



Public Diplomacy: A National Security Imperative

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As Delivered

Thank you. Thank you, Kristin, for that generous introduction. I would also like to thank Dr. John Nagl and the Center for a New American Security for inviting me to be part of this conversation. And thank you also for sending us Kurt Campbell and Michele Flournoy. I met with Michele this week and I am looking forward to working closely with Kurt at State. In fact, I've quickly learned that Foggy Bottom and the Pentagon have become unofficial CNAS alumni clubhouses. And I just hope someone teaches me the secret handshake before I leave.

It is a privilege to share the program today with so many distinguished speakers, including General Petraeus, who continues to provide leadership and insight on the most complicated issues of the day.

Fortunately, he is not alone. Today we have a President and Secretaries of State and Defense who are committed to renewing our engagement with the people of the world and restoring the kind of leadership that made the United States a force for global progress for so much of our history. The Obama Administration recognizes the central role of public diplomacy as a tool of smart power and an essential ingredient for 21st century statecraft.

Whether we are strengthening old alliances, forging new partnerships to meet complex global challenges, engaging with citizens and civil society, or charting new strategies in Afghanistan and Pakistan, our national interests depend on effective engagement and innovative public diplomacy. The stakes could not be higher. We must get this right.

Today I'd like to share some thoughts on what effective engagement looks like in a rapidly changing world and why it is so important to our foreign policy.

The starting point must be a recognition of how much the communications and information revolution has transformed the world in which we live. In today's interconnected world, people everywhere and at all levels of society are bombarded with information and more engaged with the wider world than ever before. Young people especially see the world through new lenses that fuel both new aspirations and old resentments. The advance of democracy and open markets has empowered millions to demand more control over their own destinies. Even in autocratic societies, leaders must increasingly respond to the opinions and passions of their people.

This has far-reaching implications for our foreign policy and national security. Governments inclined to support U.S. policies will back away if their populations do not trust us. But if we do this right, if we develop relationships with people around the world, if they trust us as a partner, this dynamic will be reversed. Less cooperative regimes will be forced to moderate their positions under popular pressure. To the extent that we succeed, threats we face today will diminish and new partnerships will be possible.

That is why Secretary Clinton has put people-to-people diplomacy at the heart of smart power and has underscored our need to, "build new partnerships from the bottom up, and to use every tool at our disposal."

Today, traditional government-to-government diplomacy is just not enough. Our ability to build and sustain the kind of partnerships we need to address the challenges of this century - and seize its opportunities - will depend on bolstering our credibility with the people of the world and forging an ethic of common purpose.

Secretary Gates has argued, "much of our national security strategy depends upon securing the cooperation of other nations, which will depend heavily on the extent to which our efforts abroad are viewed as legitimate by their publics." The key, he says, is "the steady accumulation of actions and results that build trust and credibility over time."

We are not the only ones who see the significance of increased engagement. Friends, competitors, and adversaries are moving quickly. The Chinese are building infrastructure and cultural centers across the world, developing long-term relationships in Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere. The Iranian public diplomacy network in the Middle East and beyond includes satellite television and radio networks in several languages, more than 100 newspapers and magazines, and thousands of web sites and blogs. And of course al-Qaeda and other extremists continue to engage aggressively using a range of new and old media.

This is not a propaganda contest - it is a relationship race. And we have got to get back in the game.

So how do we rebuild our national credibility and renew our engagement with the people of the world?

We need to develop a multi-dimensional, results-oriented approach that combines traditional outreach with cutting-edge technology to engage with people at all levels of society.

Broadly speaking, public diplomacy operates on two levels.

First, communication. This is the air game, the radio and TV broadcasts, the websites and media outreach that all seek to explain and provide context for U.S. policies and action; and

Second, engagement, the ground game of direct people-to-people exchanges, speakers, and embassy-sponsored cultural events that build personal relationships.

It is imperative that we improve on both levels, that we get smarter about how we communicate and more ambitious in how we engage.

As we communicate with people around the world, we must move beyond messaging. We need to listen more and lecture less. We have to learn how people

listen to us, how our words and deeds are actually heard and seen. And we need to explain our positions and policies upfront and not after the fact when opinions have already hardened. The more languages and venues we communicate in, the more respect we show for our audience, the more effective we will be.

And in our on-the-ground engagement, we need to build on the historic success of exchange programs such as Fulbright and reach wider and deeper into societies. In a world of billions of people, we need to find ways to scale up our programs and engage on a much broader level.

Advances in technology are providing new tools to do just that. They are enhancing our communications and our engagement, and providing unprecedented opportunities to develop new relationships. They allow us to move from an old model in which our government speaks as one-to-many, to a powerful new model of engaging interactively and collaboratively as many-to-many.

Our efforts to support President Obama's recent Cairo speech suggest the breadth and depth of these new possibilities. The President's words were almost instantly translated into 14 languages, posted on websites and blogs around the world, transmitted by text message to mobile phones in more than 170 countries, and discussed on social networks that span the globe. State Department officers texted, blogged and chatted about the speech in dozens of languages.

We paired these unprecedented high-tech communications efforts with traditional person-to-person outreach. Staff at more than 100 embassies and consulates hosted speech-watching gatherings, sponsored post-speech public debates and discussions, conducted hundreds of media interviews, and visited universities, mosques and madrassas - putting a local face on the President's promise of a New Beginning.

The goal of this kind of person-to-person engagement has always been to form lasting relationships. This is now a foundation of our communications strategy as well. In a crowded media environment, relationships offer a way to break through the clutter.

I learned this lesson while leading the expansion of Discovery into 170 countries and 35 languages. We knew that developing relationships with people across countries and cultures required understanding how they saw the world and offering them information they wanted and valued.

So if we want to forge relationships with people around the globe - and that is absolutely critical to our national strategic objectives - we need to understand people's interests and aspirations, and form partnerships to provide them with information and services they value. That is the key to an enduring relationship.

In a world where information is often the most valuable currency, we can link our unmatched national data resources with new communications technologies to create information tools that expand opportunity and improve lives. We can provide crop pricing data to cotton farmers in Uganda, financial literacy tools to shopkeepers in India, and online organizing training to activists in Colombia. Local voices and local aspirations must drive these efforts, and it is crucial that we work in a spirit of partnership, not patronage.

One of our most effective tools of relationship-building is English language training. Even in the most difficult of settings, we find that people value these skills and see them as building blocks to a better life. Through the English Access Microscholarship Program, created in 2004, the State Department has provided language skills to approximately 44,000 low-income high school students in more than 55 countries, including many in the Middle East. Evaluations have found that 87 percent of students in the Access program report a more favorable view of the American people.

If we do this right, we can forge relationships that become part of people's daily lives and endure long after the latest sound bites have faded away. With young people in particular, who are connected to the wider world in ways that their parents and grandparents never dreamed possible, we can lay a foundation of trust that will last a lifetime. *if sustained.*

And when our interests diverge, as they inevitably will from time to time, these bonds of trust and common purpose will help us debate as friends rather than clash as enemies. They will provide powerful counterarguments against the extremists who seek to spread anti-Americanism, will bolster those who see America as a source of good in the world.

The national security implications of engagement have not been lost on our colleagues at the Department of Defense, which has become heavily involved in what we call public diplomacy and they call strategic communications.

This influx of resources and personnel has bolstered our public diplomacy efforts. In Nigeria, for example, where high rates of HIV and AIDS among its soldiers hampered the Nigerian military's ability to participate in peace-keeping missions, the State Department organized a partnership with DoD and the Nigerian Ministry of Defense to create a program of testing, training, and education aimed at Nigerian military families. As of last month, more than 77,000 Nigerians had received HIV counseling and testing. Civilians at State took the lead, but they could not have implemented this program without the resources and assistance of their DoD counterparts.

Stories like this are encouraging. But we cannot ignore the legitimate concern that American public diplomacy should not be seen in any part of the world only as wearing combat boots. There needs to be a civilian face as well. Secretary Gates himself has said, "when it comes to America's engagement with the rest of the world, it is important the military is - and is clearly seen to be - in a supporting role to civilian agencies."

But, as Secretary Gates also notes, we cannot build the civilian capacity needed to assume an appropriate leadership role without adequate resources. And, frankly, at the State Department, we don't have them. This is a problem I am committed to addressing.

I also recognize that our civilian efforts need more than just resources. Our military colleagues have grasped both the significance and the urgency of public diplomacy mission and have responded accordingly. They recognize that the stakes are literally life and death and that their approach must be both strategic and global in scope.

One of my top priorities at the State Department is to instill a renewed sense of urgency and a strong emphasis on achieving real results. I am in this for the long haul and with the support of Secretary Clinton, I will tackle this challenge head-on.

At the top of my list is integrating public diplomacy into the policy process at every level, from formulation through implementation. Our policy decisions must be informed upfront by sound research and perspectives on possible impacts.

We must also create a culture of risk-taking and innovation that can adapt quickly in a changing world, nurture good ideas, and capitalize on new technologies. I plan on supporting numerous pilot programs to see which initiatives we should operationalize and scale up and which are better left on the shelf.

As someone with experience leading a large international business, I have a deep appreciation for strategic planning and results-oriented management. At the State Department, we can do a better job of thinking and planning strategically, with a clear mission and a steady eye on long-term global goals, accompanied by careful assessment of programs, personnel and expenditures.

building a sustainable relationship of trust

The bottom line is that results matter. I will work to develop methods for tracking outcomes on a consistent basis so that we have reliable ways of spotting trends and are better positioned to respond to shifting circumstances. And we will put a greater emphasis on considering and quantifying expected outcomes throughout the planning process.

I am confident that we can build a responsive and effective infrastructure that will support the kind of public diplomacy we need to achieve our national strategic objectives in today's world.

Nowhere is this imperative more pressing than in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Enhanced public diplomacy is a key component of the President's new strategy in the region. When he announced his plan in March, the President said, "a campaign against extremism will not succeed with bullets or bombs alone." He stressed the need to provide the people of the region with alternatives to extremism and to, "demonstrate through deeds as well as words a commitment that is enduring."

Afghanistan and Pakistan are, of course, large and diverse countries and we will carefully tailor our approach accordingly, valley by valley, village by village.

To achieve the President's aims, we are launching a multi-faceted strategy to provide platforms for local moderate voices, support democratic institutions and civil society, and position the United States as a long-term partner working to create opportunities and enable the people of the region to chart the futures of their own countries.

We are responding to requests from the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan to help meet the needs of their people. Secretary Clinton recently announced more than \$100 million in humanitarian support for the people of Pakistan. And Ambassador Holbrooke just announced another \$200 million. Since 2002, the United States has provided a total of more than \$3.4 billion to alleviate suffering and promote economic growth, education, health, security and good governance in Pakistan.

Yet we have a credibility gap with many in the region -- some have called it a trust deficit. So part of our task is reassuring the people that our aim in the region is to support their own aspirations. We need to do a better job of getting the word out about what we are doing to help Pakistan and Afghanistan become more stable and prosperous, both through the local media and by communicating directly with people.

There are 8 million Afghan mobile phone subscribers today and new towers and phones will provide more and more people with unprecedented access to information. Cell phone penetration in most parts of Pakistan has expanded even more rapidly. We are already exploring using text messaging to help internal refugees in Pakistan find much needed supplies and services.

We also need to lay the groundwork for long-term engagement. That is why we are expanding our English language programs in the region and launching efforts to engage teachers and students at madrassas. And we are putting new emphasis on proven public diplomacy programs. More students from Pakistan are studying for advanced degrees on Fulbright scholarships than from any other country.

Both Afghanistan and Pakistan face entrenched and brutal insurgencies. One great insight of the counterinsurgency strategy pioneered by General Petraeus is that without lasting relationships with local people and the trust of local communities, success will prove fleeting. Of course, though hard learned, this is not really a new lesson.

A few days after I started at the State Department, I moved into George Marshall's old office. General Marshall saw a world beyond our shores devastated by war and reeling from economic crisis. He knew that our fates and our fortunes were intertwined and that America had to engage with the world to ensure our future. So he launched one of the most far-reaching engagement efforts in history. And today we are still reaping the rewards of that investment in mutual prosperity and security.

From Cairo to Kabul, from quiet villages to crowded cities, America is once again reaching out a hand of friendship and seeking new relationship. We know it is the right thing to do and we know, like General Marshall did, that our future depends on it.

Thank you.