

# ‘Strategic Public Diplomacy’

Testimony Before the Senate Committee  
on Foreign Relations

At a Hearing on “The Future of U.S. Public Diplomacy”

James K. Glassman

March 10, 2010  
(updated March 9, 3:30 p.m.)

James K. Glassman  
Executive Director  
George W. Bush Institute  
P.O. Box 600610  
Dallas, Texas 75206  
202-835-1611  
jglassman@georgewbushcenter.com

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

Senator Kaufmann, you and Vice President Biden, more than any other individuals in recent years, have advanced the cause of public diplomacy as champions of international broadcasting. Thank you for your long service to your country.

I had the unique honor myself of serving, far more briefly, in two public diplomacy positions: First as chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, where I was a colleague of the future Senator Kaufmann. The BBG oversees all non-military taxpayer-funded U.S. international broadcasting, including radio, television, and Internet in 60 languages across more than 100 countries. Then, as Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, in charge of engagement with foreign publics.

This hearing asks four of us who have served or are serving in the latter post to address the future of public diplomacy. That future, in my view, is in doubt.

While the men and women who practice public diplomacy are working diligently and courageously, they lack what the Djerejian Group, a 2003 commission, called the proper “strategic direction”<sup>1</sup> to contribute effectively toward the achievement of the American interest.

In short, here is the problem with public diplomacy: It is not today being taken seriously as a tool of national security by policymakers. Will it be in the future? Perhaps only in a desperate response to a terrible crisis. Such delay is unacceptable.

In my testimony today, I will describe what a serious public diplomacy – what I call “*Strategic Public Diplomacy*” – looks like. In the second half of the last administration, President Bush and the leadership of the State Department, the Pentagon, the National Security Council, the BBG, and the intelligence community – with support from a handful of members of Congress and staffers – were succeeding in developing this new vision of public diplomacy and putting it into practice, especially to counter violent extremism.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Changing Minds, Winning Peace,” report of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, submitted to the Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, Oct. 1, 2003, p. 8.

Today, that effort needs to be sustained, renewed, and invigorated. There are areas in the world where Strategic Public Diplomacy is not merely one tool, but, in fact, the best tool, for achieving America's interests. One of those areas is Iran, which I will address today.

Public diplomacy needs to be sharp, not flaccid. It needs to focus on key foreign policy problems, not merely on vague, feel-good improvements in the far-off future. It needs to be primarily an activity of national security, not of public relations. It needs to be mobilized and sent into battle to win the ideological conflicts of our time.

During the Cold War, with institutions like Radio Free Europe, the Congress of Cultural Freedom, the publication Problems of Communism, educational and cultural exchanges, and the U.S. Information Agency, the United States became very effective at public diplomacy. Public diplomacy played an essential role in defeating communism.<sup>2</sup> But after the Berlin Wall came down, our arsenal of persuasion was dismantled.

“At a critical time in our nation's history,” said the report of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, “the apparatus of public diplomacy has proven inadequate... First and foremost, public diplomacy requires a new strategic direction, informed by a seriousness and commitment that matches the gravity of our approach to national defense and traditional state-to-state diplomacy.”<sup>3</sup> True in 2003; still true today.

### **‘We Cannot Kill or Capture Our Way to Victory’**

Here is the best definition of public diplomacy: understanding, engaging, informing and influencing foreign publics with the goal of achieving the national interest of the United States of America. Of the four activities, the most important is “influencing.” Public diplomacy is a means, not an end. It is a particular set of tools and approaches that help us influence foreigners in order to achieve goals that the United States desires.

During the Bush Administration, the relevant ends were keeping the United States safe and promoting freedom – ends that are linked.

---

<sup>2</sup> See many examples, including this speech last year by Yale Richmond, a retired foreign service officer: <http://whirledview.typepad.com/whirledview/2009/12/cultural-exchange-and-the-cold-war-how-the-west-won.html>

<sup>3</sup> “Changing Minds, Winning Peace,” pp. 8 and 13. I served on this panel, created by Congress and chaired by Ambassador Edward Djerejian.

Today, the greatest threats to safety and freedom come from violent extremists and their supporters, mainly using terrorism to try to achieve their aims.

As Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said, “Over the long term, we cannot kill or capture our way to victory. Non-military efforts – ...tools of persuasion and inspiration – were indispensable to the outcome of the defining struggle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They are just as indispensable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – and perhaps even more so.”<sup>4</sup>

In keeping with that belief, President Bush in 2006 designated the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy as the lead official across government in strategic communications – which is a rubric that includes public diplomacy as well as other activities, including covert and kinetic ones, that attempt to communicate a specific, intentional message to the rest of the world. The Secretary of State and I believed that, given my own background and the nature of the threats, this role should be my primary one. Our focus was countering violent extremism by engaging in a “war of ideas,” or what we also termed “global strategic engagement.”

Drawing on the work of my predecessor, Karen Hughes, I built an inter-agency structure that allowed visibility into the strategic communications work being done in other parts of government, including the military, the intelligence community, the foreign assistance apparatus, Treasury, and elsewhere.

Beyond visibility, we were able, working with the National Security Council, to assign specific agencies to perform specific duties in pursuit of clear strategic goals. I also created a small inter-agency group called the Global Strategic Engagement Center, or GSEC, with a State Department director and members from the Department of State and the intelligence community, to handle day-to-day operations.

By the time I left government, this structure was working well, with State at the top of it, as it should be. We received superb cooperation, both from the military and from the intelligence community. Yes, the Department of Defense had more resources for strategic communications activities, but DoD worked in concert with us and looked to us for leadership.

We tried to achieve our war-of-ideas goals in two ways: first, by pushing back and undermining the ideology behind the violent extremism while at the same time explaining and advocating free alternatives and, second, by diverting young people from following a path that leads to violent extremism.

---

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1262>

What all terrorist groups have in common, in fact, is the exploitation of vulnerable young people, who are isolated and indoctrinated and become the shock troops.

In both of these endeavors – undermining and diverting – Americans themselves are rarely the most credible actors and voices. Much of what we did was encourage others. For example, we supported a global organization of female family members of victims of violent extremism and supported another network, based in Europe, of Muslim entrepreneurs.

In Afghanistan, with the most meager resources, we helped stand up an Afghan-led media center in Kabul. In October 2008, the Taliban stopped a bus at Maiwand, pulled off 50 passengers and beheaded 30 of them.<sup>5</sup> The media center’s leaders immediately brought together 300 Afghan religious leaders who issued a statement condemning the action and calling it anti-Islamic. The effort led to widespread anti-Taliban protests.<sup>6</sup>

(I am happy to note that the new Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy calls for an expansion of the Afghan Government Media and Information Center and the establishment of 16 provincial satellite offices.<sup>7</sup>)

We often worked in partnership with private-sector organizations, deploying small amounts of money, in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars. A good example was providing funds to the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, a group that has been working for years to enhance education (to include academic subjects, plus the teaching of universal values such as tolerance and critical thinking) in Pakistan’s madrassas, often breeding grounds of terrorists.<sup>8</sup> The ICRD has so far trained over 2,000 madrassa leaders.

We also funded “Life After Death,” a documentary by Layalina Productions, a U.S.-based non-profit, on the journey of families of 9/11 victims as they commiserate with families of terrorism victims in Spain, Jordan, and Egypt.<sup>9</sup> The documentary was first aired last fall on Al Arabiya News Channel throughout Arab-speaking nations.

All of these efforts were aimed at specific goals. We wanted, for example, to

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/world/asia/19iht-19afghan.17083733.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/2892.htm>

<sup>7</sup> “Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy,” as updated Feb. 2010, Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, U.S. Department of State.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.icrd.org/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.layalina.tv/productions/lifeafterdeath.html>

show the widespread and senseless suffering caused by violent extremists, especially in their attacks against fellow Muslims. We also wanted to find ways – such as through encouraging entrepreneurship, improving madrassas, or expanding an excellent English-teaching program that teaches values as well – to divert young people from a path to terrorism.

### **‘Mutual Interest and Mutual Respect’**

We took our direction from the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism of 2006, which stated: “In the long run, winning the War on Terror means winning the battle of ideas.”<sup>10</sup> So our mission then and, it is my hope, today is to use the tools of ideological engagement – words, deeds, and images – to create an environment hostile to violent extremism.

What do these efforts in strategic public diplomacy have to do with improving America’s image abroad? Very little, in an immediate sense. The United States itself is not at the center of the war of ideas. Rather, as I will explain a bit later, the United States is being affected by conflicts within Muslim societies, which themselves are ground zero for this enormous struggle, which involves both ideology and violence.

In his inaugural address, President Obama stated, “To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect.”<sup>11</sup> He repeated this powerful phrase in speeches in Istanbul and Cairo last year. We do indeed have mutual interest, even with people who may disagree with us on such policy matters as Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

On the threat of violent extremism, we are absolutely on the same page as Muslim societies. As a result, even in countries where vast majorities say, even today, that they view the U.S. unfavorably – Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, to name a few – our mutual interest in defeating the terrorist threat (and, I should add, in constraining the Iranian threat) – the United States can work cooperatively, using public diplomacy methods, to reach mutual strategic goals.

Americans, for example, have a clear mutual interest with the Pakistanis, who, according to recent Pew Research surveys, view us more unfavorably than practically any other people (in fact, favorability dropped, to just 16

---

<sup>10</sup> <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/>

<sup>11</sup> [www.whitehouse.gov/blog/inaugural-address](http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/inaugural-address)

percent, between 2008 and 2009).<sup>12</sup> We both want to defeat the Taliban and Al Qaeda for the sake of a stable, free Pakistan and a safer America. That interest can be achieved even if Pakistanis harbor animus toward Americans.

The latest Pew data reinforce this notion. By a margin of 63 percent to 12 percent, Pakistanis support America's "providing intelligence and logistical support to Pakistani troops fighting extremist groups. By 47 percent to 24 percent, Pakistanis even support U.S. "missile strikes against leaders of extremist groups." What can public diplomacy do in Pakistan? Working quietly, it can help the Pakistani government reinforce the notion that the violent extremist threat is real and that "this is Pakistan's war."<sup>13</sup>

Still, the default position in U.S. public diplomacy – getting people to like us better – has irresistible inertia. When in doubt, policymakers and practitioners turn to brand-burnishing. But the unresolved question is whether a better-liked America is one that can more easily achieve its national security goals. Certainly, some public diplomacy activities can, over the long run, improve foreigners' understanding of the United States, our people, our values, and our policies – and we should vigorously pursue those activities. But, in addition to such activities, the tools of Strategic Public Diplomacy must be applied toward urgent goals for which likeability means little.

Much of the public diplomacy effort in the past has focused on our own image, on how we are seen by others. But today, in the war of ideas, our core task is not how to fix foreigners' perceptions of the United States but how to isolate and reduce the threat of violent extremism. In other words, it's not about us.

### **'An Observable but Intangible Attraction'**

In all aspects of public diplomacy – both traditional and strategic -- we require a new approach to communications, to the engaging and informing that lead to the influencing. We began to develop such an approach during my brief tenure, calling it Public Diplomacy 2.0. It is an approach that Secretary Clinton has embraced.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> For a more complete exposition of this subject, see my article, "It's Not About Us," on ForeignPolicy.com:

[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/09/01/its\\_not\\_about\\_us?page=0,0](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/09/01/its_not_about_us?page=0,0)

<sup>13</sup> President Zardari of Pakistan has made this statement many times, for example:

<http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/2892.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Secretary Clinton immediately supported the Alliance of Youth Movements and in January gave a speech on Internet freedom and met with high-tech executives on improving the use of social media in public diplomacy:

[http://voices.washingtonpost.com/posttech/2010/01/sec\\_clinton\\_dines\\_high-tech\\_ti.html?wprss=posttech](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/posttech/2010/01/sec_clinton_dines_high-tech_ti.html?wprss=posttech)

The approach begins with research on America's image. We found three reasons for low favorability – differences with our policies, a lack of understanding of those policies and beliefs, and a perception that the United States does not respect the views of others, does not listen to them, or take them seriously. These last two subjects – lack of understanding by foreigners and lack of respect by us – cannot be addressed by preaching or by telling the world how wonderful we are. In fact, the technique of standing in one place and spraying a message widely to others is not very effective in today's world.

A better way to communicate is through the generation of a wide and deep conversation. Our role in that conversation is as facilitator and convener. We generate this conversation in the belief that our views will be heard – even if U.S. government actors are not always the authors of those views.

This new approach takes advantage of new social networking technologies like Facebook and YouTube and Second Life, whose essence is multiple, simultaneous conversations, in words and pictures. And, in fact, the method of communication is itself a reflection of American values. The medium, as Marshall McLuhan said, is the message. We, as Americans, do not dictate. Rather, we believe that, in a free and open discussion, the best ideas will prevail, and we want to encourage the free expression of views, rather than drowning out words that disturb us.

Joseph Nye, former dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, has written: “If I am persuaded to go along with your purposes without any explicit threat or exchange taking place – in short, if my behavior is determined by an observable but intangible attraction – soft power is at work. Soft power uses a different type of currency (not force, not money) to engender cooperation – an attraction to shared values and the justness and duty of contributing to the achievement of those values.”<sup>15</sup>

Public Diplomacy 2.0, endorsed at the highest levels of government during my tenure at the State Department, embodies Nye's description of soft power. Specifically, in 2008, our Education and Cultural Affairs Bureau, under the direction of Goli Ameri, an Iranian-American with experience as a technology executive, launched the first U.S. government social-networking website. The site, ExchangesConnect,<sup>16</sup> on the Ning platform, provides a forum around the topic of international exchanges.

The U.S. government cannot control everything that goes on within this

---

<sup>15</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, PublicAffairs, 2004, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> <http://connect.state.gov/>



forum (indeed, during the fighting in Gaza, much of the comment on the site was in opposition to U.S. policy), and the lack of control naturally produces some anxiety. But we live in a world in which we have two choices: preach and be ignored, or convene a conversation and be heard – and, if our views are persuasive, have influence. ExchangesConnect is now running its second annual video contest, this one with the theme, “Change Your Climate, Change Our World.” Among the top 40 entries are videos from Egypt, Turmenistan, Cuba, and Vietnam. <sup>17</sup>

In 2008, the Bureau of International Information Programs – with such private sector partners as YouTube, the Tisch School at New York University, and NBC Universal -- initiated a video contest called the Democracy Video Challenge, with the theme “Democracy Is...” We wanted contestants, most of them young Internet users, to define democracy for themselves in three-minute films. There were 900 entries from around the world, with the winner chosen by a vote on the Web – which, again, we did not control.

Perhaps the best example of PD 2.0 in action is the Alliance of Youth Movements. In the fall of 2008, a young State Department official named Jared Cohen suggested that I travel to Colombia to see what that government, with U.S. help, had done to encourage young fighters to leave the FARC, the terrorist group (which started in the 1960s as the military wing of Colombia’s communist party) that had been killing and kidnapping innocents. Were there lessons here for the demobilization and reintegration of violent extremists in the Middle East?

Also at Cohen’s suggestion, I met with the leaders of a spontaneous civilian movement that used Facebook to bring 12 million people into the streets of cities around the world in early 2008 to oppose the FARC. That movement, One Million Voices Against the FARC, had real-life effects, demoralizing FARC fighters and causing them to demobilize. As a result of this and other efforts, the size of the FARC was cut in half and its effectiveness significantly reduced.

The dynamic young founder of the anti-FARC group, Oscar Morales,<sup>18</sup> worked without the support – or, even, at first, the knowledge – of the Colombian government. Morales, a young computer technician, was simply a citizen, angry at what terrorists were doing in his country. This was a model we wanted to replicate. So we decided to bring Morales together with young

---

<sup>17</sup> [http://connectcontest.state.gov/contests/change-your-climate-change-our-world/entries/top\\_entries](http://connectcontest.state.gov/contests/change-your-climate-change-our-world/entries/top_entries)

<sup>18</sup> Oscar Morales in February became a Visiting Fellow of the George W. Bush Institute in Dallas.

representatives of similar anti-violence and pro-social-change organizations using the Internet from countries like Egypt, Mexico, and the UK, as well as officials of technology companies such as Facebook, Google, Howcast, and AT&T.

The State Department provided only a small amount of seed money. We were conveners and facilitators. At a New York conference in late 2008, the young people decided to create their own network – which is now called the Alliance of Youth Movements (AYM), with a social networking site, including how-to hub, and a professional executive director.<sup>19</sup> With backing from Secretary Clinton, the group held a conference in Mexico in October, in part with the purpose of pushing back against narco-terrorism, and will hold another meeting next month in London.

Unfortunately, not all PD 2.0 ideas have become reality. We were on the brink of launching the contemporary analogue of “Problems of Communism,” the USIA journal that confronted the Soviet ideology for 40 years during the Cold War. Our version, tentatively called “Problems of Extremism” (POE), was planned as a journal, a website, and a platform for conferences. We wanted it to become the locus of liberal thought, promoting freedom, tolerance, and women’s rights, with emphasis on the conflicts (which I will explain below) that are occurring in Muslim societies. The POE venture, like AYM, would be a non-profit foundation, with a small amount of seed money provided by the U.S. government and other funding from foreign governments and private institutions.

Finally, a good example of PD 2.0 even before such a rubric existed is the Digital Outreach Team, begun under Ambassador Hughes. Team members go into chat rooms and on interactive websites, in Arabic, Farsi, and Urdu (and, we had planned, Russian), to explain U.S. policy and refute lies and distortions. They identify themselves as working for the U.S. government and provide links to easily accessible facts on the Internet.

Public Diplomacy 2.0 would be an unfulfilled idea if it were not for Web 2.0, the interactive tools now available on the Internet. Yes, Al Qaeda and other violent extremist organizations have exploited the Internet to their advantage, but that edge has diminished – and not just because the jihadist message has worn thin with Al Qaeda’s penchant for slaughtering fellow Muslims.

Why? One reason, says analyst Daniel Kimmage in the New York Times, is that “the Qaeda media nexus...is old hat. If Web 1.0 was about creating the snazziest official Web resources and Web 2.0 is about letting users run wild

---

<sup>19</sup> <http://youthmovements.howcast.com/>

with self-created content and interactivity, Al Qaeda and its affiliates are stuck in 1.0.”<sup>20</sup>

The Internet world of Al Qaeda is one of direction: believe this, do that. The Internet world of today is one of interactivity and conversation: I think this, your ideas are unconvincing, I need more information to make up my mind, let’s meet at 3 p.m. Thursday for a peaceful protest. In fact, the Internet itself is becoming the locus of Civil Society 2.0.

This new virtual world is democratic. It is an agora. It is not a place for a death cult that counts on keeping its ideology sealed off from criticism. The new world is a marketplace of ideas, and it is no coincidence that Al Qaeda blows up marketplaces.

### **U.S. International Broadcasting**

While taxpayer-funded, non-military U.S. international broadcasting is almost 70 years old, the fundamental principle that underlies it is the same as that of Public Diplomacy 2.0: rather than preaching, the BBG’s entities seek to inform and to generate a conversation, also with the ultimate objective of securing American interests. The BBG’s broadcasters embody President Obama’s notion of mutual interest and mutual respect.

Along with the Fulbright educational exchanges, U.S. international broadcasting is almost certainly the most successful public diplomacy program. It is also the largest. The BBG budget rose from \$440 million in 2001 to \$758 million in fiscal 2010.

The BBG’s success may be attributed in part to its clear mandate. It does one thing and does it well: as a reliable source of news, it presents an accurate, objective and comprehensive view of America and its policies and, through surrogate broadcasters like Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), the BBG serves as a free, mature communications medium in nations lacking in such institutions.

Between 2001 and 2009, the weekly audience of the BBG increased by approximately three-fourths, to 171 million, and nearly the entire increase occurred in languages of strategic importance, such as Arabic, Farsi, and Urdu. Particularly remarkable is the Arabic service, Middle East Broadcasting Network.

Before MBN’s launch, just seven years ago, the Arabic audience for BBG – through Voice of America (VOA) radio, was only two to three million. Today,

---

<sup>20</sup> [www.nytimes.com/2008/06/26/opinion/26kimage.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/26/opinion/26kimage.html)

the total audience – that is, listeners and viewers who tune in at least once a week on radio or TV – is 35 million. In the 14 countries where the BBG has done research (Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, and UAE), 92 million adults have access to satellite TV. Alhurra’s weekly audience in these 14 countries, as measured consistent with international broadcasting standard, is 27.5 million -- almost a third of the potential audience. <sup>21</sup>

While Alhurra’s weekly audience is less than the weekly audiences for Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, it is greater than all other non-Arab broadcasters combined (including BBC Arabic). Alhurra and the BBG’s Arabic radio network, Radio Sawa, have a weekly audience of 71 percent of Iraqis and 61 percent of Syrians. Together, Sawa and Alhurra reach an up-duplicated audience of more than 35 million. In each of the 14 researched markets, Alhurra figures among the top 20 TV channels of all kinds (entertainment as well as news), except in Saudi Arabia, where it is 21<sup>st</sup>. Surveys find that Alhurra is considered “trustworthy” by at least 90 percent of its viewers in such countries as Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and Kuwait. In the past few weeks, Alhurra, with a larger audience in Iraq than Al Jazeera, has provided vigorous, objective coverage of that country’s elections.

Meanwhile, two other BBG entities, RFE/RL and VOA are together broadcasting a stream in Pashto and Dari 24/7 into Afghanistan, where RFE/RL is the number-one news station in the country. Separately, last December, RFE/RL began broadcasting in local Pashto dialects to Pakistan and the border regions with Afghanistan over a new station called Radio Mashaal, offering an alternative to extremist stations in the region. Radio Deewa, a product of VOA, is now broadcasting nine hours a day in Pashto to federally administered tribal areas of Pakistan, reaching 14% of Pashtuns in this critical area.

VOA has the largest combined radio and television audience in Iran of all international broadcasters, with one in four adult Iranians tuning in to a VOA program once a week. PNN broadcasts seven hours of television daily, repeated in a 24 hour format, and five hours of radio. Programming is also available around the clock on the Internet.

At the end of December, VOA launched a new Web application that allows users in Iran to download and send content to VOA’s Persian News Network

---

<sup>21</sup> The source of these data is the BBG itself, which contracts with a firm which independently engages such respected survey organizations. Most of the Middle East research was done by ACNielsen. The BBG uses the standard audience measurement for international broadcasters, asking whether the respondent watched or listened in the past week.

with their iPhones. The application enables users of Apple iPhones and Android phones to get the latest news from PNN and, with a single click, to send links to VOA stories via Facebook and Twitter pages and email accounts. The application will be available shortly in Apple's online store, PNN's Web site (<http://www1.voanews.com/persian/news/>) and on PNN's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

The application also gives Iran's "citizen journalists" the opportunity to use their iPhones and Android phones to send video and still pictures taken on their devices to a secure Web site where VOA's PNN editors can download the images and review them for possible broadcast use and Web posting.

RFE/RL's Radio Farda continues to provide hard-hitting news and information in a 24/7 format that gets stories to the Iranian people that their government denies them on domestic media outlets. Radio Farda has reported the harsh crackdown in the aftermath of the flawed June election.

The BBG is focused not only on areas of conflict. It has a major presence in Africa, where it has gained a reputation for broadcasting useful information about health; in Cuba; Russia; and in parts of Asia where freedom of the press is constrained, such as China and Burma. BBG budgets rose significantly in the seven years following the 9/11 attacks.

Because of evolving audience tastes, as well as legal, political, and technical obstacles to radio and TV in countries such as Russia, the BBG has moved more and more toward reaching audiences through the Internet.

But all is not well. The BBG's purpose and achievements need to gain greater understanding and support among policymakers.

The BBG is an independent agency of the federal government, with eight governors, four from each party, nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate, plus the Secretary of State, who typically appoints as representative the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

Unfortunately, in recent years, the confirmation process has become fraught with difficulty. As a result, although it occurred in June 2007 – more than two and a half years ago -- my confirmation was the last voted by the Senate for a BBG governor. Natural attrition has left the BBG with only four governors plus the Secretary of State – a total of five, which is the minimum for a quorum.

The BBG is no ordinary board; its governors serve as a collective chief executive officer for this critical organization. Imagine a CEO who serves with barely half of his or her intellectual and physical strength, and you'll get an idea of the status of the BBG today. I urge the Senate to confirm a full slate of governors immediately. The lack of action over the past few years on confirmations of governors is a sad manifestation of the overall standing of public diplomacy among too many policymakers. We can't wait.

## **Traditional Public Diplomacy**

My predecessor, Ambassador Hughes, gave me two excellent pieces of advice, and I passed them on to my successor: First, the best thing we can do for the long run in traditional public diplomacy is put Americans face to face with foreigners, and, second, we can't do enough English teaching.

We put people face to face mainly through exchanges. Ambassador Hughes's great accomplishment was expanding these programs that had been languishing. The U.S. now brings about 50,000 people from other countries to the U.S. on programs like Fulbright and YES (for high school students, mainly from Muslim-majority nations) and International Visitor Programs, whose graduates have included such figures as Hamid Karzai and Margaret Thatcher, when they were rising stars.

Education is America's greatest brand, and we have bounced back dramatically from 9/11. Today, despite tougher visa requirements, more than 600,000 foreign students are matriculating in the US – an all-time record.

Fulbright is the largest single public diplomacy program of the State Department, with federal support that has been increasing consistently for the past six years,<sup>22</sup> thanks to the efforts of President Bush and the U.S. Congress. In fiscal 2004, federal spending on Fulbright was \$150 million; in 2010, it will be \$254 million. Fulbright too has become more strategic. Exchanges for university students and scholars in both directions have increased substantially in Muslim-majority countries, including Afghanistan, Indonesia, Turkey, and Iraq. The Fulbright program in Pakistan is the largest in the world. Globally, applications are at their highest level in history.

While the U.S. government is the top funder of Fulbright scholarships, there are substantial contributions coming now from 100 countries, including major investments from India, China, Turkey, Chile, and Indonesia. And as an

---

<sup>22</sup> [www.fulbright.org/conference/2009/.../Marianne%20Craven\\_Remarks.doc](http://www.fulbright.org/conference/2009/.../Marianne%20Craven_Remarks.doc). Marianne Craven is Managing Director for Academic Programs at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State.

example of the public-private partnerships that are so critical to the success of public diplomacy, U.S. universities contribute \$30 million a year in cost-sharing.

The problem with exchanges, however, is that they are expensive. To succeed in the future, public diplomacy will need to find ways to use technology to reach a wider audience with each individual exchange – through video, for example, or sophisticated use of social networking media – and to find ways to engage more private-sector partners.

As for English, the United States teaches it because the world wants to learn it – because governments and people in practically every country in the world see English as a way to move up economically. Everywhere, including difficult neighborhoods like Yemen, the West Bank and Gaza. In teaching English, we teach a language and tell America’s story. Spending on English-teaching programs by the State Department has risen from \$6.8 million in fiscal 2004 to \$46.6 million this year.

Educational and cultural (including sports) exchanges, plus the outreach activities (such as sending speakers aboard and operating America.gov websites in seven different languages) of the Bureau of International Information Programs, comprise what I term “traditional public diplomacy.” These programs are important. They work, as recent assessments and evaluations have shown. The challenge is to improve efficiency and flexibility.

## **Two Urgent Tasks**

But, to return to Strategic Public Diplomacy and the war of ideas: What are the urgent tasks today? Here are two....

A New Narrative: The most pernicious idea in Muslim societies is that the United States wants to destroy Islam and replace it with Christianity. Vast majorities in many countries believe this narrative, and it is the prism through which they view almost all U.S. activities.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> See sources that I cited in my confirmation testimony in January 2008: WorldPublicOpinion.org, Program on International Policy Attitudes, University of Maryland, “Muslim Opinion on US Policy, Attacks on Civilians and al Qaeda,” April 24, 2007. A press release summarizing the study began, “An in-depth poll of four major Muslim countries has found that in all of them large majorities believe that undermining Islam is a key goal of US foreign policy.” See <http://worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/brmiddleeastnafricara/346.php?lb=brme&pnt=346&nid=&id=>. Also, “America’s Image in the World: Findings from the Pew Global Attitudes Project, Testimony of Andrew Kohut, Pew Research Center, before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, March 14, 2007.

But to try to refute this narrative head-on is not easy. A better approach is to promote a different narrative – one that reflects the truth. The State Department’s new strategic plan for public diplomacy lists “Shape the narrative” as one of five strategic objectives. That’s encouraging, but the narrative that the plan has in mind appears, from the document, to be U.S.-centric and difficult to convey and sustain. The objective appears to be to explain American policies better and to “counter misinformation and disinformation.”<sup>24</sup> Certainly, those activities must be part of any public diplomacy strategy, but the more valuable narrative to spread is not about the U.S. at all.

The indispensable narrative is the real story of what is happening in Muslim societies. It is a narrative of three conflicts that are within Muslim societies. Yes, the U.S. is deeply affected by them, but they are intra-Muslim conflicts and need to be understood that way. They are:

\* Religion and terror. A small group of violent reactionaries -- led by Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and allied groups -- is trying, through horrifying brutality, to bring more than one billion Muslims into line with a sweeping totalitarian doctrine, inconsistent with the tenets of Islam.

Growing numbers of Muslims are waking up to threat and are opposing and ostracizing the violent extremists in their midst -- even in Pakistan, where a terrible threat had been widely ignored. Even as U.S. favorability has slipped, support for Al Qaeda and the Taliban has plummeted. In spring 2008, some 25 percent of Pakistanis had a favorable opinion of al Qaeda, with 34 percent unfavorable -- a disturbingly close split. Today, just 9 percent have a favorable opinion, with 61 percent unfavorable. So too with the Taliban: The ratings shifted from 27 percent favorable and 33 percent unfavorable in 2008 to 10 percent favorable and 70 percent unfavorable today.<sup>25</sup> Our job in public diplomacy should be to help spread information about these reactionary groups trying to destroy Islam.

\* Iran and proxies. Along with its proxies Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas, Iran is confronting the vast majority of Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt. This Iran-vs.-Arab conflict is also part of the Sunni-Shia conflict that is playing out elsewhere, including Iraq, but Iran's threat transcends religion. Regardless of sectarian bent, Muslim communities are rising to oppose the attempts by Iran and its intelligence services -- in

---

<sup>24</sup> “Public Diplomacy: Strengthening U.S. Engagement With the World,” Office of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, 2010, pp. 8-11.

<sup>25</sup> <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1148/pakistan-little-support-for-terrorists-most-favorable-education-for-girls>



particular the Qods Force -- to extend Shia extremism and influence throughout the world. Here, public diplomacy can support those who are struggling to change the policies of the Iranian regime.

\* Democracy and human rights, especially the rights of women. Many Arab governments have denied their citizens what Egyptian activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim has called "the infrastructure of democracy": rule of law, independent judiciary, free media, gender equality, and autonomous civil society. These necessities of liberty are more important than ballots dropped in a box, as we have seen by the actions of the terrorist Hamas regime in Gaza.

A widespread criticism among Muslims is that the United States has not pressed authoritarian allies to democratize. For both moral and strategic reasons, we have a stake in supporting free societies with accountable governments. The reality of democracies thriving in Muslim societies -- like Turkey and Indonesia -- is a powerful counterweight to the canard that Islam and political freedom can't coexist. Here, public diplomacy can remind those advancing freedom and democracy that they aren't alone and that history, including our own, is replete with examples of brave advocates.

For the immediate future, our job in public diplomacy is to promote this accurate narrative in everything we do. We can do it while at the same time emphasizing America's values -- concepts of pluralism, freedom, and opportunity that run counter to the extremists' ideology. We should emphasize that the United States won't be a passive bystander in these struggles. We will advance our own ideals and interests -- which include promoting a comprehensive two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians.

But it is challenging and empowering Muslim communities to take on the three great struggles themselves, with the United States as a constructive partner, that is an approach that will overturn the extremists' narrative and help shape a new, honest, and positive storyline -- in which Muslims see themselves not as victims but as central protagonists in global struggles for justice.<sup>26</sup>

Strategic Public Diplomacy in Iran: The second example is one I laid out in a recent article with Mike Doran, a former colleague who now teaches at NYU. It concerns Iran.

---

<sup>26</sup> See "What Obama Should Tell Muslims," my op-ed from the Boston Globe, with Juan Zarate:  
[http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial\\_opinion/oped/articles/2009/05/27/what\\_obama\\_should\\_tell\\_muslims/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2009/05/27/what_obama_should_tell_muslims/)

Here we are squandering a great opportunity. Our objective is an Iran free of nuclear weapons. Two routes to achieving the objective appear highly unlikely: armed conflict or successful official diplomacy. But public diplomacy can work – mainly because of the brave opposition movement that developed after the June elections. What are we doing to help? It's hard to see. Doran and I urge:

\* Providing moral and educational support for the Green Movement in Iran by publicizing what worked in Ukraine or Georgia, dubbing into Farsi documentaries on the fall of Ceausescu, Milosevic and Pinochet; the transitions in South Africa and Poland; and the achievements of the U.S. civil-rights movement. The great fear of the Iranian regime is that a non-violent civil resistance in the form of a color movement, like those in states of the former Soviet Union, will gain authority and legitimacy and, ultimately, power through democratic means. The regime is right to be afraid.

\* Tightening sanctions on the Iranian economy and publicizing the connection between regime belligerence and economic malaise. The slogans of the protesters demonstrate that they are connecting the dots between the regime's foreign policy and economic privation.

\* Doing all we can to increase communications within Iran, as well as between Iran and the outside world, including boosting broadcasting by Radio Farda and Voice of America satellite TV and spreading tools to facilitate mobile-phone messaging and social networking -- and helping Iranians get the technology to overcome regime attempts to block and censor. In testimony in February in the House, Mehdi Khalaji and J. Scott Carpenter urged this approach as well. They state that Ayatollah "Khamenei often expresses his belief that he is in a soft war with the West. For him, all new telecommunication, Internet and satellite technology are Western tools to defeat him in this war."<sup>27</sup> We should be furnishing that technology. We should also be vigorously opposing Iranian interference with satellite transmissions, in violation of international agreements.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC14.php?CID=512>. Testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia. Both Khalaji, who was trained in the seminars of Qom before moving to the United States, and Carpenter, a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, are fellows of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.bbg.gov/pressroom/printerfr.cfm?articleID=443>. VOA and BBC transmissions were both jammed, leading a European satellite operator to take down Persian TV (PTV), the BBC Farsi network. VOA's Persian News Network is also sporadically removed. "Iranians keep asking me why the west is so powerless," Sadeq Saba, head of PTV, wrote on his blog. "They say: 'This is a rogue government jamming international signals. How will the west

\* Finally, aggressively refuting, in campaign style, the key propositions of Iranian propaganda, such as that the Green Movement is marginal and lacks support and that the West wants Iran to be a technological backwater. A serious strategic communications program for Iran could have dozens, even hundreds, of programs. They might range from a campaign, including posters and TV commercials featuring Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, to encourage Iranians to come to California to be trained as high-tech experts; to an aggressive effort to expose the Iranian agents who beat and seize demonstrators; to support for an interactive satellite TV station that appeals to young people and urges them to express free choice in cultural and social, as well as political matters; to financial aid to the families of victims of the crackdown on demonstrators.

## **Recommendations and Conclusion**

Here, then are seven recommendations for a more effective public diplomacy:

1. Make public diplomacy a top priority. The entire government should know that the President sees public diplomacy as a critical part of America's overall national security strategy.
2. Make a distinction between what I call Strategic Public Diplomacy – that is, PD with clear objectives that can be achieved in a definable period, such as war-of-ideas goals – and long-term ongoing public diplomacy, which may be shaped strategically (with emphasis on exchanges with Muslim-majority nations, for example) but which is more general in its effects.
3. Institute a strong interagency structure and process led by an official with a close connection to the President. During the Bush Administration, that official was the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, but other structures are possible.
4. Launch an inter-agency program quickly to show that public diplomacy can achieve national security goals. Iran should be the immediate focus.
5. Promote the successes and enhance the understanding of the function and purpose of the Broadcasting Board of Governors. Confirm the new slate of governors. The BBG is a precious asset that must not be ignored or denigrated.
6. Expand Public Diplomacy 2.0, using technology to facilitate and convene a broad and deep global conversation in which we can more effectively influence and inform. At the same time, put teeth into Secretary Clinton's affirmation that the U.S. supports open global

---

stop Iran getting nuclear weapons if they can't deal with this?"  
(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/14/bbc-joins-iran-tv-protest>)

communications. One step would be to challenge Iranian jamming of satellite broadcasts.

7. Establish a culture of measurable results. All public diplomacy programs must be assessed and evaluated to see how well they “move the needle.” Measuring can be difficult and expensive, but, without it, we can’t tell whether work is succeeding or failing.

Finally, remember that public diplomacy performs its mission of achieving the national interest in a particular way: by understanding, informing, engaging, and influencing foreign publics. While the “influencing” part may be the most important, the “understanding” part comes first. You can’t persuade if you don’t truly understand the people you are trying to persuade.

Senator J. William Fulbright, who created the Fulbright exchanges in 1946, put it well: The “essence of intercultural education,” he said, referring to what would become one of our most effective public diplomacy programs, is “empathy, the ability to see the world as others see it, and to allow for the possibility that others may see something we have failed to see...”<sup>29</sup>

Another key word in public diplomacy is compassion. At the Bush Institute, we base our programs on four key principles of the former president: freedom, responsibility, opportunity, and compassion. Americans are compassionate people, and that trait needs to be reflected in all that we do in public diplomacy. It is the foundation of Public Diplomacy 2.0, and, in the goals we seek, it is the driving force behind Strategic Public Diplomacy.

I ended my testimony before this committee in January 2008 with the following sentence, which I believe bears repeating:

The task ahead is to tell the world the story of a good and compassionate nation and, at the same time, to engage in the most important ideological contest of our time – a contest that we will win.

Thank you.

---

<sup>29</sup> [www.fulbright.org/ifad/manual/quotes.pdf](http://www.fulbright.org/ifad/manual/quotes.pdf)