

35. Cold War Institutional Relics

The United States currently wastes billions of dollars each year on unnecessary or counterproductive foreign policy programs that could be abolished immediately with no adverse impact on American interests. Most of the programs that should be canceled are institutional relics of the Cold War; others represent foreign policy pork-barrel spending and should never have received federal funds in the first place. Therefore, Congress should

- **eliminate funding for the U.S. Information Agency,**
- **eliminate funding for the National Endowment for Democracy,**
- **eliminate funding for the Asia Foundation,**
- **eliminate funding for the U.S. Institute of Peace,**
- **eliminate funding for the Selective Service,**
- **eliminate funding for the School of the Americas,**
- **eliminate funding for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency,**
- **eliminate funding of assorted foreign policy pork-barrel spending.**

Obsolete Public Diplomacy Programs

Several of the expendable programs (USIA, NED, the Asia Foundation, and the Institute for Peace) fall into the category loosely termed "public diplomacy"—the U.S. government's overseas public relations campaign to promote Washington's policies and the American way of life. During the Cold War, it may have been necessary to counter Moscow's crusade to export communism with a vigorous campaign on behalf of democracy, capitalism, and other American values, but that war between ideologies is clearly over. The remaining communist enclaves are making no attempt to convert neighboring countries to communism; for the most part, the communist states are themselves engaged in modest reforms.

The victory of democracy and free markets over communism may be testimony to the success of public diplomacy in the past (although it is virtually impossible to link such efforts to concrete results). Today's foreign policy dilemmas, however, are not part of a greater ideological battle. Public diplomacy is largely irrelevant to the kinds of challenges—from the proliferation of nuclear weapons to the increase in regional wars—now facing the United States. The immediate elimination of federal funding for Cold War era public diplomacy programs would save taxpayers money without compromising American interests.

United States Information Agency—\$1.4 Billion

The USIA is an agency in search of a mission. After spearheading the Cold War public relations campaign against communism, it has now entered the nanny business—screening au pairs for placement with American families—although it aspires to greater things. In a November 1993 discussion paper, the agency cites such challenges as ethnic cleansing, violent religious fundamentalism, human rights, protectionist trade practices, environmental degradation, and anti-immigration sentiment as justification for its continued existence. Those issues, however, are well beyond the realm of public diplomacy, and many of them are properly the domain of other government entities. If it is important to publicize American perspectives on such issues, private media outlets are more than adequate; a government-run propaganda apparatus is unnecessary. Continued funding of the USIA to work in areas that are within the jurisdictions of other federal agencies is, at the very least, a waste of money. Worse, the conflicts that inevitably arise from the overlap between the USIA and the entities primarily responsible for particular areas invite chaos and inconsistency in U.S. policy.

National Endowment for Democracy—\$35 Million

NED is also a prime candidate for the budgetary axe, yet its funding has steadily increased since the end of the Cold War. Created in 1983 as part of America's renewed war against communism, NED was questionable even before the demise of the Soviet Union. The endowment's primary grantees have often interpreted their overly broad mandate to promote democracy to justify activities that have done little to advance, and sometimes have actually harmed, U.S. interests and democracy-building efforts. Although NED often acts as an innocuous (and wasteful) slush fund for politicians and their close associates, it also has a troublesome history of mischief-making overseas—meddling in foreign elections, supporting

military leaders in Latin America, funding right-wing extremists in Western Europe, and disrupting and splintering fledgling democratic groups in Eastern Europe. There is no justification for such a wasteful and counterproductive program.

Asia Foundation—\$36 Million

The Asia Foundation was created in 1954 to promote U.S.-Asian understanding and to encourage Asian-Pacific efforts to strengthen representative government and institutions. Neither its mission nor its programming, however, merits continued public funding. The foundation's mission of goodwill may have been useful at a time when American contact with the Asian-Pacific region was limited, but today trade, tourism, and other mutual interests ensure strong ties between the United States and Asia. Like most organs of public diplomacy, the foundation sponsors a lot of "political tourism," which U.S. taxpayers are neither willing nor able to afford. It also has a dubious political agenda, crusading for such causes as stronger environmental laws and population control. And while some of its programs—adult education, for instance—have laudable goals, it makes little sense to spend American taxpayers' money providing programs in Asia that many Americans need in the United States.

U.S. Institute of Peace—\$11.5 Million

The Institute of Peace is yet another Cold War era institution of public diplomacy. Like several of the other organizations described here, it sponsors numerous international conferences and publishes an assortment of newsletters, reports, and books. The institute has increasingly emphasized education, primarily about conflict resolution. Yet none of those functions requires a separate, federally funded organization. Countless private institutions dedicate significant portions of their budgets to publications and conferences that address international issues, including peacemaking and international conflict resolution. Billions of dollars, both private and public, are also spent on education, and if conflict resolution is a legitimate area of study (many parents view the three Rs and other traditional subjects as far more important), that money should provide ample resources for conflict resolution materials and training in America's classrooms. There is no need for the Institute of Peace to fill a void that does not exist.

Cold War Relics in the Department of Defense

It should come as no surprise that the defense budget, which consumes such a large portion of federal revenues, includes extraneous programs

that have no bearing on American national security. The obsolete Selective Service System and the controversial School of the Americas are two military programs that could be easily eliminated.

Selective Service System—\$25 Million

President Jimmy Carter **reinstated** draft registration to demonstrate "resolve" after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. Today there is no Soviet Union, **America's** military power is unrivaled, and even the Pentagon admits the \$25 million Selective Service System could be dismantled with no adverse impact on military mobilization requirements.

The three reasons President Clinton has cited for maintaining draft registration—as a “**low-cost insurance policy,**” to avoid sending the wrong signal to potential adversaries, and to maintain a link between the all-volunteer military and the general **public**—are all invalid. The draft was designed to generate a large conscript army for a protracted conflict, an extremely unlikely scenario since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. And while potential adversaries may be deterred by **the** U.S. military's highly **skilled** personnel and advanced weaponry, they are unlikely to be impressed by obsolete lists of potential **conscripts**. Nor does draft registration provide any meaningful link between the military and the rest of society; merely filling out a registration form to avoid prosecution is hardly an act of patriotism.

School of the Americas—\$7 Million to \$8 Million

Another easy target for budget cutting is the School of the Americas, described by its critics as the “**coup school**” and the “**school for dictators.**” Since its establishment in 1946, the school has trained more than 56,000 Latin American military officers. Whatever influence the school may have wielded during the Cold War, it is difficult to justify maintaining such a program in the 1990s. In fact, in view of its rather embarrassing history, the School of the Americas probably should have been abolished long before the end of the Cold War. Panama's Gen. Manuel Noriega and Haiti's Col. Michel Francois are among its most notorious alumni, but many other graduates have committed egregious offenses against their countrymen or the United States, or both. If the threat of communism ever justified the School of the Americas, it is clear that that rationale no longer exists. Eliminating the school would not only save money, it would do a great deal to assuage the suspicion with which many Latin Americans still regard the United States.

U.S.-Soviet Arms Negotiations? Arms Control and Disarmament Agency—\$60 Million

The ACDA is an independent agency that was created to oversee U.S.-Soviet arms negotiations. Those negotiations obviously have been discontinued since one of the negotiating parties no longer exists, yet the agency lives on—and receives regular budget increases.

The ACDA now acts as an advisory body to the president and the secretary of state on such matters as nonproliferation and disarmament. It also participates in arms negotiations with other countries, prepares reports on arms control issues, and conducts arms transfer reviews. Yet all of those matters could (and probably should) be within the jurisdiction of the State Department. It makes little sense to maintain an independent agency to fulfill such functions. The ACDA should have gone out with the Soviet Union; it most certainly should be eliminated now.

Pork-Barrel Spending in the State Department

The State Department budget includes contributions to a number of organizations so obscure that it is highly unlikely that very many people inside the Beltway (much less outside it) are even aware the programs exist. Ending contributions to the following organizations would save more than \$3 million each year—a small amount by government standards, but savings nonetheless.

- o Bureau of International Expositions—\$58,000
- o International Cotton Advisory Committee—\$262,000
- o International Hydrographic Organization—\$112,000
- o International Jute Organization—\$69,000
- o International Lead and Zinc Study Group—\$55,000
- o International Natural Rubber Organization—\$289,000
- o International Office of Epizootics—\$91,000
- o International Office of the Vine and Wine—\$46,000
- o International Rubber Study Group—\$75,000
- o International Seed Testing Organization—\$9,000
- o International Tropical Timber Organization—\$314,000

- o International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources—\$224,000
- o International Wheat Council—\$367,000
- o Interparliamentary Union—\$974,000
- o World Tourism Organization—\$400,000

Opportunities for the 104th Congress

The programs described here represent excellent opportunities for the 104th Congress to demonstrate its resolve to cut spending. While many federal programs require protracted negotiations and restructuring before savings can be realized, these programs can and should be eliminated immediately. The programs serve no compelling purposes; their continued existence is mere bureaucratic self-preservation.

Suggested Readings

- Baker, James, III. "Sweeping Foreign Policy Reform." *Roll Call*, December 5, 1994.
- Bandow, Doug. "Draft Registration: The Politics of Institutional Immortality." Cato Institute Policy Analysis no. 214, August 15, 1994.
- Conry, Barbara. "Loose Cannon: The National Endowment for Democracy." Cato Institute Foreign Policy Briefing no. 27, November 8, 1993.
- General Accounting Office. "Promoting Democracy: The National Endowment for Democracy's Management of Grants Needs Improvement." March 1991.
- Isenberg, David. "The Sins of Security Assistance Programs." Cato Institute Foreign Policy Briefing no. 18, February 27, 1992.

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