Soft Power, Hard Issues

Reports of the 2005 Aspen Institute
Roundtable on Public Diplomacy and the Middle East
and the Forum on Communications and Society

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The reader should note that this report is written from the perspective of an informed observer at the conference. Unless cited to a particular person, none of the comments or ideas contained in this report should be taken as embodying the views or carrying the endorsement of any specific participant at the conference.

Shanthi Kalathil is a World Learning Senior Democracy Fellow. The views expressed in this document are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the positions of any organization or entity.

Foreword

This volume brings together two reports about two distinct roundtable conferences convened by the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program in Aspen, Colorado, in August 2005. "Public Diplomacy and the Middle East" was a short but intense meeting among leaders of business, government, media, academia, and the nonprofit sector with the objective of moving beyond the morass of conventional wisdom in American public diplomacy with regard to the Middle East. "The Use of Digital Technologies and Network Principles in Relations with China" was a meeting of the chief executive-level Forum on Communications and Society (FOCAS). As the title indicates, the purpose was to explore how the new communications technologies are affecting China, with particular regard to how the United States can and should relate to that country.

Both reports are deftly and concisely written by Ms. Shanthi Kalathil, a scholar formerly with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and currently a Democracy Fellow with World Learning. Ms. Kalathil does an excellent job of bringing coherence to the topics and understandability to the concepts, in part by conveying her own knowledge and experience on the topics, and in part by importing outside authorities into the dialogue at certain points.

We are publishing the two reports in a single volume because they have some common themes. The most obvious is the emerging importance of "soft power," which Kalathil defines—following Kennedy School of Government professor Joseph Nye—as "nonmilitary power that is capable of attracting, rather than coercing, others through intangibles such as policies, values, and culture" to obtain desired outcomes. Looking at two crucial areas of international tension, the U.S. role in the Middle East and Sino-American relations, we understand the importance of a country gaining friends and support throughout the globe. This international support cannot be achieved militarily, although we would be naïve to ignore the importance of hard power in the mix. It cannot be achieved by the economic policies of the "Washington Consensus" or economic sanctions alone. It cannot be achieved by traditional diplomacy in an era when the public becomes aware of facts and attitudes almost as fast as the government.

Diplomacy—formal, informal, and public—now finds itself embedded within the digital revolution. The network form—whether in the media, terrorist organizations, netcentric warfare, or Internet communication—now pervades the realm of international relations. Practitioners in the field must now take into consideration network principles in how they act or respond to events and forces—a concept we called "netpolitik" in an earlier report, *The Rise of Netpolitik: How the Internet Is Changing International Politics and Diplomacy* (Aspen Institute, 2003). The world is interconnected, interdependent, and digital.

Within this environment the United States finds itself more unpopular in the Middle East than ever before. So this area is primary when we think about improving the United States' relations abroad. As Kalathil observes, 29 recent reports have advised the U.S. government on what it can do to improve its public diplomacy—suggesting the use of a variety of instruments to further the understanding of U.S. values, objectives, and policies to influence attitudes and behavior abroad.

The Public Diplomacy in the Middle East conference allowed participants to explore many different approaches to reform in public diplomacy and apply them in the new digital age context. After considering a wide variety of suggestions and proposals from participants on where the United States should take its public diplomacy program, Joe Nye suggested that different approaches might apply to different range goals. That is, immediate goals required immediate responses—for example, to respond to stories in the local Arabic press. Medium-range goals would aim at the youth of foreign countries and concentrate on narratives to convey broader values. They also would encompass exchange programs. Long-range goals—following up on suggestions from Reed Hundt, among others—would focus on personal empowerment and self-development. Those goals would come from the diffusion and development of the new "pull" media.

The resulting matrix, set forth in the text that follows, should be of use to future generations as they think through the role of public diplomacy. In the meantime, the group amassed a list of 20 recommendations that policymakers could consider to improve America's lot. These proposals were individual suggestions from participants rather than consensus recommendations. Normally I believe fewer good suggestions are better than a laundry list of ideas, but this list would be an exception to that rule. We hope that the U.S. government and the many other players involved in the public diplomacy field will consider these suggestions.

One of the suggestions—"Encourage journalist/media exchanges between the United States and Middle East"—has already been acted upon. The U.S. Department of State, the Aspen Institute, and seven schools of journalism spearheaded by the USC Annenberg School for Communication have announced the formation of the Edward R. Murrow Journalism Program at the State Department. In April 2006 the government will bring in more than 100 journalists from around the world as part of its International Visitors program, have them experience American newsrooms and local politics, and enroll in special classes at one of the seven journalism schools; the program will culminate with a symposium in Washington, D.C., programmed by the Aspen Institute.

Another recommendation received a lot of attention and enthusiasm: the "Radio Understanding" proposal offered by Marc Nathanson. This proposal would entail an interactive radio station and website, broadcasting simultaneously in Arabic, Hebrew, and English and focusing on engaging local dialogue in the Middle East. It would be run independently of any government and privately funded from many countries inside and outside the region. We have appended Nathanson's description, and we invite readers to follow up on the idea.

Although the discussion at the FOCAS meeting on digital technology in China was more far-ranging, the issue of public diplomacy and soft power arose several times. Indeed, one of the conclusions one would draw from the meeting is that China's soft power has increased markedly in recent years, while America's has waned. Moreover, China's burgeoning economy, spurred by developments in information and communications technologies (ICT), has not yet really taken hold.

Participants at the Forum observed the many paradoxes and tensions in China today and the foreseeable future. As Kalathil writes, the themes of tradition and modernity, change versus continuity, control versus chaos, and growth versus gaps appear repeatedly. Those same themes appear in the United States in very different contexts. The more the FOCAS participants explored these themes and the internal problems of each country, the more they saw the need for the two nations to work with each other in partnership rather than in rivalry. For example, whereas the two countries could consider themselves in competition for energy resources (China's energy consumption is increasing rapidly, and the United States is the world's largest gas guzzler), they have common interests in keeping energy prices down, as well as in global security and promoting jobs. As Kalathil writes, "The interests of each country…are interrelated, compatible, and unlikely to be destabilized by external global circumstances. Destabilizations are more likely to come from internal politics…."

The role of ICT in these developments obviously will be central. Although the technologies need to be more widely diffused to enhance connectivity, education, and development, they also could bring about destabilization. Nevertheless, a world where peoples as well as governments are more aware of those outside of their own country is a safer world in the longer run. To that end, the group recommended an increase in the teaching of Mandarin Chinese in American schools, as well as a Bipartisan Planning Commission through which the United States and China can plan for and engage each other for mutual interest.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Marc Nathanson for his efforts in two capacities: as co-chair of FOCAS and as chair and sponsor of the Public Diplomacy in the Middle East conference. Marc has been a stalwart to the Communications and Society Program in recent years—and never more so than in these two conferences. Similarly, Reed Hundt has been an inspiring co-chair of FOCAS for several years now; he expends many hours in planning and working to make it an annual success. I want to thank each of the FOCAS members for contributing time, attention, and financial support to this important activity. Thanks as well to Shanthi Kalathil, who did an outstanding job of bringing disparate thoughts together into coherence and narrative, and to Maria Medrano, project manager, who edited and produced the background readings for participants, and handled the logistics for the conferences, and our assistant director, Patricia Kelly, who supervised the production of this report.

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February 2006

SOFT POWER, HARD ISSUES

Shanthi Kalathil

Public Diplomacy and the Middle East

Shanthi Kalathil

Introduction

Having lapsed in importance following the end of the Cold War, public diplomacy has reemerged as a focal point for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners. Particularly following the attacks of September 11, 2001, American public diplomacy in the Middle East has rocketed to a place of prominence in the U.S. foreign policy toolkit. Yet even as resources and attention are trained on refining the U.S. public diplomacy strategy, there is little consensus on core problems, effective solutions, and what success might tangibly look like.

In her July 2005 confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, new Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes acknowledged the importance of listening in crafting an effective public diplomacy strategy, noting that she "was mindful that before we seek to be understood, we must first work to understand."[1] Her subsequent trip to the Middle East in September 2005, where she engaged in sometimes provocative and unexpected exchanges on issues ranging from U.S. foreign policy to women's rights, underlined the complexities and challenges inherent in this task.

There certainly has been no shortage of analysis on the topic. A September 2005 Congressional Research Service report on public diplomacy surveyed 29 articles and studies on the subject, collecting recommendations and identifying common themes. These common recommendations included the need to define an overall strategy; reorganization of public diplomacy at the White House and/or State Department; creation of a new agency; increased embassy involvement and interagency coordination; better financial and human resources, as well as specialized training; and improved oversight.[2]

These issues and others were raised at the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Public Diplomacy and the Middle East, which convened on August 13-14, 2005, in Aspen, Colorado. The Roundtable, which brought together leaders from business, government, media, academia, and nongovernmental organizations (NGO), sought to identify U.S. goals, strategies, and action steps with respect to public diplomacy efforts in the Middle East. By the session's end, the group had put forward several proposals and new approaches toward U.S. public diplomacy in the region.

Setting the Stage: Old versus New

One construct featured prominently in the discussions: The "new" public diplomacy, however defined, cannot simply mimic the approaches of the past. Moreover, the United States is only one of many actors to acknowledge the importance of an updated and innovative public diplomacy strategy. Pan-Arab satellite channel Al Jazeera, for instance, recently demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of new approaches to public diplomacy by hiring former Marine Corps captain and public affairs officer Josh Rushing for its new English-language international channel.[3]

Roundtable participants generally agreed that the new public diplomacy, regardless of the form it takes, must reflect post-Cold War realities. Simply focusing on international broadcasting, for instance, may not be sufficient in a networked world of multiplying information sources. The United States must identify and become cognizant of approaches that have worked in the past, then assess what must be modified, abandoned, or invented in light of current and future realities.

How can we usefully distinguish new forms of public diplomacy from the old? U.S. Ambassador to Belgium Tom Korologos offered a preliminary list of contrasts, summarized in the following chart:

Old Forms of Public Diplomacy	**New Forms of Public Diplomacy**
Monologue	Dialogue
Mission-driven	Mission-driven, market-savvy
About us	About them
Bilateral	Bi- and multilateral
Managing images	Building relationships
Stovepiped	Coordinated
Reactive	Proactive

Many Roundtable participants felt that this list provided a sound basis for further exploration of new approaches to public diplomacy. The comparison also catalyzed debate about the revamped mission and role of public diplomacy.

Former U.S. Secretary of State and Albright Group principal Madeleine Albright felt that there were key differences between older approaches toward Eastern Europe and the current situation in the Middle East. "Dissidents in central and eastern Europe wanted to be identified with the United States," she reminded the group. In the Middle East, however, U.S. support for dissidents can be "the kiss of death—a very different setup." Her example highlighted the fact that Eastern European experiences cannot simply be lifted and transferred to a new time and setting.

The "new" public diplomacy, however defined, cannot simply mimic the approaches of the past.

Emphasizing dialogue rather than monologue highlighted the role of international broadcasting in older public diplomacy strategies. International broadcasting, under the Broadcasting Board of Governors, traditionally has been more of the former than the latter. Some participants were concerned that current approaches, such as Radio Sawa and particularly Alhurra TV, were using an outdated and ineffectual approach that smacked too obviously of government heavy-handedness. "[Alhurra] is being criticized as being a propaganda organ," pointed out *New York Times* White House correspondent Elisabeth Bumiller.

Mouafac Harb, executive vice president of Alhurra, maintained that the editorial operations of Alhurra were shielded from government influence and that his newsroom operated much like any newsroom would. Harb also defended the utility of international broadcasting. "I still think we can achieve something through radio and television," he said. He pointed out, however, that "not only one prescription will work for the Middle East; a lot of other things have to come together. One main problem is trying to do everything at the same time. We need a focus on targets of opportunity."

The emphasis on dialogue over monologue also led several Roundtable participants to emphasize the importance of language and rhetoric in the construction of new public diplomacy campaigns. "Part of public diplomacy is the language you use to address us," said Khaled Dawoud, Washington correspondent for the Egyptian daily *Al-Ahram*. "When Bush says every day, 'We want to confront terrorists abroad rather than at home,' that makes me as an Arab scared." John Rendon, president of The Rendon Group, noted, "When the United States says this is not a war against Islam, 1.2 billion people hear that it is. . . we are reconstituting potential enemies by our rhetoric, not by our action."

Hussein Hassouna, Ambassador of the League of Arab States, suggested that the new approach must take into account that U.S. public diplomacy efforts sometimes are seen as being directed against the Arab world. A successful strategy, Hassouna said, would take into account "common interests, common values, and common ideals—and we have to work together." The United States and interested parties in the Arab world must work together on joint initiatives and joint consultations—which also boosts the legitimacy of such efforts in the Middle East. Joint initiatives give the United States "more credibility than if it is a purely American" effort, Hassouna suggested.

"When the United States says this is not a war against Islam, 1.2 billion people hear that it is…we are reconstituting potential enemies by our rhetoric, not by our action."

John Rendon

As several reports on public diplomacy have highlighted, any new approach is likely to require renewed focus, commitment, and resources. The 2003 report by the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, headed by Edward P. Djerejian, states that 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."[4] Roundtable participants underlined the need for this commitment as they turned to isolating the key components and definitions of a successful public diplomacy strategy.

Who, How, What, and Why: Recurring Questions

In discussing this new strategic direction, Roundtable participants returned on several occasions to certain core issues and related key questions. These questions highlighted the need to further zero in on targeting, process, and clear goals in seeking to understand and implement effective public diplomacy.

Defining Terms and Goals

One question that surfaced repeatedly spoke to the often-slippery nature of the topic. “What is it we really want people to do as a result of this diplomacy? We’re talking a lot about means, but what is our goal?” asked Robert Hormats, vice chairman of Goldman Sachs (International). If the goal is unclear, diplomacy has no chance of success, Hormats added. Moreover, the goal should be identified on a country-by-country basis to avoid blurring the issue beyond meaning.

Khaled Dawoud of *Al-Ahram* highlighted the ambiguity of the current emphasis on listening and exchange. “Does the United States want us to approve of policies, or is it a kind of dialogue in which each side listens to the policies of the other side?” he asked.

Joint initiatives give the United States “more credibility than if it is a purely American” effort.

Hussein Hassouna

Albert Carnesale, chancellor of the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA), offered his take on that issue: The job of public diplomacy is not simply to get others to understand our policies; it’s to convince others “to adopt and agree with our policies,” Carnesale said. Yet the fact that U.S. policies are not universally accepted around the world may not reflect a failure of public diplomacy so much as the fact that “maybe not everybody likes our policies! Eastern Europeans were the easiest target we’ll ever have,” he asserted—reiterating that we shouldn’t allow Cold War expectations to inform our current approaches.

Madeleine Albright also expressed a need to clarify objectives. “I think we’re laying too much on public diplomacy. We don’t have a good definition of what it is, so we need to figure out what we’re talking about here,” she said. “Public diplomacy is not the be-all and end-all, but people reach for it easily.”

Different scholars and publications adopt varying definitions of the term “public diplomacy.” A 2004 report by the Defense Science Board identifies public diplomacy as one core instrument in a larger process of strategic communication. It defines strategic communication as

> …a variety of instruments used by governments for generations to *understand* global attitudes and cultures, *engage* in a dialogue of ideas between people and institutions, *advise* policymakers, diplomats, and military leaders on the public opinion implications of policy choices, and *influence* attitudes and behavior through communications strategies.[5]

The public diplomacy component of strategic communication, the report goes on to note, should seek "through the exchange of people and ideas to build lasting relationships and receptivity to a nation's culture, values, and policies. It seeks also to influence attitudes and mobilize publics in ways that support policies and interests."[6]

"Public diplomacy can be a tool in the war against error, but not necessarily in the war against terror."

Shashi Tharoor

Other analyses take a narrower tack. One author notes that "the U.S. government must improve its efforts at 'public diplomacy'—the presentation to publics abroad of U.S. objectives and policies."[7] One of the challenges for policymakers and practitioners, therefore, is ensuring that the various actors in the public diplomacy field carry, at minimum, a shared understanding of terms and goals.

An important part of the goal-defining process, some Roundtable participants noted, is recognizing limits. Public diplomacy practitioners "are trying to reach a number of audiences all at the same time," said Shashi Tharoor, Under Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information at the United Nations. "But we have to acknowledge that we can't reach the people who are going to kill us. [Public diplomacy] can be a tool in the war against error, but not necessarily in the war against terror."

Who Is the Target?

Tharoor's comment touches on a common theme: Who should be on the receiving end of the public diplomacy package? Although the answer to this question seemed clear during the Cold War era, current realities in the Middle East—and widespread disapproval of U.S. policies in the region—make answering this question now more difficult.

"Joe [Nye] mentioned how we were successful in the Cold War, and why we cannot imitate this in the Middle East," observed Mouafac Harb of Alhurra. "Now we have a lack of clarity: Who's the enemy?" Harb cautioned against viewing the Arab world as a singular unit, devoid of disparate streams of thought, belief, and culture.

Queen Noor of Jordan agreed. Conversations about public diplomacy tend to lump Arabs into "an amorphous whole," she said. Simplistic stereotyping also is employed: There is a perception on the part of many Americans that Arabs "either like us, or they're extremists and against us." Any message must be delivered with mutual respect and a sense of common goals, she noted.

The Defense Science Board report on strategic communication also addresses this issue. "The official take on the target audience has been gloriously simple. If the enemy is a relatively small group of crazies and criminals—'Bad Muslims'—then the rest must be 'Good Muslims' and thus the people we want our own public diplomacy to reach," it points out.[8] A graphic illustrates this misconceived simplification:

Good Muslims	**Bad Muslims**
(including friendly regimes and everybody else)	(Only terrorists and sponsors)

Source: "Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication," Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, Washington, D.C., September 2004, p. 41.)

Pointing out that the Muslim world looks nothing like this, the report notes that a still oversimplified—but perhaps more roughly accurate yardstick—might break down an audience into five distinct categories: regimes and their retainers (including the army, bigwigs, cronies, etc.); the professional class (or "technocrats"); establishment and activist Islamist prelates (plus social welfare and education networks); regular and poor Muslims (small entrepreneurs on down); and fighting groups and their networks.[9]

What's the Process?

Numerous reports on public diplomacy list recommendations about changing the makeup and process of public diplomacy. The 2005 Congressional Research Service (CRS) survey of these recommendations grouped the most common into several categories:[10]

1. Define Overall Strategy
2. Presidential Directive/Reorganize Public Diplomacy at the White House
3. Create a New Agency
4. Reorganize Public Diplomacy at the Department of State
5. Redefine the Role of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy
6. Increase Embassy Involvement
7. Coordination
8. Increase Financial and Human Resources
9. Increase Public Diplomacy and/or Language Training
10. Increase Technology Use
11. Increase Private-Sector Involvement
12. Improve Communication
13. Increase Exchanges and Libraries
14. Increase Oversight

Getting beyond broad recommendations can prove tricky, however, some Roundtable participants said, especially when the details of implementation create very practical challenges. James Dobbins, director of the International Security and Defense Policy Center at RAND, suggested focusing on three main elements: content of message, packaging of message, and how it's delivered. In terms of how it's delivered, Dobbins noted, "you can't have two messages, one for international and one for domestic." The United States must have a single message and decide how to prioritize that message. Since September 11, however, the U.S. message has been targeted at an audience that "has been almost exclusively domestic."

Focusing on a complementary aspect of the public diplomacy toolkit, Pat Mitchell, the president and CEO of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), gave an example of a project that is based on listening rather than messaging. Mitchell was asked to participate in a State Department public/private initiative, the U.S./Afghan Women's Council, through which PBS ran a mentoring program for young Afghan women. Twenty-four women came to the United States and were trained as camerawomen, editors, and journalists. These women subsequently returned to Afghanistan and produced their own film, which was broadcast on PBS and subsequently nominated for an Emmy, Mitchell said. "It's not always about the hard power of old media" or about "us" telling "their" stories but about the kind of empowerment that changes lives as well as minds.

Since September 11, the U.S. message has been targeted at an audience that "has been almost exclusively domestic."

James Dobbins

Moreover, sometimes it's not about putting a public face on programs at all, maintained John Rendon. "The best way to receive credit is to give it," he said, noting that a conscious effort to step to the background in the tsunami relief effort undoubtedly paid dividends for the United States. "Branding on everything doesn't work in today's environment."

Education should be an important part of any public diplomacy process, argued Gary Knell, president and CEO of Sesame Workshop. "You can't miss the issue of investing in children," Knell said, pointing out that a primary goal should be promoting empathy among youth and "putting your feet in their shoes."

Summarizing the process aspect of the discussion, Geoff Cowan, dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California, suggested that participants seemed to agree on the necessity for several elements in a new public diplomacy strategy: effective international broadcasting, vastly better research, partnering with civil society and the private sector to empower local communities, and more effective exchange programs. Moreover, this new approach must take into account the fact that U.S. public diplomacy cannot be separated from U.S. policies and actions. "Some of these policies have been damaging to our image for decades," Cowan pointed out, and cannot be solved through a "quick-fix" mentality.

Stages of Implementation: Short, Medium, and Long Term

Joseph Nye, Distinguished Service Professor at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, suggested reconciling disparate approaches through a breakdown of the time horizon. In the short term, public diplomacy can focus on promoting the president's agenda and dispelling false rumors regarding U.S. policy. "This is where broadcasting is crucial," Nye said. In the medium term, public diplomacy should develop a counternarrative to that used by extremists, focusing on the prospects for a hopeful future. In the long term, the emphasis should shift to empowering others. Nye concluded, "There you're trying to develop open societies and develop democracies because we think in the long run it's better for them and better for us." This last phase also should include an emphasis on promoting access to ICT, to better empower a plurality of new and competing voices.

Charles Firestone, discussion moderator and executive director of the Communications and Society Program at the Aspen Institute, built on this framework to construct a preliminary matrix:

	GOALS	**CONTENT**	**PACKAGE/AUDIENCE**	**DELIVERY**
IMMEDIATE	American interests	Response to stories	Current generation	Local media
MEDIUM RANGE	Values	Narrative	Youth	All media; exchanges; cultural measures
LONG RANGE	Self development	Personal empowerment	Three generations	Pull: new media

In discussing this concept, Roundtable participants disagreed about the exact components of the matrix—and even on whether a linear timeline was appropriate in shaping an information age public diplomacy. "I disagree with the chart, and I disagree with what Joe said. I think you have to collapse that thing," said Jane Harman, U.S.

Representative from California. Other agencies and policy priorities have taken into account the network concept, but "where we haven't done that is in public diplomacy; that's the analog piece still." A first step would be focusing on a plurality of messages delivered by multiple messengers, Harman said.

What Does Success Look Like?

Putting items into neat boxes, however, leads to a metrics-related question: How do we show, or measure, success? Although instances of ineffective public diplomacy—or its subsequent effects—often are depressingly easy to highlight, a comprehensively successful strategy is more difficult to demonstrate. "You know individual successes as they're happening," said Geoff Cowan—such as combating false rumors about U.S. foreign policy. "But you can't show overall success."

Madeleine Albright concurred: "It's hard to view what the success of a public diplomacy program is while it's going on," she said. One way to measure a successful program would be to monitor ongoing polls that would track changes in the perception of the United States and its policies, some participants noted.

"It's hard to view what the success of a public diplomacy program is while it's going on."

Madeleine Albright

The 2003 Djerejian report acknowledges that measurement of success in public diplomacy has been underemphasized in the past and is likely to prove quite difficult. Nevertheless, it notes,

> "Success" in a general sense means improving attitudes toward the United States. More specifically, it means encouraging support for discrete policies. The proper unit of measurement is not the number of publications distributed by embassies, the number of households reached by radio, or the number of speeches made by advocates of U.S. policies. Those are all important inputs, but the key measurement is the *output*, which is influencing people's views and attitudes.[11]

The Djerejian report suggests that public diplomacy programs should not begin or continue unless research shows that the programs have a reasonable chance of success and that benefits outweigh costs. Three recommendations on measurement emerge in the report: The State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research should receive funding to monitor foreign opinion on a regular basis, establish a separate outside measurement and evaluation unit, and create a database of exchange program alumni. The report acknowledges, however, that "precise measurement of progress in moving the needle of public opinion is quite difficult. If, for example, it is true that public opinion in Arab and Muslim countries responds more to policies than to public diplomacy, it is clear that successful public diplomacy will not be able to change minds dramatically in the presence of a strong opposition to policy."[12]

"We need to communicate information to people who are not yet born."

John Rendon

Precise metrics aside, John Rendon kept Roundtable participants focused on the time frame for measuring success. "I think a lot of these ideas are good tactical ideas, but the magnitude of this problem is multiple generations," Rendon pointed out. "We need to communicate information to people who are not yet born."

Although there was little consensus on answers to the questions raised, the debate framed several key recurring questions about the nature, role, and endgame of public diplomacy in the Middle East. In particular, the discussion highlighted the importance of agreeing on basics such as definitions, processes, benchmarks, and priorities in crafting public diplomacy strategies. It also threw into sharper relief the need to examine bigger-picture issues, such as the exact relationship between public diplomacy and the other elements of soft power.

The Big Picture: Soft Power and Public Diplomacy

Attempts to redefine public diplomacy invariably bleed into discussions of soft power, although the two are not necessarily synonymous. Encompassing instruments such as public diplomacy, soft power typically is defined as nonmilitary power that is capable of attracting, rather than coercing, others through intangibles such as policies, values, and culture. As Harvard's Joseph Nye notes in his 2004 *Foreign Affairs* article "The Decline of America's Soft Power," anti-Americanism is on the rise while the United States' soft power is on the decline. This trend is significant, Nye argues in his article, because soft power is more than simply ephemeral popularity; it constitutes a means of obtaining desired outcomes.[13]

Recognizing that soft power rests on a variety of sources is a first step in understanding the issues surrounding public diplomacy, Nye pointed out at the Forum. If one understands that soft power—and public diplomacy as a component of it—is about attraction, then public diplomacy must involve more than broadcasting a message. For instance, Nye cautioned, public diplomacy cannot simply be about selling: "If the policy is terrible, advertising won't work," he observed. Moreover, as Nye put it, soft power can be much harder to wield than hard power, with less predictable results.

Soft power typically is defined as nonmilitary power that is capable of attracting, rather than coercing, others through intangibles such as policies, values, and culture.

The United States is not alone in trying to understand and augment its soft power. In a preceding discussion on China, many participants concurred that China has successfully boosted its soft power capabilities in recent years. It has done so not through advanced messaging techniques but through strategic engagement on key foreign policy issues of interest to its target countries. In this sense, one can understand that the scope of soft power goes far beyond the techniques and practices of public diplomacy—and has the potential to be far more influential.

Although soft power and public diplomacy are conceptually separate, their linkages became more difficult to disentangle when the conversation turned to strategies and implementation. During the course of the discussion, some participants identified approaches to public diplomacy that others placed more firmly in the soft power category. In addition to obvious methods such as message campaigns and international broadcasting, should public diplomacy also include issues such as foreign assistance and development, empowering others, democracy promotion, development of independent media, practicing at home what we preach abroad, and so on? As Geoff Cowan of USC's Annenberg School of Communication asked, "What is public diplomacy about? Should it be about messaging or empowerment, or is it trying to accomplish too much?"

"What I hear [in the Roundtable] are two very different conversations" on this issue, offered Reed Hundt, senior advisor at McKinsey & Company. "One is a conversation about exercise of power, and the other is empowerment of someone else." The current U.S. approach seems to favor exercise of power over empowering others—an approach Hundt disagreed with. Part of empowering others to communicate and enrich themselves includes acceptance of criticism of U.S. policies, he said. "You accept a positive or negative opinion of the United States because what you value is that they are fact-based, self-aware, and determining their own outcomes."

Hundt suggested that public diplomacy be guided by five core principles:

- The proliferation of actors rather than the promulgation of ideas
- The notion that there is no absolute truth about beliefs—with the corollary that tolerance is the only principle for which we should be arguing
- The premise that imposing a form of government on a country with a distinctive culture is impossible
- That the United States should do everything in its power to create a rising standard of living around the world
- Widespread dissemination of ICT, given that societies with abundant access to ICT will organize themselves and are more likely to choose benign forms of government than if the form of organization is imposed by an elite.

Zoë Baird, president of the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation, also emphasized the idea of getting away from pure message delivery. "There is a thread of continuity running through all this: We should be focusing on empowerment rather than focusing on trying to sell our programs."

Moreover, the focus on message may obscure the more important work the United States already is doing in helping other countries.

“Public diplomacy has a great role to play, but actions and deeds are even more important than words,” noted Kip Hagopian, managing member of Apple Oaks Partners and founder of Brentwood Associates. Hagopian cited the foreign assistance given to several Muslim countries, as well as the occasions when the United States has gone to war to defend Muslims—for instance, in Bosnia and Kuwait. “These are great deeds, and we need to figure out how to tell this story,” Hagopian said.

Other Roundtable participants felt that other actors also needed to play a more active role in telling this story. “I think the Arab world needs to bring its contribution,” said Ehud Danoch, Consul General of Israel. Often, Danoch commented, the Arab media does not pick up on the large amounts of foreign assistance contributed by the United States; for instance, Danoch observed, even though the United States has given a considerable amount of foreign assistance to Egypt over the past several years, “the citizens don’t know.”

“Public diplomacy has a great role to play, but actions and deeds are even more important than words.”

Kip Hagopian

Public diplomacy isn’t only about who tells the story and how it gets told, some participants noted. “The need to offer an alternative narrative is important, but there is a question of attracting sympathy, and there are a few tricks that are being missed,” said the UN’s Shashi Tharoor. These issues include working on ameliorating the effects of tougher U.S. visa policies, as well as showcasing the fact that the United States values diversity of opinion, he observed.

However, casting too broad a net—combined with a fundamental disconnect regarding basic concerns in the region—may sandbag any effort before it begins, maintained one Roundtable participant. “People in Washington say, ‘Oh, don’t talk about the Palestinian/Israeli issue, talk about education . . . ,’ but this is the view of people in Washington, not the view of people in the Arab world,” said Khaled Dawoud of *Al-Ahram.* Focusing on softer issues such as development, democracy, and women’s rights is not going to automatically erase paramount issues and concerns in the region, Dawoud said. “The view is that if you do democracy and women’s rights, people will forget about (the Palestinian/Israeli conflict), but this is not really doable.”

Other participants also were wary of broadening the public diplomacy discourse to include technically and conceptually separate issues such as development assistance or democracy promotion. “You can’t conflate democracy with public diplomacy; otherwise democracy promotion turns into a public relations exercise,” argued Kenneth Wollack, president of the National Democratic Institute. However, Wollack added, broad U.S. support for democracy assistance can reinforce public diplomacy efforts. James Dobbins of RAND also felt that the issues should be kept separate: “An exaggerated emphasis on democratization as public diplomacy could be dangerous.”

“You can’t conflate democracy with public diplomacy; otherwise democracy promotion turns into a public relations exercise.”

Kenneth Wollack

Generally, drawing a clear line between public diplomacy and soft power appears to be easier in theory than in practice. This challenge is most evident in the context of the new, broader parameters for public diplomacy. Given recent refocusing away from one-way, message-driven broadcasting and toward a more holistic focus on dialogue and empowerment, the distinction between public diplomacy and issues such as humanitarian assistance, international development, and democracy promotion is becoming increasingly blurred. Although this blurring elevates the role of public diplomacy in foreign affairs, it does make defining the goals and operations of public diplomacy more difficult and risks minimizing other key components of U.S. foreign policy.

The Information Revolution and Public Diplomacy: A Paradigm Shift?

In an age in which Al Qaeda purportedly airs its own newscast over the Internet—complete with commercial break and masked anchorman—we cannot avoid acknowledging that the information revolution is playing and will continue to play a key role in the transformation of public diplomacy.[14] “We’re trying to hold on to these old levers of power—we can control the message, control what people think—and that old paradigm is just gone,” noted John Clippinger, senior fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard Law School.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has already acknowledged that "the information technology of the 21st century has made waging an ideological global struggle against extremism particularly complex."[15] Many studies of public diplomacy have pointed to the need to integrate ICT and network principles more explicitly into public diplomacy strategy; the CRS review of 29 articles on public diplomacy notes that eight recommended increased, more effective, and creative uses of technology.[16]

Exactly how technology should be incorporated is where many studies seem to get fuzzy. Inherent in the discussion, however, is the implication of ceding central control in favor of a universe of multicentric, self-empowered audiences/actors. This empowerment, in turn, should foster greater transparency, which ultimately dovetails with core U.S. values. "Ubiquitous transparency works for us. You have to operate in that space in real time—that's the first five minutes [after an event], not two hours later," said John Rendon. "These things ascend and achieve a velocity that's extraordinary."

Truly new public diplomacy should focus on creating access to the Internet to encourage bottom-up competing voices and vibrant discussion.

Zoë Baird

"There is a new paradigm, so the consumer and user is the originator of media and content," said John Clippinger. New forms of organization are predicated not on hierarchies but on edge-to-edge, peer-to-peer interaction; this type of organization "has its own authenticity," Clippinger said. The Department of Defense recognizes this issue; it is moving toward an understanding of networked and edge warfare.

Referencing the discussion about old versus new strategy, Zoë Baird of the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation suggested that the *new* in that context was actually only "halfway new." Truly new public diplomacy should focus on creating access to the Internet to encourage bottom-up competing voices and vibrant discussion, she said. U.S. Rep. Jane Harman agreed, adding that the bottom-up approach was more likely to generate progress on the public diplomacy front "than any top-down message we may have."

"The threat that has us fully engaged is unlike any other," loaded with anomaly and paradox, said Sidney Harman, executive chairman of Harman International Industries. The fact that supposedly antimodern terrorist groups make full use of the Internet "is not just a curiosity, it's an urgent reality." This reality, he said, is not reflected in the recent and ongoing reorganization of American public diplomacy institutions. "All of our institutions have reorganized as though circumstances today require little more than a rearrangement of the architecture that served us during the Cold War; it is simply irrelevant. We deal with an enemy that is nonlinear, nonserial, nonsynchronous, and we are approaching this in a classic linear, synchronous fashion. Unless we address this, we're just spinning our wheels."

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>
> ***Sidney Harman***

Adding a caveat, Geoff Cowan cautioned participants against jumping entirely into the brave new world of technology. "We don't want to give up old tools in favor of new tools" when the old tools have proved effective, Cowan said. "We need to keep these in the game."

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Proposals

The group ultimately came up with several wide-ranging and innovative proposals and recommendations, which are briefly summarized in major thematic categories below. The list does not represent the collective suggestions of the group; it encompasses the universe of ideas proposed in the concluding brainstorming session.

ICT-Related

1. **Create a "common ground" Internet space.** Creating this space should enable sharing of different viewpoints both within and outside the Arab world, with particular emphasis on encouraging moderates to seek the common ground necessary for mutual understanding.

2. **Provide technology for newsrooms in the Arab world.** Better technology in newsrooms would enhance the capacity and professionalism of Arab journalists.
3. **Monitor the blogosphere for instant U.S. response to breaking news.** Monitoring and response would be tasked out to a network of "trusted interlocutors," not necessarily U.S. officials, who could fairly and accurately present the U.S. perspective or correct false information.
4. **Create a cloud of wireless broadband Internet hotspots in the Middle East.** The increasing penetration of wi-max or wi-fi should spark heightened transparency, local empowerment, and international information sharing.
5. **Build Internet cafes connected to U.S. embassies.** Although security concerns might preclude such cafes from being connected to the embassies directly, they could be remotely located and serve as "information kiosks" open to all.
6. **Use ICT to build collaborative curricula.** This effort could include encouraging children in various countries to document their own "day in the life" on the Internet; generally, this approach would build on the interactivity of ICT to encourage connections and cross-cultural empathy among youth.

Traditional Media

7. **Create a new international radio outlet called Radio Understanding.** This outlet would be a multi-donor-funded international radio network that would provide space for moderates and informed debate, link up with the blogosphere, and channel voices from below. (See expanded detail on page 23.)
8. **Encourage funding of international broadcasting by a variety of sources, rather than the single-government-funded model.** Diversified funding would encourage multiple points of view and increase the credibility of international broadcast outlets.
9. **Encourage local ownership of media-related endeavors.** Where donors are developing independent media, they should take care not to duplicate existing efforts or crowd out local initiatives.

10. **Send "democratic" U.S. talk/news shows to Arab channels.** This initiative would highlight the freewheeling debate at the heart of the U.S. political system and expose viewers to U.S. positions on both sides of the issues.
11. **Create a media fund to support independent media in the Middle East.** This fund would enable training of media organizations in running media businesses; such training could be for-profit or not-for-profit.
12. **Encourage journalist/media exchanges between the United States and the Middle East.** The traditional approach has been one-way—sending Arab journalists on visits to the United States; true two-way exchanges would expose U.S. journalists to the complex realities of the Middle East and its media sector. In conjunction with these exchanges, U.S. media outlets would have more opportunities to incorporate views and opinions from Middle East commentators.

Education, Empowerment, and Culture

13. **Restore U.S. libraries abroad and translate books into Arabic.** U.S. libraries overseas used to provide an effective means of sharing knowledge and information, as well as establishing goodwill. Reestablishing and promoting the overseas library system could revitalize a key component of public diplomacy. In conjunction with this step, increasing the general availability of books translated into Arabic (preferably selected and translated by an independent entity) increases the capacity of the general public in the Middle East to access other points of view.
14. **Promote partnerships between U.S. and foreign universities and increased student exchanges, with expanded alumni networks.** Partnerships and student exchanges have long proved a potent force for effective public diplomacy; new centers such as Education City in Qatar present fresh opportunities. Through ICT-enabled enhanced networking, alumni can maintain and deepen contacts.
15. **Emphasize democratization as a primary policy, apart from public diplomacy.** Although democracy promotion can be an important component of soft power, policymakers should ensure that it does not become part of a broad public relations package.

16. **Encourage development and local empowerment in the Palestinian territories.** U.S. commitment to empowering the Palestinians will go a long way toward demonstrating U.S. commitment to peace and mutual understanding in the region.
17. **Start a global endowment on health care and education, funded by Congress.** This endowment would build on the model of the National Endowment for Democracy; although Congress would fund it, other countries also could contribute.
18. **Promote roles of Arab Americans and American Muslims in public diplomacy.** Arab Americans and American Muslims have the potential to be the most effective unofficial ambassadors for American values; they should be used more in public diplomacy efforts. Both should be encouraged to tell the American story in their own words.
19. **Support more Aspen-type roundtables in the region.** Roundtables bringing together Middle Eastern and U.S. participants would encourage information sharing and generate fresh, nonofficial ideas.
20. **Engage Arab conservatives.** U.S. experts and policymakers should ensure that they hear a diverse array of views by inviting more conservative elements of Arab society—not just West—friendly liberals and moderates—to participate in exchanges and conferences.

Radio Understanding: A Key Proposal

The group did discuss one proposal in greater depth. Marc Nathanson, chair of the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Public Diplomacy and the Middle East and chairman of Mapleton Investments, presented a proposal to create a new international broadcast outlet called Radio Peace. Broadcast initially in Arabic, English, and Hebrew, the radio station would focus on encouraging dialogue within the Middle East and between people in the Middle East and other countries. Ultimately the station would incorporate dialogues drawn from the Internet and other media, and preferably would be run by either an Aspen group or another nonprofit entity, rather than by individual governments. (The full proposal description appears in Appendix A.)

Nathanson suggested that initial funding could come from some combination of Arab leaders, Israel, the United States, and private foundations and corporations. “The more we go away from specific government controls, the better we are,” he noted.

“Personally, I think it’s good if the aim is to promote dialogue among people to create a climate of peace,” responded Ambassador Hussein Hassouna. However, Hassouna added, the credibility of the outlet would be enhanced if there were no governmental participation in funding at all, “because anything coming from government is looked at as propaganda in a way.”

Queen Noor proposed changing the name of the radio from Radio Peace to Radio Understanding—a suggestion with which many Roundtable participants concurred. The value in the whole proposition, she suggested, would be not as “an organ for getting across a message but as a vehicle to draw people in and engage.”

The value in Radio Understanding would not be as “an organ for getting across a message but as a vehicle to draw people in and engage.”

Queen Noor

Following a period of sustained discussion, other Roundtable participants agreed that the idea of Radio Understanding was worth further consideration. Moderator Charles Firestone of the Aspen Institute called on several volunteers to pursue the idea further.

Conclusion

Sidney Harman of Harman International Industries concluded with an observation that challenged Roundtable participants to continue to think critically about what public diplomacy seeks to achieve. “Almost everyone has spoken of debate, exchange of views, and argument. Any time one of these exchanges produces not just persuasion of the other but something new that neither of the persons has brought to it, you have something marvelous and magical . . . that would be not just refreshing but important.”

The expansive discussion explored the frontiers of many key public diplomacy issues currently facing policymakers and pundits. Roundtable participants emphasized the need for the United States to remain committed to its public diplomacy strategy over the long term, involving current and future generations through a fresh, post-Cold War approach that is based on two-way or multilateral communication and exchange rather than one-way monologue. The information revolution will play an important role in amplifying this communication, sparking new opportunities for education and empowerment. At the same time, many Roundtable participants reiterated the oft-raised notion that even the most effectively deployed public diplomacy strategy cannot rescue a deeply unpopular piece of foreign policy.

The outlines of this new approach must still be refined by those who practice it; until the how, why, and what of public diplomacy are more clearly addressed, ongoing efforts are likely to suffer from a lack of strategic coherence and policy effectiveness. Defining and distinguishing public diplomacy—and its interconnection with other important components of U.S. foreign policy—is a task that practitioners and policymakers must explicitly undertake, without delay. This task is vital if the United States seeks not only to repair its image but to continue to act as a force for positive change in the world in the years and decades ahead.

Even the most effectively deployed public diplomacy strategy cannot rescue a deeply unpopular piece of foreign policy.

NOTES

1. Testimony at confirmation hearing for Karen Hughes, nominee for Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, D.C., July 22, 2005.

2. Susan B. Epstein and Lisa Mages, "Public Diplomacy: A Review of Past Recommendations," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, September 2, 2005.

3. Rushing appeared in "Control Room," a documentary about Al Jazeera, where he explained and defended U.S. policy to Arab journalists while also reflecting on the questions these interactions engendered. Following the release of the film, Rushing reportedly was discouraged by the Pentagon from talking to the media. See Sally B. Donnelly, "Al Jazeera Hires an Ex-Marine," *Time*, September 27, 2005.

4. "Changing Minds, Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World," Report of Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, Edward P. Djerejian, Chairman, submitted to U.S. House of representatives Committee on Appropriations, October 1, 2003, pp. 8-10. Available at http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/24882.pdf.

5. "Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication" (Washington, D.C.: Office of Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, September 2004), p. 11.

6. Ibid., p. 12.

7. Seyom Brown, "Public Diplomacy: Restoring Legitimacy to U.S. International Leadership" (Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress, November 1, 2004). Available at http://www.americanprogress.org/site/pp.asp?c=biJRJ8OVF&b=237877.

8. "Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication," p. 43.

9. Ibid., p. 42.

10. Epstein and Mages, "Public Diplomacy."

11. "Changing Minds, Winning Peace," p. 65.

12. Ibid., p. 66.

13. Joseph S. Nye, "The Decline of America's Soft Power," *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 3 (May/June 2004), pp. 16-20.

14. Daniel Williams, "Purported al Qaeda Newscast Debuts on Internet," *Washington Post,* September 27, 2005.

15. Donald H. Rumsfeld, "War of the Words," *Wall Street Journal,* July 18, 2005.

16. Epstein and Mages, "Public Diplomacy."

The Use of Digital Technologies and Network Principles in Relations with China

Shanthi Kalathil

Introduction

Globalization and the digital revolution have combined to ensure that in today's world, international relations are conducted against a new topography of instantaneous communication, extended sociopolitical and economic networks, and ever-increasing interconnection. As a rising global power that is both shaping and being shaped by these trends, China sits at a nexus of many forces: tradition and modernity, stability and tension, control and chaos. Its choices will have lasting implications for the entire international community.

China sits at a nexus of many forces: tradition and modernity, stability and tension, control and chaos.

There is little doubt that the revolution in information and communication technologies (ICT) has swept through China's political, economic, and social landscape over the past several years. Network principles and new forms of organization are guaranteed to affect China's trajectory over the coming decades. As Zheng Bijian, chair of the Beijing-based China Reform Forum, notes in *Foreign Affairs*, China's Internet and mobile phone subscriber base is growing by leaps and bounds. Meanwhile, economic growth in the coastal areas continues to soar, even as the country strives to cope with ongoing development challenges. Zheng writes:

> This last challenge is reflected in a series of tensions Beijing must confront: between high GDP growth and social progress, between upgrading technology and increasing job opportunities, between keeping development momentum in the coastal areas and speeding

> up development in the interior, between fostering urbanization and nurturing agricultural areas, between narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor and maintaining economic vitality and efficiency, between attracting more foreign investment and enhancing the competitiveness of indigenous enterprises, between deepening reform and preserving social stability, between opening domestic markets and solidifying independence, between promoting market-oriented competition and taking care of disadvantaged people.[1]

The 2005 Forum on Communications and Society (FOCAS) annual chief executive officers' (CEO) meeting, which convened in Aspen, Colorado, in August 2005, took as its mandate an analysis of many of these phenomena. The Forum, which comprises leaders from business, government, media, academia, and nongovernmental organizations, explored China's development challenges and international relations strategies through the lens of ICT-inspired network principles.

"There is a sense in China that this is their moment."

Robert Hormats

Over the course of the meeting, the lively discussion expanded to address the structure and conduct of U.S.-China relations in the information age and numerous other related concepts. This wide-ranging and detailed conversation revolved around several central themes, including change versus continuity, the political impact of the information revolution, China's soft power, the digital divide, and the relevance of ICT and network principles to U.S. and Chinese policymaking.

China in the Information Age: Change versus Continuity

One theme that many participants highlighted during the course of the discussion was that of change versus continuity in China, particularly in light of the information and communications revolution. The information revolution has indisputably and significantly altered China over the past several years and is likely to catalyze even greater changes over the next decades. Yet China's history and political trajectory also demand a nuanced view of these changes.

Some participants expressed the view that although China is due to experience accelerating change over the next several years, this change must be understood within the context of China's long history. In his opening remarks, Robert Hormats, vice chairman of Goldman Sachs (International), noted that "there is a sense in China that this is their moment"—that China is reasserting itself after a period of past and recent humiliations. A critical element of this moment is stability, which the Chinese particularly value after periods of chaos and which is threatened by growing imbalances. According to Hormats, the Communist Party derives its legitimacy from the three pillars of stability, nationalism, and growth. If it can adhere to these three pillars, the party can continue to lead China. Hormats concluded that the information revolution is enabling China to address some of its imbalances through greater integration into the global economy, increased networking with overseas Chinese, and heightened transparency that enables leaders to respond quickly to crises.

China is rife with contradictions—none more striking than the contrast between its emergence as a stable, respected player in the international arena and the potential for domestic upheaval just below the surface.

Other participants took a less sanguine view of potential developments. James Dobbins, director of the International Security and Defense Policy Center at the RAND Corporation, countered that there is likely to be more discontinuity in China over the next decade, following a period of 25 years of high economic growth and high political stability. Citing a shaky banking system and the state-owned enterprises it underpins, Dobbins suggested that Chinese growth is likely to diminish to about 5 percent annually over the next 20 years. At the same time, he said, he expects political change to accelerate, given that a greater percentage of the Chinese population will be in the lower-middle-income bracket and these Chinese are likely to demand political participation, particularly in light of the economic slowdown. If the Chinese government does not find a way to resolve these issues, there is a possibility that China may move "toward entropy and a system overtaken by corruption and centrifugal forces in society."

A third view is that both perspectives contain an element of truth. As some participants noted, China is rife with contradictions—none more striking than the contrast between its emergence as a stable, respected player in the international arena and the potential for domestic upheaval just below the surface. Technology statistics also help encapsulate this trend: Even as China rapidly adopts cutting-edge technology, the government remains wary about the political ramifications. Craig Ehrlich, chairman of the GSM Association, the international association of Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) cell phone operators, pointed out that by the end of 2005 there will be 400 million mobile phone users in China, and the number of Internet users (currently estimated at around 100 million) also is likely to increase. At the same time, the Chinese government is issuing restrictive regulations on Internet content. Higher ICT penetration is likely to amplify these contradictions, reinforcing the dynamics of continuity while also contributing to bottom-up change.

Discussions of China's future in light of the information revolution frequently center on such issues of change and continuity, revolution and evolution, control and freedom. What remains less clear is how the information revolution will shape these conceptual pairings. As the discussion evolved, it became clear many of these concepts—which frequently are placed in opposition—may be leveraged simultaneously by the digital revolution.

The Digital Revolution in China: Enabler of Freedom, Instrument of Control, or Both?

The conversation turned to whether—and how—the communications revolution in China would act as a lever for political freedom or as an instrument of political control by the ruling party. This recurring topic, often the subject of hot debate among China and communications scholars, elicited a wide diversity of opinion. Some participants felt that the introduction of new technologies and new forms of media opened China to the possibilities of creeping—or quick—political change. Others cautioned that the effects of technology were likely to be more complex.

For instance, the Internet has played a role in exposing local corruption and abuse of power, Robert Hormats of Goldman Sachs noted: "If you have a grievance with the government, you go online and you blog it and you start a chat room and talk about it, and the government has to focus on that issue." Moreover, in some cases the Chinese government welcomed the opportunity to go online and gauge popular opinion, Hormats added. "It's a powerful way of helping [leaders] understand problems before they blow up and threaten stability."

Scarlett Li, founder and chief operating officer of Chinese start-up R2G, offered the example of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) crisis as a way of illustrating that technology is forcing the Chinese government to react, as well as shaping its responses. The prevalence of text messaging to exchange information during the SARS crisis in Guangdong, Li said, forced the local government to respond and become more transparent. It also convinced the government to reassess the importance of cutting-edge technologies. "The implication is that our government is moving from reacting to technology" toward a more proactive stance, she remarked. "They realize that putting their eyes down and ignoring [it] is not a good way of dealing with issues."

New technologies and new forms of media opened China to the possibilities of creeping—or quick—political change.

Clearly the introduction of text messaging and Internet features such as blogs have had an opening effect on Chinese political culture and have limited the government's ability to completely control the flow of information. Yet as some participants noted, past dissidents have used earlier forms of technology to achieve similar results. "I think it's interesting that while this information revolution is much larger, this kind of going around the system is not new," pointed out former U.S. Secretary of State and current Albright Group principal Madeleine Albright. Previous political upheavals in Eastern Europe were predicated at least partly on older forms of communications technology, Albright said.

At the same time, there is a tension between openness and control in China, particularly in the realm of communications, commented Pat Mitchell, president and CEO of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). Mitchell referenced a recent example: China's state-run CCTV had approached PBS about a collaborative product. There were no restrictions placed on PBS on the content of the project from the beginning. Once PBS camera crews began attracting crowds of would-be interviewees on the street, however, the Chinese government got skittish and tried to clamp down on the project. "When it got to what was going on in the streets, it was difficult," she pointed out.

The Chinese government has struggled with these tensions for several years. Although it acknowledges the economic boost provided by the introduction of ICT, as well as their necessity to China's emergence as an important world power, it remains wary of the disruptive political forces such technologies may enable. Therefore, it frequently adopts different policies toward different kinds of media or issues seemingly contradictory policies in an effort to broadly constrain the information revolution's unwanted political effects.

Emblematic of these tensions is the ongoing evolution of Internet policy. The Chinese government tends to issue competing regulations on Internet content, simultaneously encouraging Internet growth while attempting to control its use. In recent months the central government appears to have once again turned toward increased control. New regulations on Internet news content, issued in September 2005, drive home the point that the domain of independent bloggers and Chinese chat rooms is still under the watchful eye of regulators. According to the new rules, only "healthy and civilized news and information that is beneficial to the improvement of the quality of the nation, beneficial to its economic development and conducive to social progress" will be permitted.[2] These regulations mimic earlier edicts that stipulated "healthy and orderly development" of Internet services and ensured that penetration of the Internet progressed broadly according to parameters delineated by central authorities.[3]

The Chinese government tends to issue competing regulations on Internet content, simultaneously encouraging Internet growth while attempting to control its use.

Although it is still too early to gauge whether the newest regulations will indeed stifle China's growing blogosphere, the Chinese government has clearly indicated its willingness to clamp down in the past. Optimists on the potential role of the communications revolution in reforming China's political system should keep in mind that the government has employed jamming technologies against international radio broadcasts for many years, said Marc Nathanson, FOCAS co-chair and chairman of Mapleton Investments. Drawing on his experience as former chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors—which oversees all U.S. non-military international communications, including Voice of America (VOA)—Nathanson sounded a note of caution: "There are still people arrested for listening to jammed broadcasts…so just throw that in the mix as you talk about their use of cellular" and other potentially liberating technologies. Geoff Cowan, dean of the Annenberg School for Communications at the University of Southern California and former head of VOA, also found reason to be wary: "An open digital media environment…will have unpredictable consequences and is not necessarily as great a thing as you may think it will be."

"Sooner or later, they will realize the more flexible political system is a better typology than fixed in the long term."

Donald Tang

Donald Tang, vice chairman of Bear, Stearns & Co. Inc., pointed out that although the Chinese leadership has passively "watched" the development of electronic and "new" media, the traditional media remains very much under control. "They never miss an opportunity" to rein in traditional media when it has gone too far, Tang said. Nonetheless, he posited, the information and communications revolution was sure to be a positive political force in China, particularly because it lends itself to a more flexible and adaptable political architecture. "Sooner or later, they will realize the more flexible political system is a better typology than fixed in the long term."

Tang suggested that the Chinese leadership tends to consider three main tenets when it plots the political future: flexibility, controllability, and graduality. Just as with currency reform in China, the government has come to terms with the fact that a more flexible regime may be better than a fixed one—but that realization did not come right away.

Assuming that the information and communications revolution may be influencing internal Chinese dynamics through the introduction of network principles, how might these changes empower the creation of various civil society constituencies? Joshua Cooper Ramo, former editor at large at *Time* magazine and currently an advisor at Goldman Sachs specializing in China, suggested that the single biggest challenge facing the Chinese leadership today is interest group management: “Every single day there are new interest groups being created in China; the cultural revolution is a great case study of what happens when interest groups go astray.” Neither U.S.-based China watchers nor Chinese political analysts have the metrics to determine how interest group dynamics will balance out, Ramo noted, adding that China is trying to determine whether it can permit the development of an environment that allows for conflict and debate without necessarily threatening the one-party framework.

> **China is trying to determine whether it can permit the development of an environment that allows for conflict and debate without necessarily threatening the one-party framework.**
>
> ***Joshua Cooper Ramo***

As many participants noted, the cumulative effect of new technologies contributes to an enabling environment for both civil society and government, in different ways. Although some observers regard these technologies as tools to strengthen an authoritarian government, others argue that they are inherently forces for freedom. Yet depicting these issues in zero-sum terms may be too simplistic and deprives the analysis of the complexity that accompanies the multifaceted effects of information technology. This complexity—which manifests in interest group dynamics, changes in traditional media, and government effectiveness and legitimacy—also characterizes some of the intangible elements of China’s evolving soft power.

China’s Increasing Soft Power

The concept of “soft power” is closely related to network principles in the information age. Soft power can be defined broadly as nonmilitary power that is capable of attracting, rather than coercing, through intangibles such as policies, values and culture. Particularly in light of evidence that suggests that U.S. prestige and influence abroad have decreased in recent years, some observers believe that soft power is as important as hard—i.e., military—power in the networked age of diplomacy. With

China's embrace of various aspects of the digital revolution, the inevitable questions arise: Have China's soft power capabilities increased, and if so, in what ways? How has China's soft power been enhanced by the spread of information and communications technologies? What does China hope to achieve through its accumulation of soft power?

In his article "The Beijing Consensus," Joshua Cooper Ramo argues that the Beijing model of development is spreading in a ripple effect through the developing world. According to Ramo, this model emphasizes innovation-led growth, relying on leading-edge technology to race ahead of more developed nations. It also relies on chaos management and the ability to leverage power in the international sphere. Ramo writes, "For both reasons of national pride and security, China wants to project its model abroad.…If China wants to follow its own path, to achieve a Peaceful Rise, it is crucially important that it get other nations to buy into the worldview it proposes."[4]

Many FOCAS participants agreed that the Chinese have demonstrated their growing prowess in building up and using soft power capabilities. China continues to see itself as "the world's largest developing country," said Madeleine Albright. "That's what their public diplomacy is about—that they can speak on behalf of those that don't have a role." Successfully defining its role as the emerging leader of the developing world could be a crucial component of China's soft power, Albright concluded.

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Madeleine Albright

In fact, China may be trying to become the new "indispensable nation" for many of the developing countries around the world, said Robert Hormats of Goldman Sachs—referencing a phrase Albright coined when she was U.S. Secretary of State. "They are probably among the most effective practitioners of soft power; they know they're the big kid on the block, particularly in Asia," Hormats noted. "And they do not want to appear to other countries as a threat…. They have worked assiduously to underscore that they resist efforts by any country to interfere in other countries' internal affairs. That's reassuring to other countries who are afraid of us."

The United States is sensitive to that view, some FOCAS participants commented, which partly accounts for the often heated rhetoric directed at China. Sean Maloney, executive vice president at Intel, put it bluntly: “America has the biggest issue with China,” whereas the rest of the world considers China’s rise a relatively more benign phenomenon. The underlying “vibe” of all the politically motivated congressional testimony, reports, and analysis, Maloney asserted, is that it is “unfair that China is being successful.”

Shashi Tharoor, Under Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information for the United Nations (UN), offered the view that China’s approach to international politics historically has been about protecting domestic interests. In recent years China has moved from an essentially defensive posture—working to ensure that the system didn’t undermine its own goals, but rarely proactively using the system—to a more assertive stance. China has acquired a greater voice and confidence in international affairs, whether in the halls of the UN or in the channels of the international media. Chinese ambassadors are much more comfortable giving interviews on a variety of topics—“showing that China is now a great power that has views and is not afraid to express them,” said Tharoor.

China’s increasing energy needs also dictate that the Chinese government devise a smart soft power strategy. Although China became a net importer of oil only in 1994, it now imports half its daily consumption, writes Ian Bremmer in *Fortune* magazine:

> Conventional wisdom has long held that China never entangles itself in international disputes that do not directly threaten its national interest. The Chinese haven’t sought the kind of global influence that the British, Japanese, French, or Americans have. But it’s dangerous to assume that China will be bound by history, particularly now that its national interest demands that it scour the globe for energy suppliers.[5]

Although China and the United States—as energy-importing countries—have a common interest in keeping world energy prices as low as possible, this search for resources has put China in conflict with U.S. foreign policy goals in other arenas, such as nuclear nonproliferation or human rights, and this conflict is likely to continue. China has sealed an oil deal with Iran and invested in extractive industries in Africa to lock in oil supply at its source. Particularly in Africa, notes one analyst, China's presence "is illustrative of Beijing's efforts to create a paradigm of globalization that favors China."[6]

China also is hyperaware of its image in the Latin American context, said Gustavo Cisneros, chairman and CEO of the Cisneros Group. China aims to be regarded as a benign force in Latin America, Cisneros explained: "At some point, the Chinese leadership decided they were going to use their dollars to make sure they had access to raw materials on a long-term basis, and targeted the Latin American continent."

China's growing prowess in the soft power arena has been both directly and indirectly enhanced by the spread of digital technologies and the rise of network principles, many FOCAS participants agreed. Yet not everyone was convinced that heavy emphasis should be placed on the concept of soft power itself. "It's difficult to disaggregate soft power from economic and military power," said Albert Carnesale, chancellor of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The most significant reason to keep track of China's soft power—and the impact of the communications revolution—is to understand how these phenomena may affect the Chinese military or the country's competitiveness, Carnesale asserted.

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Albert Carnesale

Regardless of how the issues are cast, China clearly has strong ambitions to play a larger role on the international stage. These ambitions—in tandem with China's own domestic security and economic agenda—indicate that the country will continue to nurture its ability to deploy soft power in coming years. Moreover, as new generations of savvy Chinese diplomats and plugged-in youth take advantage of ICT to communicate with the world, China's soft power strategy is likely to evolve in more sophisticated ways.

Yet the complexities highlighted above—such as the Chinese government's struggle with openness and control—also may hamper China's ability to take full advantage of important soft power tools such as the Internet. This struggle is likely to be exacerbated by uneven nationwide access to the benefits of the digital revolution—also known as the digital divide.

The Digital Divide: Growth and Gaps

Any discussion of the information revolution and network principles in China must take into account the country's extraordinary growth rate and the relationship between this growth and ICT development. Although this topic is worthy of several roundtables in and of itself, FOCAS participants addressed the topic mainly in the context of the "digital divide" (the gap between the wired and unwired) and growing inequalities in China.

In a paper commissioned by the Aspen Institute Congressional Program, Pieter Bottelier outlines several reasons for China's current competitiveness. Prominent among them are an open trade regime; high-quality physical and ICT infrastructure; political and macroeconomic stability; the availability of skilled or highly trainable labor; growing availability of local managers and scientific personnel for research and development; and the prevalence of local networks of interfirm supply chains.[7] FOCAS participants mentioned many of these qualities over the course of the discussion as being particularly influenced by or related to the communications revolution in China.

The downside, of course, is the growing wealth gap and its potential correlation with the spread of ICT. Although proving a direct causal relationship is difficult, evidence indicates that even as cities on the coasts become wealthier and more wired, the inland provinces fall further behind. No one is more aware of this issue than the Chinese themselves, many FOCAS participants noted. "China is a country with extraordinary disparities and is conscious of them," said the UN's Shashi Tharoor.

Scarlett Li of R2G worried that China's future (as a *Foreign Affairs* article by George Gilboy describes) is one of "nodes without roads," where undo emphasis is placed on high-tech infrastructure before solving elemental development problems.[8] The country should be concerned about the wealth gap as well as about the degree of emphasis placed on commercial development without a corresponding emphasis on social justice issues, Li said.

Others argue that China's prioritization of research and development (R&D) and its ability to leapfrog developed nations through use of ICT may actually lead to a reverse digital divide effect. Emphasizing the development of human resource potential among youth—particularly in science and engineering—has been crucial to the success of many Asian countries, China included. One author states:

> Many developing nations—most notably India and China—are training many more of its citizens for careers in math and computer science than the presumptively more advanced developed countries. Even in the U.S., many colleges and universities report that the overwhelming majority of students enrolled in math and computer science programs are foreign-born—and this is not a recent phenomenon.[9]

At the same time, the United States is not prioritizing science and engineering curricula to further its own R&D agenda, Reed Hundt of McKinsey and Company argued. "To get an advanced degree in the U.S. in [IT engineering], you have to pay more than other students in the world, come out with a debt burden, and the net present value of going into that career is negative," Hundt said.

Scarlett Li of R2G worried that China's future is one of "nodes without roads," where undo emphasis is placed on high-tech infrastructure before solving elemental development problems.

Lip-Bu Tan, chairman of Walden International, noted that the Chinese government has taken a proactive role in ensuring an emphasis on R&D. "Tsinghua (University) has funding from the government and also major industry groups…that kind of proactiveness is amazing to me," he said, particularly in comparison with developed countries. The number of science graduates produced is striking, noted Intel's Sean Maloney. Although the United States has maintained a competitive edge in terms of overall university education, "it would be unwise to assume it will stay that way in perpetuity," he said.

Many FOCAS participants agreed that one of the most important impacts of the information revolution in China is the country's new-found commitment to fostering its young cadre of science and engineering experts. This cadre should enable China to maintain innovation and growth while taking advantage of the benefits of the digital revolution. At the same time, these advantages must be balanced against the country's tremendous development needs—particularly in the western, rural areas of the country, where the benefits of technology have been slower to spread. As several FOCAS participants noted, these disparities—and the tensions they highlight—are just a few of the many challenges China must meet in coming years, while it navigates an increasingly complicated international arena. To explore this scenario in more detail, the group engaged in a policy-focused simulation exercise.

Simulation Exercise Findings

Toward the end of the session, the group engaged in a simulation exercise designed to generate new ideas about policy options and potential future directions for both the United States and China in a hypothetical networked scenario. Participants were assigned roles—representing, for instance, U.S. and Chinese leaders, government bodies, business interests, the military, and civil society groups—and then engaged in stakeholder analysis against the backdrop of a hypothetical scenario. This scenario posited continuing economic growth in China; job losses and a stagnant economy in the United States; heightened conflict in the Middle East and instability on the Korean peninsula, accompanied by a U.S. draft; and growing political unrest in China. Following the exercise, the group briefly reconvened to discuss some of the major issues illuminated by the exercise.

"It's clear from this discussion that China is well known but not known well," concluded John Rendon of the Rendon Group. Establishing enduring relationships at a personal level would be in the interest of the United States—the better to ensure circles of trust, Rendon added. "We must find ways to work on problems we both share and not [focus on] what divides us."

Many participants noted that soft power formed both an explicit component and an implicit component of the simulation exercise. The United States' foreign policy focus has shifted away from Asia over the past several decades, to rest most recently on the Middle East—which has given China more scope for successful soft power diplomacy, said Robert Hormats of Goldman Sachs. "The Chinese have the view that while we may be the strongest power, our ability to influence events is diminished," he said. The scenario appeared to bear this out, noted UCLA's Albert Carnesale: "The U.S. talks about soft power all the time, but it was the Chinese that had the soft power, not the U.S." in the simulation exercise.

The simulation exercise also demonstrated that the United States is not encouraging development of China expertise among the emerging cadre of foreign policy analysts, said Zoë Baird, president of the Markle Foundation. "All of us should try to encourage the study of China and the Chinese language," Baird said. Moreover, "we need to use our experts on China better."

One implication is that education must be put on the agenda, said Gary Knell, president and CEO of Sesame Workshop. "These relationships should be built around education and cultural diplomacy," Knell argued. "The visa issues now are terrible. Education is critical; there are fewer U.S. students learning Mandarin than French. China and the U.S. have an opportunity to connect around this catch-up game."

"Education is critical; there are fewer U.S. students learning Mandarin than French. China and the U.S. have an opportunity to connect around this catch-up game."

Gary Knell

Some FOCAS participants felt that the simulation, which set the United States and China on something of a collision course, did not allow for multiple future directions in the U.S.-China relationship. "The scenario did reflect just one set of assumptions, relating to a basically adversarial relationship between the two countries. I'm not sure that's inevitable," commented the UN's Shashi Tharoor. In fact, Tharoor said, "China has an enormous vested interest in global stability …and every interest in not wanting to see situations blow up."

Ultimately, the group did not reach a clear consensus on the exact ways in which network principles might affect the conduct of U.S. and Chinese internal and external policymaking, although participants considered many innovative ideas. John Clippinger, senior fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard Law School, observed that next-generation operating systems are moving increasingly in the peer-to-peer direction. This totally distributed operating model also could inform the development of political systems. We have to examine "what kinds of social innovations take place because of social technology," Clippinger said. "You can have governance models outside formal government" that may be based in part on this distributed model.

China could be moving toward a "distributed democracy" that allows for some form of self-organization, though within the context of a single party.

Joshua Cooper Ramo

Joshua Cooper Ramo of Goldman Sachs also framed the issue in terms of organizing principles. "Most well-managed complex organisms are self-organized.… China is so complex that it can't be managed centrally," he said. Therefore, "the smart people on the edge of politics are envisioning an operating system that looks somewhat like the Internet." China could be moving toward a "distributed democracy" that allows for some form of self-organization, though within the context of a single party, Ramo concluded. Other participants noted that this networked scenario did not necessarily mean a more benign China presence internationally.

Meanwhile, the locus of technology development itself is set to shift eastward, said Intel's Sean Maloney. "What about the future? Most cell phones will be made in China," and China already is involved in defining the new standards. "I see the mantle of technology leadership moving into the Pacific." China eventually is likely to boast the most advanced wireless networks in the world, Maloney suggested.

Roundtable moderator Charles Firestone, executive director of the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program, brought the discussion back around to Donald Tang's three principles of flexibility, controllability, and graduality. Whether these principles are compatible with a distributed system of governance remains unclear, Firestone pointed out, and what that might mean for the future of Chinese policymaking in this context. What is clear, however, is that the rapid growth of information and communications technologies in China, its increased mobility and connectivity, will add significantly to China's wealth, its growth, and its emerging presence in world markets and politics.

Concluding Thoughts: Current and Future Policy Considerations

Overall, the group concluded that although the U.S.-China relationship is not mature, it has great potential to develop if each country regards the other as both competitor and collaborator. The interests of each country—such as jobs, security and low energy prices—are interrelated, compatible, and unlikely to be destabilized by external global circumstances. Destabilizations are more likely to come from internal politics within the United States—or, more likely, China. Both countries need to come to grips with the changing economic situation. Jailing of Chinese dissidents and media controls were of considerable concern to the group, however.

Many FOCAS participants concluded that China is filling a soft power vacuum in the world, putting the United States on the defensive. To regain its soft power, the United States must engage in long-term thinking and keep international trade from becoming a partisan issue. The group proposed an increase in the teaching of Mandarin in U.S. schools, as well as measures for greater engagement between the two countries, such as a Bipartisan Planning Commission.

Several FOCAS participants agreed that promoting widespread access to ICT would accrue to the benefit of both China and the United States and that China should work for ubiquity in communications connectivity as soon as possible. This environment also creates new opportunities for foreign media companies, although the Chinese government still has issues with ownership and control of the information space. The group discussed creating incentives for forcing the issue of intellectual property and in China—perhaps by encouraging more direct ownership of content in China. Participants also observed that media businesses are changing rapidly, although the role of the media remains crucial. On that point, they debated the role of private and public-service media, the importance of traditional journalistic values, and the need for domestic media to reflect the growing potency of civil society in China.

Ultimately, the full impact of the global communications revolution on China, as well as on the U.S.-China relationship, is only beginning to be understood. As one might expect from a distributive model, this revolution's effects are likely to be unpredictable, at times contradictory, and lacking in absolutes. ICT and network principles may empower forces of dissent or chaos from below in China; they also may enable the central government to develop improved forms of governance while maintaining one-party rule. Even as the Chinese state projects soft power more effectively in the international arena, nonstate actors (including private firms, NGOs, and others) are taking advantage of the digital revolution to disproportionately exert influence and seize strategic opportunities. How the United States and China navigate this complex environment is vital not just to these two countries but to the entire world.

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APPENDIX

Radio Understanding Proposal

Marc Nathanson

Arab nations, Israel, United States, foundations, corporations, private individuals will fund an FM radio network in Arabic (with simultaneous Hebrew and English language tracks) that will be heard throughout the Middle East. It will consist of "talk" and promote dialogue between Arabs, Israelis, and people of other countries.

The talk radio will consist of dialogue and discussion programming about problems and issues facing the people of the Middle East.

This project will be extended into the Internet through the work of a nonprofit organization called Meadan that will create area wide opportunities for secure two-person, cross-cultural dialogues. Radio Understanding will broadcast the most outstanding and important discussions from the website as stimulus for more detailed discussions.

Radio Understanding also will broadcast translated excerpts from media around the world on specific topics of interest to its listeners. It also will put these excerpts on its website. Also on the website will be information about democracy and how it works and where to find resources. There will be specific sections devoted to understanding of the history and people of each country in the Middle East, as well as the United States, in all three languages. Also, popular American books will be translated into Arabic on the website for downloading.

The network will be run and programmed by the Aspen Institute or another appropriate entity and not by specific governments.

The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Public Diplomacy and the Middle East

Aspen, Colorado
August 13-14, 2005

Roundtable Participants

Madeleine Albright
Principal
The Albright Group

Zoë Baird
President
John and Mary R. Markle Foundation

Elisabeth Bumiller
White House Correspondent
New York Times

Albert Carnesale
Chancellor
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John H. Clippinger
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Harvard Law School

Geoffrey Cowan
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Ehud Danoch
Consul General of Israel

Khaled Dawoud
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Note: Titles and affiliations are as of the date of the conference.

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Alhurra and Radio Sawa
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News Director
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Sidney Harman
Executive Chairman
Harman International Industries, Inc.

Jane Harman
U.S. House of Representatives

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John W. Rendon
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Forum on Communications and Society (FOCAS)

Annual CEO Meeting

The Use of Digital Technologies and Network Principles in Relations with China

Aspen, Colorado
August 11-13, 2005

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Zoë Baird
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John W. Rendon
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Lip-Bu Tan
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About the Author

Shanthi Kalathil is a Senior Democracy Fellow with World Learning, focusing on the role of civil society and independent media in advancing and consolidating democracy, as well as on issues relating to fragile states and post-conflict reconstruction.

Prior to becoming a Democracy Fellow, Ms. Kalathil was an associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Her 2003 co-authored book, *Open Networks, Closed Regimes: The Impact of the Internet on Authoritarian Rule*, examined the political effect of the Internet on eight authoritarian countries. At Carnegie, she also specialized in the role of traditional and new media in transitioning countries, the global digital divide, and the emerging national security implications of the information age.

Ms. Kalathil is a former Hong Kong-based staff reporter for the *Asian Wall Street Journal*, where she wrote the Asian "Heard on the Street Column" and covered Hong Kong, Chinese and regional Asian markets. She has also written extensively on Hong Kong's transition to Chinese rule, the evolution of Chinese listed companies, and the 1997 Asian economic crisis.

Ms. Kalathil holds a B.A. from U.C. Berkeley and an M.Sc. in Government from the London School of Economics. She is fluent in Mandarin Chinese, and is a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Prior Reports in the Forum on Communications and Society Series

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In Search of the Public Interest in the New Media Environment (2001)

David Bollier, rapporteur. This report examines public interest and the role of the marketplace in redefining this concept with respect to educational and cultural content. It suggests options for funding public interest content when all media are moving toward digital transmission. The publication also includes afterthoughts from an international perspective by British historian Asa Briggs. 61 pages, ISBN Paper: 0-89843-333-9, $12.00.

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Richard P. Adler, rapporteur. This report explores the barriers that impede acquisition of the knowledge and skills needed to effectively manage information in its myriad forms, especially digital. It explores six concrete initiatives that individuals and institutions might develop to remedy this problem. The report includes a background paper on information literacy by Patricia Senn Breivik, dean of libraries at Wayne State University and chair of the National Forum on Information Literacy. 45 pages, ISBN Paper: 0-89843-262-6, $12.00.

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In particular, the Program provides an active venue for global leaders and experts from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds to exchange and gain new knowledge and insights on the societal impact of advances in digital technology and network communications. The Program also creates a multidisciplinary space in the communications policymaking world where veteran and emerging decision makers can explore new concepts, find personal growth and insight, and develop new networks for the betterment of the policymaking process and society.

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