed by Edward R. Murrow, who resigned from CBS News in 1961 in order to become the new director of USIA:

Asked why he took a 90 percent pay cut to accept a \$23,000 job in the Kennedy administration, [Murrow] replied, “I just figured that if this young man couldn’t do it, no one could, and if he wants my help, I have an obligation to do it.”¹⁰⁸

Government service was not always voluntary; conscription drew many young men into military service until it was abolished in 1973. Interestingly, the draft may have unintentionally bolstered US deployable civilian capacity during the Vietnam War. Members of the foreign service and USAID knew that they were likely to

deploy to Vietnam, given the large personnel demands there, but if they quit their jobs, or complained and were fired, the resulting loss of their occupational deferment could make them eligible for military service in Vietnam. This may have made them more likely to stay in their civilian positions, and might have even encouraged people to apply to work in these organizations in the first place.¹⁰⁹

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, fewer people in the private sector had direct experience working for the government; it was no longer common for people to blend careers in the public and private sectors. At the same time—and perhaps as a direct result—there was an increased emphasis on contracting out government services. As fewer things were considered to be core government functions, more could be contracted to the private sector, which, many argued, could use resources more efficiently and bring more effective outcomes. This philosophical shift has set in motion a self-reinforcing cycle with further erosion of the prestige of public service leading to a heightening of the staffing difficulties described above. The September 11 terrorist attacks have led to a resurgence of interest in public service, but serious problems remain in attracting talented people to work for the government.¹¹⁰

Resource Limitations

Resource constraints also plagued past efforts to generate civilian capacity. The examples discussed in this paper point toward a broader hesitation within the government to embrace nonmilitary efforts. In the case of Vietnam, for example:

US policymakers saw very early how the paramount importance of “political” considerations meant that military “solutions” alone could not suffice. But the resultant US policy stress on such counterinsurgency measures as political and socioeconomic reform, land distribution, pacification, and the like called for far greater GVN/US emphasis on such efforts than was ever set in train – at least until very late. This was perhaps the greatest gap between policy and performance.¹¹¹

In addition, despite the establishment of CORDS as a vehicle to coordinate pacification efforts, the

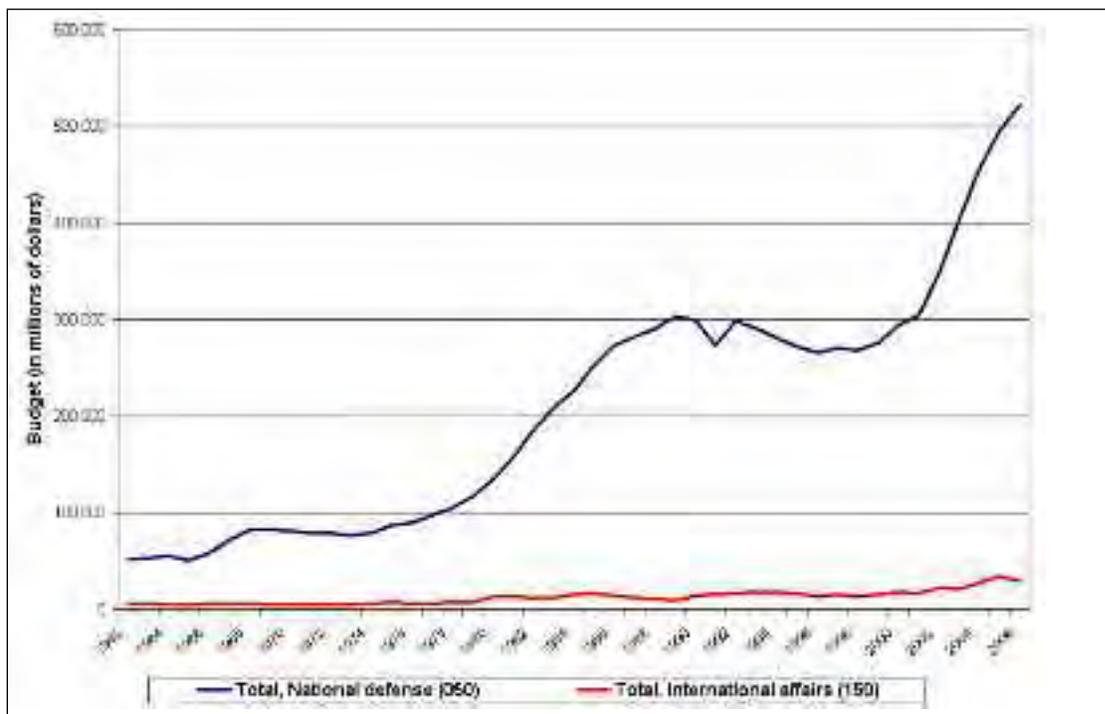
lead role played by the military further highlighted the tendency to entrust the military with primary responsibility for solving pressing problems—regardless of whether those problems were military or not.

A similar imbalance exists in the funding allocated for military operations compared to civilian operations. In 1968, for example, “almost \$14 billion was spent for bombing and offensive operations, but only \$850 million for pacification and programs designed to offset war damage and develop the economy and social infrastructure in Southern Vietnam.”¹¹² Furthermore, a closer look at the US federal budget over time indicates that this imbalance is a longstanding trend and not a wartime anomaly. As shown in Figure 1, since 1962 there has been a widening disparity between the national defense budget and the international affairs budget. In fact, the international affairs budget (function 150 accounts) has remained relatively flat over time while the national defense budget (function 050 accounts) has continued to climb despite a dip in the 1990s.¹¹³

Effects of the End of the Cold War

During the Cold War, containment of the Soviet Union was the lodestar of US foreign policy. All US efforts abroad—including USIA’s information activities, USAID’s development activities, and the pacification efforts of CORDS—were part of the effort to build support for the United States in its ongoing ideological confrontation. The end of the Cold War, therefore, had a very profound effect on all of the international affairs agencies. Their activities lost the connection to an urgent purpose, which made them more vulnerable to bureaucratic politics and budget cuts.

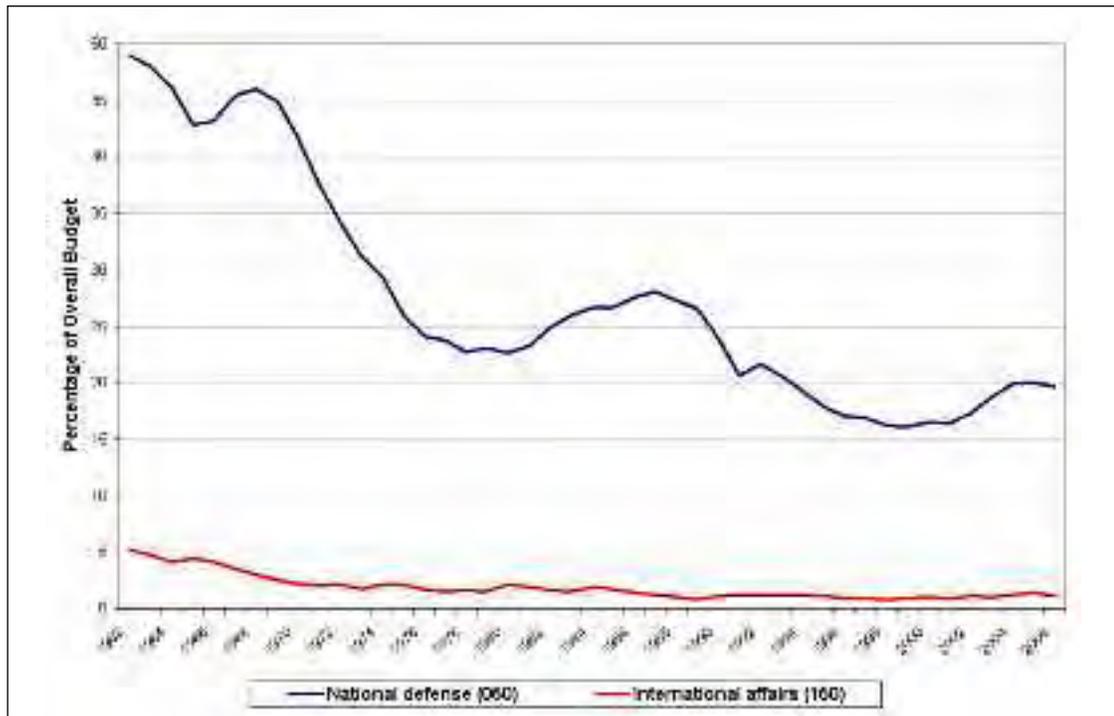
USIA’s mission was the most endangered because many started to question why the government needed to be involved in information activities abroad absent the communist threat. President Clinton ultimately agreed to abolish it as part of a deal with Senator Helms that achieved several of the administration’s other foreign policy objectives, including funding overseas abortion clinics and dues to the United Nations—objectives that just a few years earlier would surely have been



Source: Data is from the US Government Printing Office, “Budget of the United States Government: Historical Tables Fiscal Year 2008: Table 3.2—Outlays by Function and Subfunction: 1962–2012,” online at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/usbudget/fy08/hist.html>, accessed July 25, 2008.

Figure 1: Total US National Defense and International Affairs Budget over Time

Relative to the total federal budget, historically the international affairs budget has only comprised a small fraction. In contrast, Figure 2 shows how the national security budget was over 50 percent of the total budget during the early 1960s. The high point for the international affairs budget in 1962, however, was slightly over 5 percent and has not neared that level since.



Source: Data is from the US Government Printing Office, "Budget of the United States Government: Historical Tables Fiscal Year 2008: Table 3.2—Outlays by Function and Subfunction: 1962–2012," online at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/usbudget/fy08/hist.html>, accessed July 25, 2008.

Figure 2: US National Defense and International Affairs Budget as a Percentage of the Overall Federal Budget

In the end, part of the challenge in generating civilian capacity is simply that many of the civilian agencies lack a critical mass of personnel, programs, and funding to enable such growth. And, as these previous figures indicate, the struggle to acquire sufficient resources to support these efforts is ongoing and likely to persist well into the future.

overshadowed by the need to sustain the government's capacity for information activities.

USAID was spared a similar fate, but its budgets and staff levels were significantly reduced during the 1990s, and its program of activities suffered as a result. Recent reforms have integrated USAID into the State Department more closely than ever before, which many see as the beginning of a gradual process of removing its independence altogether. Even more significant is the fact that it was sidelined during the most important new foreign aid initiative of the post-Cold War world. President Bush's decision to administer this ambitious new program through an entirely new organization, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, raises questions about USAID's future.

The Enduring Challenge of Civilian Capacity

Problems with generating civilian capacity in the US government international affairs agencies are not a new phenomenon. The common challenges identified above show that whether in times of war or in times of peace, whether deploying a

capacity abroad or fostering a sufficient one at home, interagency coordination has been a constant struggle and available civilian capacity has usually fallen short of what was sought. Today's debates on this issue are remarkably similar to those of the past. The enduring nature of these problems indicates their structural roots in the essentially decentralized nature of the US government and the policymaking process.

This suggests that efforts to improve civilian capacity must be done holistically, so that the challenges of organizational structure, staffing, resources, and authorities are all addressed together. Even if it were possible to design a perfect and efficient organizational structure, that structure would not make much of a difference without an infusion of new resources. Even if significantly added resources were brought to bear, those resources would not make a substantial difference if staffing constraints hampered the ability to marshal qualified personnel. All of these different elements must be brought together in a comprehensive and complementary way if reform efforts are to overcome these persistent challenges.

Endnotes

- ¹ Craig Cohen and Noam Unger, "Surveying the Civilian Reform Landscape," Appendix A, working paper for this project.
- ² Most Americans in the late 1940s had personal memories of the Great Depression, which may have made government officials more likely to respond proactively to avert a similar economic collapse in Europe. See Barry Machado, *In Search of a Usable Past: The Marshall Plan and Postwar Reconstruction Today*, Lexington, VA: George C. Marshall Foundation, 2007, p. 5. For more on the state of the economy, see Hadley Arkes, *Bureaucracy, The Marshall Plan, and the National Interest*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972, pp. 47-51.
- ³ Arkes, especially pp. 63-83, 102-110, and 191-197.
- ⁴ Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 101-109; Machado, pp. 34-39.
- ⁵ The number of country missions later increased to 17. Machado, p. 8.
- ⁶ Machado notes that "After the ECA, the concept [of decentralized theater command] fell out of favor in foreign aid circles, and a formal discarded which had once been a significant government asset." Machado, p. 34.
- ⁷ Machado, p. 35.
- ⁸ Machado, pp. 35-37.
- ⁹ Machado, pp. 37-39; Arkes, p. 358.
- ¹⁰ The ECA went to great lengths to avoid even the perception of political interference. In May 1948, Senator Carl Hatch pressed the ECA to hire his son-in-law as the Chief of Mission to Greece. Even though his son-in-law was very well qualified for the position, his application was rejected. Machado, pp. 38-39.
- ¹¹ Herbert A. Simon, "Birth of an Organization: The Economic Cooperation Administration," *Public Administration Review*, Volume 13, Number 4, Autumn 1953, pp. 234-235. Perhaps less diplomatically, another staff member surmised that if the Commerce Department had overseen the Marshall Plan, its staff "would have numbered in the tens of thousands." Machado, pp. 35-36.
- ¹² Hogan, pp. 136-145; Machado, p. 38 and Appendix A.
- ¹³ One notable exception was the appointment of two trade union officials to head the ECA missions in Norway and Sweden. Hogan, pp. 137-140 and p. 203.
- ¹⁴ Machado, p. 16.
- ¹⁵ Machado, pp. 17-18.
- ¹⁶ Machado, p. 19.
- ¹⁷ Arkes, Chapter 11, especially pp. 229 and 237.
- ¹⁸ Machado, pp. 49-50.
- ¹⁹ Hogan, pp. 391-392.
- ²⁰ Machado, p. 14.
- ²¹ The initial mandate of the OWI covered information programs both at home and abroad, but most of the domestic components of its work were phased out by 1944. Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency*, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004, p. 17.
- ²² The largest USIS post was in London, which employed 1600 personnel. Dizard, pp. 18-28.
- ²³ Dizard, pp. 37-47.
- ²⁴ Dulles apparently believed that international public opinion played a limited role in affecting foreign policy and particularly disliked the information program. Dizard, pp. 54-55, 65, and 68; Mark Haefele, "John F. Kennedy, USIA, and World Public Opinion," *Diplomatic History*, Volume 25 Number 1, Winter 2001, p. 68; Carnes Lord, *Losing Hearts and Minds?: Public Diplomacy and Strategic Influence in the Age of Terror*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006, p. 65.
- ²⁵ Dizard, pp. 54-59.
- ²⁶ Dizard, pp. 4 and 153.
- ²⁷ Dizard, pp. 4 and 103.
- ²⁸ Dizard, pp. 4-5 and 153-197; Allen C. Hansen, *USIA: Public Diplomacy in the Computer Age, Second Edition*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989, chapters 8-10; Paul P. Blackburn, "The Post-Cold War Public Diplomacy of the United States," *The Washington Quarterly*, Volume 15 Number 1, Winter 1992, pp. 75-86.
- ²⁹ Dizard, p. 4.
- ³⁰ AFN had a number of broadcasting advantages over VOA, including local transmissions on medium wave frequencies and broadcasts that lasted 24 hours a day.

- In the 1960s, AFN estimated that it reached an audience of 20 million Europeans. Dizard, pp. 134-136.
- ³¹ Dizard, pp. 142-144.
- ³² Dizard, p. 134.
- ³³ Tensions also existed in the field between USIS officers, who integrated themselves into their communities, and the foreign service officers at embassies who served more traditional diplomatic roles. Dizard, pp. 154-156.
- ³⁴ Dizard, pp. 98-99 and 144-147; Blackburn, pp. 75-76.
- ³⁵ Between 1959 and 1963, for example, USIA expanded from 24 posts in 13 African countries to 55 posts in 33 African countries. USIA activities in Europe and Japan were reduced as resources were shifted to these new areas. Dizard, pp. 77-78 and 84.
- ³⁶ The JUSPAO staff grew to 200 officers, more than ten times as many people as at any other USIS post, and its budget of \$10 million was the largest ever devoted to a single country. Dizard, pp. 92 and 97.
- ³⁷ Dizard, p. 98.
- ³⁸ Charles Wick, the USIA director during the Reagan administration, had a particularly close relationship with the president and is widely seen as one of the most effective directors in the agency's history. Dizard, pp. 200-201; Hansen, pp. 31-32; Carnes Lord, "The Past and Future of Public Diplomacy," *Orbis*, Volume 42, Winter 1998, pp. 54-58.
- ³⁹ See, for example, John E. Tedstrom, *Beyond Consolidation: U.S. Government International Broadcasting in the Post-Cold War Era*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, MR-366-OSD/A/AF, 1994.
- ⁴⁰ Critics of USIA suggested that CNN could replace VOA, for example, since CNN had established satellite broadcasts around the world. VOA officials countered that CNN at that time broadcast only in English and mostly reached large Western hotels, instead of providing programming in local languages. Dizard, p. 215.
- ⁴¹ United States Agency for International Development (USAID) became exempt from this plan, as discussed below.
- ⁴² VOA was the only exception. It was put under the oversight of the independent Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), which also oversees RFE/RL, Radio Free Asia, and Radio Marti. Dizard, pp. 213-216 and 219-220. On the relationship between VOA and the BBG, see Sanford J. Ungar, "Pitch Imperfect," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 84 Number 3, May/June 2005.
- ⁴³ For more on the erosion of US public diplomacy capabilities since the 1990s, see Carnes Lord, *Losing Hearts and Minds?: Public Diplomacy and Strategic Influence in the Age of Terror*, especially Chapter 7.
- ⁴⁴ During the Eisenhower administration, for example, Carol Lancaster writes that there was a "growing view among US policy-makers that supporting economic and social progress in [countries exposed to communist pressures] was much more important in shaping the outcome of the Cold War than simply providing their governments with aid to help stabilize their countries." Lancaster, *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007, p. 65.
- ⁴⁵ Carol Lancaster, *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007, p. 67; Samuel Hale Butterfield, *U.S. Development Aid—An Historic First*, Westfield, CT: Praeger, 2004, pp. 35-39; United States Agency for International Development, "A History of Foreign Assistance," April 2002, available at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACP064.pdf, accessed May 2008.
- ⁴⁶ Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, p. 66; USAID, "A History of Foreign Assistance."
- ⁴⁷ Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, p. 72. This quote is also reproduced in USAID, "A History of Foreign Assistance."
- ⁴⁸ Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, pp. 73-74.
- ⁴⁹ Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, p. 72.
- ⁵⁰ Carol Lancaster and Ann Van Dusen, *Organizing U.S. Foreign Aid: Confronting the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2005, pp. 14-18.
- ⁵¹ Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, pp. 101-102.
- ⁵² Butterfield notes that in 1998, USAID gave its program managers a list of Congressional requirements and prohibitions that was 25 pages long and still considered to be incomplete. See p. 15.
- ⁵³ Lancaster and Van Dusen, p. 24.
- ⁵⁴ In particular, Congressional concerns about foreign aid have been expressed constantly, and sometimes quite negatively, since before the formation of USAID. Butterfield, pp. 14-15.

- ⁵⁵ Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, pp. 75-77; Butterfield, pp. 113-114.
- ⁵⁶ Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, pp. 80-81; USAID, "A History of Foreign Assistance."
- ⁵⁷ Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, pp. 45-47 and p. 86.
- ⁵⁸ For more on staffing changes during the 1970s and 1980s, see W. Haven North and Jeanne Foote North, "Transformations in U.S. Foreign Economic Assistance," in Louis A. Picard, Robert Groelsema, and Terry F. Buss, eds., *Foreign Aid and Foreign Policy: Lessons for the Next Half Century*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2007, pp. 291-293.
- ⁵⁹ Lawrence Korb, "Foreign Aid and Security: A Renewed Debate?" in Picard, Groelsema, and Buss, eds., p. 29.
- ⁶⁰ Butterfield, pp. 220 and 222.
- ⁶¹ Of the 2,227 direct hire employees in 2004, 1,132 were based in Washington and 1,095 were officers of the foreign service, and 672 of those foreign service officers were assigned to overseas missions. USAID also employed 4,966 foreign service nationals, who are citizens of the host countries, and hired an additional 624 personal service contractors who work for USAID on specific projects for a set period of time. See United States Agency for International Development, *USAID Primer: What We Do and How We Do It*, March 2005, pp. 29-30, available at http://pdf.dec.org/pdf_docs/PDADC100.pdf, accessed May 2008.
- ⁶² USAID had 2,300 personnel deployed in Vietnam in 1968. Butterfield, p. 94. See also the discussion of CORDS below.
- ⁶³ Lancaster and Van Dusen, pp. 32-34.
- ⁶⁴ The tension between technical expertise and project management existed from the earliest days of USAID, but in previous periods, the organization had the budget and priorities that enabled it to change course and rehire more technical expertise when needed. Butterfield, pp. 25-26.
- ⁶⁵ Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, pp. 87-90; Lancaster and Van Dusen, pp. 30-31.
- ⁶⁶ Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, pp. 105-106; Korb, p. 31.
- ⁶⁷ For more on the history and implementation of the MCA, see Terry F. Buss and Adam Gardner, "The Millennium Challenge Account: An Early Appraisal," in Picard, Groelsema, and Buss, eds., pp. 329-355.
- ⁶⁸ The 17 specific criteria include political and economic freedoms, investments in education and health, control of corruption, and respect for the rule of law. For more details and a full list of these criteria, see Millennium Challenge Corporation, "Selection Criteria," available at <http://www.mcc.gov/selection/index.php>, accessed May 2008.
- ⁶⁹ Lancaster, *Foreign Aid*, pp. 91 and 105-106. Lancaster also reports that the decision memorandum given to President Bush on how to administer the MCA funds did not include USAID as a possible option: it only included the options of administering the funds through the State Department or creating a new agency.
- ⁷⁰ Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, "Remarks on Foreign Assistance," January 19, 2006, available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/59408.htm>, accessed June 2008.
- ⁷¹ Congressional Budget Justification, Foreign Operations, Fiscal Year 2008, available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/80701.pdf>, accessed June 2008.
- ⁷² For a fairly positive preliminary assessment, see Gordon Adams, "Getting U.S. Foreign Assistance Right," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists Web Edition*, May 2, 2008, available at <http://www.thebulletin.org/web-edition/columnists/gordon-adams/getting-us-foreign-assistance-right>, accessed June 2008.
- ⁷³ Richard Hunt, *Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995, p. 13.
- ⁷⁴ During this time, the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) was largely focused on training the South Vietnamese regular forces in conventional tactics. See Hunt, p. 13.
- ⁷⁵ In 1954, a team of advisors from Michigan State University (MSU)—sponsored by the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA), later folded into the ICA—was sent to South Vietnam to help the local government. Their initial assessment of government efforts in public administration soon expanded into a MSU-led program to train police and paramilitary forces between 1955 and 1962. See William Rosenau, *US Internal Security Assistance to South Vietnam: Insurgency, Subversion and Public Order*, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, pp. 35-37.
- ⁷⁶ This number was more than a quarter of the total foreign aid budget of \$2 billion. Marc Leepson, "The Heart and Mind of USAID's Vietnam Mission," *Foreign Service Journal*, April 2000, available at <http://www.afsa.org/ffsj/apr00/leepson.cfm>, accessed May 2008.

- ⁷⁷ R. W. Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S.-GVN Performance in Vietnam*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1972, p. ix.
- ⁷⁸ Richard Stewart, "CORDS and the Vietnam Experience: An Interagency Organization for Counterinsurgency and Pacification," Paper Submitted for Master of Science in National Security Strategy, Fort McNair, DC: National War College, May 1, 2006, p. 13.
- ⁷⁹ Stewart, p. 24.
- ⁸⁰ Komer, p. 112.
- ⁸¹ CIA was the second-largest contributor to the OCO. Also, total US civilians in OCO numbered roughly 1,000. See, Hunt, p. 82.
- ⁸² For example, Porter did not have the authority to shift funds between programs. See Hunt, 83, and Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1988, p. 656.
- ⁸³ Komer, p. 77.
- ⁸⁴ Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, p. 217.
- ⁸⁵ Sheehan, p. 656.
- ⁸⁶ As Komer noted, "The bureaucratic price that had to be paid for creating this military elephant and civilian rabbit stew was to put CORDS under the military. *Paradoxically, this resulted in greater U.S. civilian influence over pacification than had ever existed before*; it also powerfully reinforced pacification's claim on US and GVN military resources, which have constituted the bulk of the inputs during 1967-1971." Komer, p. 114. Emphasis in the original.
- ⁸⁷ Komer's official title was Deputy to COMUSMACV (Commander, US Military Assistance Command Vietnam) for CORDS and his position was established in a directive signed by the president. See, National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) No. 343, "Designation of Special Assistant for Direction, Coordination and Supervision of Non-Military Programs for Peaceful Construction Re Vietnam," Washington, DC, March 28, 1966, available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsam-lbj/nsam-343.htm>, accessed May 2008. Also, it is worth noting that the CIA apparently voiced some initial concern over having one person (Komer) oversee all pacification efforts across the regional, district, and provincial levels, but such concern failed to sway the president to make any changes.
- ⁸⁸ Hunt, p. 95.
- ⁸⁹ Komer, p. 121.
- ⁹⁰ United States Institute of Peace and the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (USIP-ADST), "Afghanistan Experience Project: Interview #5," Interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, April 13, 2005, p. 20.
- ⁹¹ David Passage, "Speaking Out. Caution: Iraq is Not Vietnam," *Foreign Service Journal*, November 2007, pp. 13-15.
- ⁹² USIP-ADST, p. 20.
- ⁹³ It is worth noting that this effort was only about 3 percent of the estimated 550,000 American civilians and soldiers there as well. Komer, p. 123, and Krepinevich, p. 218.
- ⁹⁴ Komer, p. 123.
- ⁹⁵ The number of Viet Cong insurgents was 12,000 in 1967, which declined to 9,000 in 1968 and to under 2,000 in 1971. Major Ross Coffey, "Revisiting CORDS: The Need for Unity of Effort to Secure Victory in Iraq," *Military Review*, March-April 2006, p. 26.
- ⁹⁶ Hunt, p. 253.
- ⁹⁷ Komer, p. 118.
- ⁹⁸ Hunt, pp. 272-274.
- ⁹⁹ Hunt, p. 279.
- ¹⁰⁰ Hunt, p. 180.
- ¹⁰¹ Komer, p. 63.
- ¹⁰² As Hunt writes, "Pacification was not accorded the resources commensurate with its importance in countering a communist threat that was directed heavily against the RF/PF [Regional Forces/Popular Forces]." See p. 278.
- ¹⁰³ As one assessment of CORDS notes, "The U.S.-backed pacification program could not overcome the South Vietnamese government's defective execution of plans and programs, its omnipresent corruption, or its inability to develop a sturdy, self-sustaining political base." Frank L. Jones, "Blowtorch: Robert Komer and the Making of Vietnam Pacification Policy," *Parameters*, Autumn 2005, p. 116.

¹⁰⁴ Butterfield, pp. 30-31.

¹⁰⁵ Komer stated, “In particular, the peacetime military and civil personnel systems proved quite inflexible in terms of providing the right kind of career people, putting them in the right jobs, or retaining them for optimum tours of duty in Vietnam.” Komer, p. 69.

¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, the military had similar recruitment problems of its own. Even after CORDS was established, the military had difficult recruiting war fighters to serve instead as advisors, because such an assignment was perceived to be “a less desirable means of career advancement than service with combat units.” While the military incentive program was subsequently revised to address this issue, serving as a military advisor would fail to retain a value on par with commanding troops in the eyes of the common soldier. Hunt, p. 107.

¹⁰⁷ Komer, p. 70.

¹⁰⁸ Dizard, p. 85.

¹⁰⁹ We are indebted to Ambassador James Dobbins for this point.

¹¹⁰ Paul C. Light, *A Government Ill Executed: The Decline of the Federal Service and How to Reverse It*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008.

¹¹¹ Komer, p. 8.

¹¹² Alain C. Enthoven, and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much Is Enough? Shaping the Defense Program, 1961-1969*, New York, N.Y., Harper & Row, 1971, p. 294.

¹¹³ US Government Printing Office, “Budget of the United States Government: Historical Tables Fiscal Year 2008: Table 3.2—Outlays by Function and Subfunction: 1962–2012,” online at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/usbudget/fy08/hist.html>, accessed July 25, 2008.

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About the Project

“What an Engagement Strategy Entails” addresses the weak condition of the United States’ civilian international affairs agencies. An impressive range of specialists have highlighted the importance of diplomacy, aid and trade, democracy promotion, and public information for US national security. Becoming more effective in all of these areas, however, will require a major upgrade of the associated government infrastructure, which in turn will need a political push from top leaders. This project will look at that problem in its largest dimensions and context.

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