

“Waging Peace” – A New Paradigm for Public Diplomacy

Karen P. Hughes

Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs

The challenging times that we face around the world today demand a new post-Cold War paradigm for public diplomacy. The way people communicate and access information in today’s world is rapidly changing, so our diplomatic efforts are adjusting to meet the times.

When people talk about the contest of ideas in the 21st century, the comparison often is made to the Cold War. That was the era when broadcast services like Voice of America and Radio Free Europe were launched to promote democratic values by broadcasting information and ideas to people behind the Iron Curtain.

But today’s communications environment is dramatically different.

When I started my career in television back in the mid-’70s in Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, one of my first jobs as an intern at the TV station was to make what was called “the meet,” getting in the car in Dallas and driving halfway to Fort Worth on the freeway in order to meet a person who had driven by car from Fort Worth, so film could be transferred by hand to be taken back to Fort Worth for processing for that night’s news. Within a year, the “meet” was totally irrelevant because we’d gone digital and electronic. When I served as communications director during President Bush’s 2000 presidential campaign, I didn’t have a BlackBerry. By 2004, I couldn’t imagine how you would participate in a campaign without one.

So the technology has changed and the political landscape has changed. In the Cold War, we were primarily trying to get information into largely closed societies



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where people were hungry for that information. Today we are competing for audiences in a very crowded communications environment.

Today the United States must compete for attention and for credibility. We must reach the grandchildren of the World War II generation and their children. Sometimes governments have a hard time keeping up with such dramatic changes, but a new U.S. architecture for public diplomacy has been steadily evolving. Today’s public diplomacy has to be rapid, it has to be global, it has to be multimedia, it has to be

people-centric, and it has to be a team effort because all of us are involved in painting a very complex tapestry that is the picture of America across the world.

I like to describe that new diplomatic paradigm as “waging peace”—reaching out to the rest of the world in a spirit of respect and partnership.

Three Strategic Priorities

Three strategic priorities are guiding all of our public diplomacy programs:

First, America must continue to offer people across the world a positive vision of hope that is rooted in our deepest values, our belief in liberty, in justice, in opportunity, in respect for all. I saw an interview of a young man in Morocco who was asked: “What do you think when you think of America?” And he said: “For me, America represents the hope of a better life.” Our country must continue to be that beacon of hope.



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In October 2006, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes interacts with worshippers following an Eid-ul-Fitr service sponsored by the All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) in Fairfax, Virginia.

Our second strategic imperative is to isolate and marginalize the violent extremists who threaten the civilized world and confront their ideology of tyranny and hate. We have to undermine their efforts to portray the West as somehow in conflict with Islam, because that simply isn't true. Islam, as a world religion, is also part of the west and an important part of America itself. As a government official, I represent an estimated seven million American Muslims who live and work and worship freely in this great country. One of the things I've worked to do is to empower their voices and to demonstrate respect for Muslim cultures and contributions. In many instances, the number one thing we can do to improve a relationship is show that we respect the contributions and cultures of others. That's why I've spent a great deal of my time as under secretary reaching out to Muslims in America, because I believe they're an important bridge to Muslim communities across the world. We are also encouraging greater interfaith dialogue. It's vitally important that we bring people of different faiths together to encourage dialogue and understanding. We have hosted multiple programs at the State Department to bring people of different faiths together to talk about what they have in common, to talk about what they believe and to share that with our employees who are going out to work around the world.

Our third strategic imperative is to foster a sense of common interests and common values between, Americans and people of different countries and cultures across the world. That's what we are seeking to do with public

diplomacy—nurture the sense that Americans and people of different countries, cultures, and faiths have much more in common than the issues that divide us.

The Scope of Foreign Outreach

America's public diplomacy involves reaching out to the entire world.

It is about providing books in Arabic for children in Jordan as well as broadcasting news. It is about talking to citizens in Internet chat rooms as well as to leaders in high office. It's about bringing many more students to study in the United States and teaching women in the Middle East skills to run their own businesses. It's about providing life-saving surgery for victims of the Southeast Asia tsunami on American hospital ships.

Our country has been expanding its outreach in many ways, and yet the expansion has been taking shape so gradually and in so many parts that it is not yet recognized as the post-Cold War paradigm that it is. Few people around the world know that outreach on such a large scale—the “diplomacy of deeds”—is being done by the United States in the far corners of the world.

Across the world, America feeds the poor, educates the illiterate, cares for the sick, and responds to disasters. The United States does so many different development projects, in fact, that we often get no credit for any of them.

While it's understandable that the world's attention has been focused on the pressing need to resolve the conflict in Iraq, it is also important to remind people around the world that the United States is also “waging peace” around the world. The diplomacy of deeds is the heart of that effort.

What we do as a country is just as important as what we say. Our diplomacy of deeds sends the message that the American people care deeply about the well-being of people in other lands. Americans reach out to help people in need because of who we are and because of what we believe. We share with others because of our conviction that all people are equal and each person is uniquely valuable.

Today, American compassion reaches around the world as never before:

The United States is by far the largest donor to the stricken Darfur region, supplying more than half the emergency food aid.

The United States is the largest bilateral donor to the Palestinian people, providing \$234 million in 2006 through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Americans were the largest providers of help to Muslims affected by the tsunami in Indonesia and the earthquake in Pakistan.

The United States leads the world in support for the fight against AIDS, contributing more than one-half of all bilateral global HIV/AIDS funding.

We are the largest donor to the United Nations World Food Program, providing \$4.83 billion in food aid since 2003.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation has approved nearly \$3 billion to reduce poverty by supporting sustainable economic growth in 25 of the world's poorest countries.

People-to-people programs demonstrate American values in a concrete way that relates directly to people of any nationality or religion. I have talked with the women in our literacy programs in Morocco, who expressed gratitude that for the first time in their lives, they can now mail a letter, read their children's homework, and read the labels on food for their families.

Such testimonials may not fit with the traditional image of formal statecraft, but the realities of today's world demand that modern diplomacy have a more human face. Our diplomats today not only have to think about winning over government officials, but also the people to whom those leaders are ultimately accountable.

We are, therefore, reaching out in different ways and on a more personal level. A new emphasis is being put on programs that directly benefit individuals, such as micro-finance loans to help women start small businesses and summer camps to help youngsters learn English.

The New Model for Diplomacy

The new model for diplomacy will require more flexible embassy spaces, balancing the need for security and public accessibility for such things as information programs.

This is already happening through American Presence Posts, which are offices in secondary cities in larger countries, with outreach as their primary role. We are also establishing more American Corners, which are essentially



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Under Secretary Karen Hughes addresses the Public Diplomacy Council at The George Washington University in October 2005.

reading rooms, usually in public libraries. More and more, we are using technology to go over the walls to people:

Web pages are being aimed at specific regions.

Online chats with U.S. officials are explaining visa regulations or policy issues.

Cell phone text-messages are being sent to exchange program alumni or journalists.

Podcasts carry video of speeches and projects around the world.

It is imperative that we reach young people through media they favor before their views become entrenched. That's why we are putting TV cameras in the hands of our exchange students, so their experiences can become part of the YouTube phenomenon.

Exchange Programs

Exchange programs have been our single-most effective public diplomacy tool of the last 50 years. Everyone you talk to who has participated in an exchange program says that his or her life was forever changed. And what better way to tell the story of America than to bring young people here and let them see American life for themselves? We are increasing exchange programs of every kind and working aggressively to recruit more students to study in the United States so they can experience the country for themselves and make up their own minds.

We are also reinvigorating cultural programs, another effective way to communicate our values. Funding for cultural diplomacy has more than tripled since 2001.

In addition to art exhibits, recitals, and literary talks, we are using cultural diplomacy in new ways—our public affairs office in Nepal partnered with NGOs to present a rock concert combined with a major voter registration drive for youth called “Rock the Vote.”

And because we believe freedom of expression is an essential part of an interconnected, tolerant society, we are partnering with journalism schools and the Aspen Institute to provide professional training for journalists from around the world.

We are placing a greater focus in public diplomacy on the areas that touch people’s lives most directly, especially education and health.

Our education programs today range from fellowships for training teachers from the Middle East to English-language camps for youngsters in Russia. We provide language training in some 90 countries, which often is the first step toward mutual understanding.

Reaching out with compassionate health care is one of the most effective ways to demonstrate American goodwill. Under the president’s Malaria Initiative, for example, 15 of the hardest-hit countries in Africa will receive an infusion of expertise and \$1.5 billion to prevent the disease.

Assisting and empowering women is another way that the new brand of public diplomacy diverges from previous generations. Promoting education for women and girls will be essential for the development of democracy—women who read can decide for themselves, manage their own businesses, and sustain healthier families.

That’s why we are increasing scholarships for young girls in places like Africa, literacy classes for women in the Middle East and Latin America, and micro-grant programs for women around the world.

Citizen Emissaries

More and more, our citizens are becoming our emissaries.

We have sent several delegations of American Muslims as citizen envoys to the Middle East. That program grew out of a conversation I had with a Turkish woman who felt isolated in her Muslim community in Germany. I asked her if I could visit her community and meet with people there. She told me, quite bluntly, “no.” “We’re not interested in meeting with our own government,” she said. “Why would we want to meet with yours?” I asked back, “Could I send some Muslim-American citizens?” She nodded and said, “yes,” that would be wonderful. Based on that, we recently launched a “citizen dialogue” program, sending Muslim-Americans to reach out to Islamic communities and engage in dialogue. Those abroad need to hear the voices of Muslim-Americans—and we, as Americans, need to hear feedback from other cultures and other peoples.

The public diplomacy of the future and the embassy of the future must be people-centric. As former director of the U.S. Information Agency, Edward R. Murrow said, the most important part of public diplomacy is that last three feet. It is that person-to-person contact that often counts the most.

The point is to engage with people on a personal level and explain our policies in person. As Secretary Rice has said, our goal should be to have a dialogue with the world, not a monologue. ■

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