

*Mapping Smart Power in Multi-stakeholder  
Public Diplomacy / Strategic Communication*

Bruce Gregory\*

“New Approaches to U.S. Global Outreach”  
The Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communication  
George Washington University  
October 5, 2009

Thank you Sean. And thanks to all who organized what promises to be a day of thoughtful conversation on smart power and global engagement.

Smart power is a term Harvard’s Joseph Nye invented in 2003 to counter the misperception that soft power alone is sufficient in foreign policy. He said we need “smart strategies that combine the tools of hard and soft power.”<sup>1</sup> Nye had been writing for years about combining coercion, persuasion, and attraction. For him, smart power was a new term, not a new concept.

The Obama Administration has adopted “smart power” to frame a strategy that uses “the full range of tools at our disposal – diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural.” The challenge, as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton puts it, is “picking the right tool, or combination of tools, for each situation.”<sup>2</sup>

To frame the conversation, I’ll offer three propositions.

***First proposition: public diplomacy and strategic communication are analogous – not antithetical.*** To save time, I will call them PD and SC. Diplomats tend to prefer PD. Soldiers tend to prefer SC. These are the preferences of different tribal cultures. They are not separate analytical categories.

---

\* Bruce Gregory teaches courses on public diplomacy and strategic communication at Georgetown University, George Washington University, and the U.S. Naval War College. [BGregory@gwu.edu](mailto:BGregory@gwu.edu), [bg243@georgetown.edu](mailto:bg243@georgetown.edu).

All of the central characteristics in PD can be found in SC. Understanding the perceptions and attitudes of others. Engagement and dialogue. Advocacy and persuasion. Advising leaders. Evaluation of impact.

All of the time dimensions in PD – 24/7 news streams, medium-term campaigns, and engagement over years and decades – can be found in SC.

SC and PD share the same methods. Analyzing the information environment. Framing policies and issues. Press conferences and use of web-based media. International exchange and visitor programs. When Ambassador Richard Holbrooke and General David Petraeus do a joint interview on the *NewsHour*, is it PD? SC? Or public affairs? When Secretaries Clinton and Gates hold a televised conversation at George Washington University this evening, is it SC? PD? Or an academic seminar?

Are the International Military Exchange and Training (IMET) programs SC or PD? Military officers from other countries routinely attend my classes at the U.S. Naval War College. They take courses at the National War College and all of the service colleges. A lot of PD goes on in these seminar rooms.

The military has an important role to play in public diplomacy.<sup>3</sup> Today's armed conflict occurs increasingly "among the people." National security realities call for more soft power, not less. As the USC's Nick Cull puts it, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century "public diplomacy is everyone's business."<sup>4</sup>

PD and SC share one other important piece of common ground. They are about *open* communication – not *covert* communication. PD and SC are categorically different from military operations intended to deceive and from the intelligence community's covert actions. These are necessary tools. They support American interests. They are vital in armed conflict. But they should be treated differently -- conceptually and organizationally – in any smart power strategy.<sup>5</sup>

These terms confuse many lawmakers, journalists, and practitioners. One of the under appreciated comments in Kristin Lord's fine Brookings report on public diplomacy is the need for the government, including Congress, to have a serious discussion about the role and scope of PD and covert information operations.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the Army War College's Dennis Murphy has urged the Joint Staff to conduct a "clean slate review" of the entire matter.<sup>7</sup> We need both open and covert. We need a bright line between them. We need to examine where and how they fit together in the interagency process. We need this discussion.

***Second proposition: in today's global information environment, we must do more than adapt – we must transform.*** We know that exponential growth in mobile phones, social media, and viral communication is changing diplomacy and armed conflict. But we are struggling with what this means for our institutions and smart power instruments.

Technology change on this scale creates massive cultural disturbances. We live in what Clay Shirky calls a "new information ecosystem" where technologies are changing the social order – and creating "new social strategies" used by groups of all kinds.<sup>8</sup> This is a world that privileges networks over hierarchies. It is a world where Harvard's PD Collaborative and American University's Craig Hayden urge us to leverage "networks of influence . . . outside traditional conceptions of PD."<sup>9</sup>

State and Defense have taken impressive first steps with blogs, websites, Facebook, YouTube, and other social media. They also wisely recognize that radio and other traditional media are instruments of choice in countries such as Afghanistan where the communications infrastructure is weak and literacy rates are low.

However, as the University of Pennsylvania's Monroe Price points out, government is engaged in *adaptation* when it should be about *transformation*. By this he means we are using new technologies to create efficiencies and legitimize traditional tasks. We

are not engaged in transformation that “actually come to grips with fundamental changes” in the missions, strategies, structures, and life cycles of organizations.<sup>10</sup>

Britain’s Ali Fisher, one of public diplomacy’s imaginative new thinkers, suggests (borrowing from Eric Raymond) the mindsets of most leaders and practitioners still reflect the rigid hierarchies of the “cathedral” not the highly interactive, networked complexity of the “bazaar.”<sup>11</sup>

There are hopeful signs. The appointment of Alec Ross as the State Department’s technology innovation advisor. The scholarship on networks of State’s Director of Policy Planning Anne-Marie Slaughter. The “joined up governance” logic of the CSIS report on *Smart Power*.<sup>12</sup>

***Third proposition: as important as they are, State and Defense are not the only stakeholders; Afghanistan and Iraq are not the only issues.*** In 2007, 62 U.S. government departments and agencies conducted international exchange and training programs. And these were just the agencies reporting. Total U.S. expenditures: \$1.5 billion. Total expenditures overall with foreign and private contributions: \$2.2 billion.<sup>13</sup> USAID funds Fulbright scholarships in Pakistan, Voice of America broadcasts in Africa, and VOA training workshops for journalists covering health care in India. The Center for Disease Control carries out a variety of PD programs. Civil society initiatives add to the mix: Sesame International. Community Development Radio. The Peace Corps. One Laptop per Child. Sister Cities International.

Practitioners are not just Foreign Service officers and soldiers in uniform. This does not mean we no longer need PD and SC professionals. Far from it. It does mean we need to transform the way we recruit, train, and assign. It means “whole of government” and “whole of society” mindsets and networks. It means spanning tribal cultures and fewer swipes at PD in combat boots and wingtips. It means new incentives and penalties in stove-piped career systems. It means considering bold new ideas such as merging political officer and PD officer career tracks.

And it means respecting what worked well in the past. Junior officer training is one issue that unites the successor generation and public diplomacy's old guard. A white paper on Facebook by ten mid-career State Department PD officers who claim "no institutional memory of USIA" calls for restoration of USIA's apprenticeship year in which new officers understudied experienced officers.<sup>14</sup>

We also need to focus on the "strategic buffet" – not just Afghanistan and Iraq. Americans have a long history of episodic commitment. Since Benjamin Franklin went to Paris, we "discover" PD and SC in wartime. Then we mount campaigns against single threats with myopic intensity.

We appear wisely to have moved away from the "war on terror" as a dominant strategic narrative. We seem increasingly to understand that *what we do* matters more than *what we say*. We hear less about "telling America's story to the world." The new reference point, former USIA Counselor Donna Oglesby tells us, should not be self-referential messages that "burnish the diminishing glow of American exceptionalism." Our narrative should relate to common concerns and the aspirations of others.<sup>15</sup>

But we have not made hard choices about priorities, investments, and the use of smart power tools in climate change, reform of global financial systems, nuclear proliferation, energy issues, scarce water, pandemic disease, and more. Where are the relevant PD and SC strategies for these challenges? Can we get by with business as usual?

Let me close with these questions.

1. *Rather than talk casually about listening, how should we privilege deep comprehension?* What more should we be doing to understand the cultures, motives, and perceptions of others before we seek to engage and influence? What tools do we need to really know what's going on in non-elite networks and the 44% of the world's population under the age of 25?

2. *How should we take government collaboration with civil society to a new level?*

Eighteen studies have recommended some kind of independent non-partisan, Congressionally funded center outside government to leverage civil society's knowledge, skills, and creativity. Where are the business plans to take us from rhetoric to action?

3. *How should we change in ways that favor networks and flexible practitioners – boundary spanners rather than gatekeepers?*<sup>16</sup> How do we keep what's valuable in existing hierarchies rather than build new ones inside or outside government departments?

4. *How should we change investment ratios?* Secretary of Defense Gates famously called for greater civilian capacity in his Landon Lecture two years ago.<sup>17</sup> This is common sense in a budget where Defense is funded at 12 times the level of all non-military instruments of power. But we should look to tradeoffs between instruments of hard power and soft power – not between soft power instruments in State and Defense. The Secretary's F-22 decision reflects the changing nature of armed conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That said, we should take a hard look at problematic soft power projects and how civilian and military money is spent. TV Marti, Al Hurrah, and contracts of the Lincoln Group in Iraq come to mind. And we should fund the "right" soft power tools as situations warrant. State's new Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) holds promise if we can make it work in concert with the Pentagon's QDR.<sup>18</sup>

5. *How should we move from episodic coordination to strategic direction that is durable and empowered?* Coordinating committees have come and gone since World War II. National Security Council models have been ephemeral. It is impossible for an Under Secretary of State to lead the interagency process effectively. The Defense Science Board has called repeatedly for leadership at the White House level that focuses exclusively on all aspects of national capacity in PD and SC.<sup>19</sup> The kind of leadership that has the authority to set priorities, assign operational responsibilities, transfer funds,

and concur in senior personnel appointments. This may be too hard. It may not work. But our “ground hog day” approach to coordinating committees has not worked either. In a world of global threats and opportunities unrelated to election cycles, can we achieve the Presidential direction and bipartisan Congressional leadership required for needed legislation and sustained direction?

6. *Finally, can we achieve meaningful transformation soon?* Real change seldom occurs late in Administrations – if it comes at all. Presidents and senior leaders value effective PD and SC. At the personal level, some of them demonstrate world-class skills; others do not. But with limited time, finite political capital, and no electoral votes to be gained, they seldom take on the hard work of institutional transformation. We don’t need more studies. I suspect most of us have “report fatigue.” We don’t lack advice. We lack the roadmaps and leadership required for implementation. If the Obama Administration does not move quickly on these issues, we face another round of reports in the run-up to 2012, and perhaps again in 2016.

Thank you for listening. I look forward to the conversation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr. “Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power.” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August, p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> “American ‘Smart Power’: Diplomacy and Development Are the Vanguard,” U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Fact Sheet, May 4, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/scp/fs/2009/122579.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> For an assessment with reference to the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), see Abiodun Williams, “The U.S. Military and Public Diplomacy” in Philip Seib, ed., *Toward a New Public Diplomacy: Redirecting U.S. Foreign Policy*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp 217-237.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 502-504. On “war among the people,” see Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, (Alfred A. Knopf, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> The military uses *strategic communication* as an integrating term for capabilities that include public diplomacy, public affairs, military support for public diplomacy, military diplomacy, and open psychological operations. These capabilities are distinguished from *information operations* – capabilities that include electronic warfare, computer network operations, covert psychological operations, military deception, and operational security. These distinctions can be found in the Defense Department’s strategic communication roadmap and definitions in Joint Publication 3-13 on *Information Operations* (now under review). See Gordon England, Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum, “2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Strategic Communication Execution Roadmap,” September 25, 2006, <http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/QDRRoadmap20060925a.pdf>; and *Information Operations* and Joint Publication 3-13, February 13, 2006, [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new\\_pubs/jp3\\_13.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp3_13.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Kristin M. Lord, *Voices of America: U.S. Public Diplomacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, The Brookings Institution, November 2008, p. 40, [http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2008/~media/Files/rc/reports/2008/11\\_public\\_diplomacy\\_lord/11\\_public\\_diplomacy\\_lord.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2008/~media/Files/rc/reports/2008/11_public_diplomacy_lord/11_public_diplomacy_lord.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Dennis M. Murphy, *Talking the Talk: Why Warfighters Don’t Understand Information Operations*, Issue Paper, Vol. 4-09, Center for Strategic Leadership, U.S. Army War College, May 2009, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/DIME/documents/IP%204-09%20-%20Talking%20the%20Talk.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*, (Penguin Books, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Craig Hayden, “Talking with the Harvard Public Diplomacy Collaborative,” *Intermap* blog, September 27, 2009, <http://intermap.org/>. See also “The Public Diplomacy Collaborative,” Harvard Kennedy School, <http://ashinstitute.harvard.edu/pdc/index.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Monroe Price, Susan Haas, Drew Margolin, “New Technologies and International Broadcasting: Reflections on Adaptations and Transformations,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 161, March 2008, pp. 150-172.

<sup>11</sup> Ali Fisher, “Music for the Jilted Generation: Open Source Public Diplomacy,” *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 3 (2008), pp. 1-24, [http://wandrenpd.files.wordpress.com/2008/09/hjd\\_003\\_02\\_03-fisher.pdf](http://wandrenpd.files.wordpress.com/2008/09/hjd_003_02_03-fisher.pdf); Eric S. Raymond, *The Cathedral & the Bazaar: Musings on Linux and Open Source by an Accidental Revolutionary*, (O’Reilly Media Inc., 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Cecelia King, “Diplomatic Efforts Get Tech Support,” *The Washington Post*, April 6, 2009; Anne-Marie Slaughter, “America’s Edge: Power in the Networked Century,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2009, pp. 94-113; and Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *CSIS Commission on Smart Power: A Smarter, More Secure America*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007, [http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/071106\\_csisreport.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/071106_csisreport.pdf).

---

<sup>13</sup> Interagency Working Group on U.S. Government-Sponsored International Exchanges and Training, *FY 2008 Annual Report*, p. 14, [http://www.iawg.gov/rawmedia\\_repository/63ded484\\_d6ef\\_4862\\_af8e\\_41a344873a91](http://www.iawg.gov/rawmedia_repository/63ded484_d6ef_4862_af8e_41a344873a91).

<sup>14</sup> Public Diplomacy Front Line Working Group, “*Public Diplomacy: A View from the Front Line*,” June 8, 2009, [http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note\\_id=88497493182](http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=88497493182).

<sup>15</sup> Donna Marie Oglesby, “Statecraft at the Crossroads: A New Diplomacy,” *SAIS Review*, Summer-Fall 2009, Vol. 29, No 2, (forthcoming).

<sup>16</sup> “Boundary spanners” in this context is Brian Hocking’s term. Among many publications, see his “Reconfiguring Public Diplomacy: From Competition to Collaboration,” in *Engagement: Public Diplomacy in a Globalized World, Foreign and Commonwealth Office*, United Kingdom, 2008, pp. 62-75, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/pd-engagement-jul-08>.

<sup>17</sup> Robert L. Gates, *Landon Lecture*, Remarks Delivered in Manhattan, Kansas, November 26, 2007, <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199>.

<sup>18</sup> Jacob S. Lew and Anne-Marie Slaughter, “Briefing on Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review,” U.S. Department of State, July 10, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/s/dmr/remarks/2009/125950.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on *Strategic Communication*, January 2008, [http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2008-01-Strategic\\_Communication.pdf](http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2008-01-Strategic_Communication.pdf).