

Notes on “Voices on America” at the Brookings Institute

KL

Why?

- Official engagement much smaller than unofficial engagement
- Issues too big to address alone
- Need to meet enemies on ideology
- Need to find non-kinetic means to address security challenges

Need to compete for attention and credibility, has not had to do this

Not just to counter radical challenges and ideologies

Key points

1. Make initial statements from Obama
2. Comprehensive strategy for all PD and SC engagement, use pro-actively
3. R U/S should have government wide responsibility for this (how?)
4. Interagency hub for coordination in regions (Heritage suggests this would be through DoD coordinated regions)
5. More FSOs and PD staff
6. Make things more straightforward and decentralized
7. USG and esp. DoS needs more resources
8. More research on world
9. Review methods in line with strategy
10. Strike balance between security and openness

Does not suggest a new agency (a la USIA), too much effort, take years to get, too many resources to merely change, more conflict and overlap between USG agencies and we don't have that liberty

ST: (Q from Carlos: much more trans-national environment, so if you have good policy, how to operate in this new power environment? Esp when relating to power of NGOs, public, diffused groups/people

1. PD is sort of a contradiction, think of diplomacy as noble and behind closed doors, but will have to change due to this trend toward democracy, meaning governments have to create constituencies, so not possible or wise to have behind closed doors and emerge with treaty and then present to parliament and say “please ratify”, examples include global warming and financial bills. Argues for beefed up US diplomacy, but similar efforts in other countries
2. In 90's, inadequate focus on listening, both in public and in private mode, **more focus on transmit mode than in receive**. Obama says this, need to listen more, not just propaganda (or spin), not just putting out the US story, but also understand cultures in which they operate (understand why people do what they do, hope, dream, need, etc).

CV: (Q from Carlos: report focuses on what USG would do and this new NGO, how would one leverage both science and Univ. can be relevant to PD)

- Two sets of experience
 1. Working on corporate board and realized US-based corporations are already globalized and have been for a long time and an important projection of what the US thinks and does
 2. Ethics board: showed huge capacity out there we do not use, especially on what we aspire to

Universities:

- can tick off country after country who's leaders were educated in the US
- at MIT put all basic teaching materials on web for anyone to get to, easy to get, link, to etc; then looked at the messages that came back from everyone (Africa, ME), many said it was something America is doing for them, really great example of openness
- underground university in ME using these open material, who were minorities and otherwise couldn't attend the local school
- "creating the infrastructure for cross cultural work", bringing coherence to this process, and will help us gain in science, engineering, and univ.

Carlos: ability for Trust to invest in areas that may not be strictly in PD, but still is investing in the part of life that still tells the story of the US

TM (Q from Carlos: from business perspective, immediate focus on marketing, but behind that is enormous amounts of research and analysis to know what is effective)

Three key areas

1. listening:
 - need to understand not just what message to send, but to know what they hear
 - security at embassies: how can they interact with publics?
 - Business community has developed sophisticated methods for listening to their customers, suppliers and other constituents
 - Great work done listening as the soviet collapse, but was not disseminated across USG
2. collaboration: creating cross-cultural consensus
 - Coke: 70% of sales and people from outside US, boss is Turk, previous was Irish
 - Know how to bring people together with carrots rather than sticks
 - Management decisions made with global perspective
3. communications and new media:
 - very new, new administration really gets it, how adeptly they deployed new media

Carlos: listening is systematic process, but at some point need to systematize and implement into policy. Also, where does innovation come from? Innovation may not come in from USG

TM: how would PPP, lots of innovation lies in private sector, how to harness that is a big question and must not be one way, big challenge

CP: need to be able to move quickly, USG will have to take on, what is the role for USG in PD but also how would WT support?

KL: *not* outsourcing PD to private group, but need someone to connect with private sector, major role of WT would be to really work across agencies, tap expertise (tech, resources, innovation) and push them toward USG,

- DoS people would then sit in this organization, or in their private partner (e.g. marketing business, NGO, private group, etc) for a year then go back to DoS
- WT would not really deal with day to day emergency, allowing to be an incubator for ideas
- Success: “wears not invented here as a badge“

CP: imagine yourself in the ME peace process, how would you use something like the WT?

MI: public opinion there is at least as important as in democracies because the authoritarian gov is scared of public since no way for them to express action, listening conveys respect and many in ME feels US doesn't respect them, have to show we are willing to change or they won't care of we just listen

- People sense we espouse one thing and do another, double standard, easiest way for our PD is dismissed since we say we believe in democracy, meritocracy, but we do something else
- WT would allow us to find what we have in common with focus audiences while the USG ends up having to do things out of national interest that conflict with what we say, private sector programs can speak in common language but without being affiliated with USG actions/policy
- Jazz ambassadors, hugely successful, but we somehow just gave up on
- Easier for NGO to push these things than USG (for reason noted above)

CP: Is there a business-case for WT?

Colleen Graffy (DAS public diplomacy, the one who did twitter): EUR public alert, created regional media hubs, europe.state.gov. Q: can't plan due to continuing resolutions

Doug Wilson (congressional director of USIA, leaders program): Q: PD practitioners, how to relate when these individuals who are not inside the organization, credibility of both messenger and then message, people are increasingly doing this outside USG than inside because it is frustrating

Chris Ross (Al Hurra, etc): budgets are very small for BBG-type broadcast, hours and hours of programming that lack a PD focus (for example, focus on small power meeting large power using example of Hannibal and Rome), so some of the non-news items are poorly chosen, but still need news firewall

KL:

- Funding: real problem with huge swings in PD budget *and* new programs, need a long term budget cycle allowing for long-term budget, may not know budget even $\frac{3}{4}$ through the year, bad way to use tax payer money
- How to engage practitioners: facebook example of powers of communities who opt-in, but they also really want leadership, can create a community of people who are interested, people have all created their own blogs and have thousands of readers, help them help each other
- Broadcasting: need to protect news function. Also need to look at news-saturated environments such as in the ME vs. news-limited like Burma, need to focus more on getting our people on al jazerra and there is no one in USG responsible for that

ST:

- Broadcasting: examples of cold war, RFE/RL, really about filling a gap (little information on outside world), USG sponsored broadcasting, admirable job of trying to find new niche, area of opportunity and obligation for USG to look at
 - Real backsliding toward bad old days (esp. Russian Federation), hard to get real information now, real question for US/EU how to pull back, how can American's go on tolerate shows/stations and not beaming in from outside, but engaging on the inside with the more open areas
 - US media: problem is both domestic and international, really think US media falling down on job, how providing US-trust and education to own citizenry and also carrying out its global function, not necessarily relevant, but really need a USG (funded) function that can plug into the fourth pillar, need buy-in in terms of mission from US media

Sherry Newler (international council for foreign visitors): flagship exchanges, do they need more attention?

Kristina Tribble (FSI): what ratio of US/foreign people be involved in WT? need good balance to ensure they all will see each other as partners

David ___ (educational cultural affairs): suggests exchanges.state.gov, preaching to choir here, but US public and people on hill really need to convince them that PD really needs the resources. First thing cut in crisis is cultural programs, don't see it as an investment

Martin Apple (council of science leaders): when looking globally, you see nations, but also common interest organizations and how these groups really can influence governments (intergovernmental council on climate change, IPCC or something)

Gary Mitchell (Mitchell report): ideally “people would see us no better than we are”, but really we need to become better global citizens, US population needs to get smarter and more engaged

KL:

- exchanges have shown to be useful, report suggests we increase budgets
- speakers: need to focus on broadcasting, which speakers does not do
- use DARPA as a model for program, which has a six-year cycle (?)
- on hill, American public: not so worried about Hill, see a lot of interest from staffers and even from members, but US public is really hard because of problems with using USG money, but this is the place for NGOs (b. for diplomatic access)
- networks: how does USG engage with these? Very difficult when in USG, so better to do from NGO, thinking about networks puts you in a different mind-set, especially when thinking about security

CV:

- believe deeply in person-to-person contact (took a US nobel-laureate to Tehran)
- time of broadcasting may be over: the young folks are out on the web and really need to recognize this
- age of leveling the world, can only lead by participation, ideas, collaboration
- business case: listening, not only across oceans, but also in the US, if working in organization just listening and feeding back you can create a positive feedback to move in direction we want to go

TM:

- business case: listening
- US global citizenship: BDA has created US programs
- Exchanges: US-muslim busienss sxvchanges at BDA
- Networking: how do you really empower networks on web to really come to your side and you have to cede control, which argues for buffer organization between outside and USG which is ultimately responsible

ST:

- Obama: called himself citizen of world before he took office
- Business case: essence of American foreign policy, advance US interests, when non hard then it is done consensual and rule-based, emphasis consensual, which means we need to find a way to build this consensus
- Powell was able to take prestige and make argument that certain things in DoS was underfunded, Clinton will (hopefully) be able to do the same, esp. when comes to getting money from congress

CP:

1. Systemic listening, need to invest and learn, critically important in dispersed environment
2. Networks: impetus for change, how to we work with them better
3. Innovation: always cutting edge, drives us further, needs to be effective in trans-national world
4. Huge assets in US but are spread out across the nation in a myriad of different places