

January 2017

Public Diplomacy and National Security in 2017

Building Alliances, Fighting Extremism, and Dispelling Disinformation

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Throughout the world, citizens are increasingly flexing their muscles and shaping their governments’ decisionmaking on domestic and foreign affairs. Expanded access to information, facilitated by new media and communication technologies, has greatly empowered nonstate actors and strengthened their role in international politics. In this environment, the U.S. government cannot afford to solely engage in state-to-state diplomacy. The new global landscape requires foreign ministries and diplomats to go beyond bilateral and multilateral diplomacy and broaden and deepen relationships with a broad and diverse range of actors.¹ The public diplomacy (PD) toolkit of informational, educational, and cultural programs is central to this objective by creating and maintaining relationships with influential leaders and opinion-makers in civil society, commerce, media, politics, and faith communities worldwide. This paper attempts to capture the lessons that the U.S. government and PD experts have learned over the past eight years in applying PD tools in order to chart an effective course for the incoming administration.

The Trump administration will inherit a sound public diplomacy apparatus at the U.S. Department of State that facilitates more than 90 educational and cultural programs each year and costs just 2 percent of the entire \$50.655 billion International Affairs budget for Fiscal Year 2016.² Building on progress the Bush administration made in PD after the 1999 merger between the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) and the Department of State, the Obama administration elevated exchange and professional development programs as fundamentally transformative experiences for foreign and American citizens; created a paradigm shift in the State Department’s mastery of the digital environment, including using social media to produce direct dialogue with audiences and create virtual communities; and invested more in PD professionals’ advancement so that PD can be closer to

¹ University of Southern California Center on Public Diplomacy, “What Is Public Diplomacy?,” <http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/page/what-pd>.

² U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, “2016 Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy & International Broadcasting,” September 2016, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/262381.pdf>.

policymaking processes. Moving forward, the PD career track at State should continue to be strengthened through investment and trust in foreign service officers (FSOs).

In November 2016, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), along with the Center on Public Diplomacy (CPD) at the University of Southern California, convened public diplomacy thought leaders currently working in and out of government to assess the successes of PD in the outgoing administration, and make recommendations for a future course. The session focused on the major challenges that confront public diplomats today, namely their role in building and strengthening networks with foreign citizens who are critical to achieving U.S. foreign policy goals; countering violent extremism (CVE); and dispelling disinformation from state actors.

When Trump administration officials enter into government, they will find a PD apparatus consumed by these critical issues. Therefore, workshop participants aimed to identify successes, pinpoint enduring challenges, and provide concrete recommendations for reforms and improvements in all three areas, looking at PD themes, tools, and structures.

Stakeholders agreed that the overarching successes of the Obama administration have included:

- **Reaching larger global communities** through new digital platforms throughout the State Department; the reconstruction and revitalization of the International Information Programs (IIP) Bureau, specifically, has optimized the use of online-driven campaigns and “digital diplomacy” to help create larger networks of foreign citizens connected to the United States.
- **Expanding educational and professional development opportunities to non-elite audiences** through various existing exchange programs, in addition to the creation of the Young Leaders initiatives: Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), and Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLA).
- **Developing the exchange alumni office** in the Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Bureau to maintain networks of tens of thousands of ECA program alumni worldwide, and to support U.S. embassies in engaging these alumni directly.
- **Advancing the theme of entrepreneurship** to leverage the soft power of American entrepreneurship and innovation, which was manifested in many educational, cultural, and information programs, including the annual Global Entrepreneurship Summits, which convened the brightest entrepreneurs worldwide to collaborate in solving global public policy and development problems.
- **Continuing to enhance a career path for PD professionals to better connect PD with policy**, which included increasing the advancement of FSOs to PD leadership roles. The creation of public diplomacy deputy assistant secretaries (PD DAS) in the regional bureaus in Washington and the advancement of the Policy, Planning and Resources (R/PPR) office for the under secretary were central to this progress. In addition, FSOs who have chosen PD as their principal career track, or

Public Diplomacy by the Numbers	
2	PD budget percentage to entire State Department and USAID FY 2016 planned budget
51	Reporting tours for foreign correspondents in the U.S. organized by Foreign Press Center
93	Washington-directed educational, professional development and cultural programs
400	EducationUSA advising centers worldwide
450	U.S. embassy and consulate websites
457	Expert speakers dispatched overseas to engage with foreign audiences
485	Alumni of exchange programs who are former or current heads of state
700	American Spaces worldwide
>700	State Department social media platforms
1,500	Foreign Service officers on a PD career track
3,000	Credentialed foreign correspondents in the U.S. through the Foreign Press Center
55,000	Exchange program participants in the U.S. and abroad
275,000	Visitors to the United States on the J-1 visa program
970,000	International students studying in U.S. higher education institutions
>1 million	Exchange program alumni worldwide
3.47 million	Followers to @StateDept Twitter handle
52 million	Contribution in USD of International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) to U.S. economy
30.5 billion	Contribution in USD of international students to U.S. economy

Note: Most data based on FY 2015 figures.

Source: U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy. "2016 Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting," September 20, 2016. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/262381.pdf>

cone, have increasingly become ambassadors and deputy chiefs of missions, a long-overdue achievement considering USIA's integration into the State Department 18 years ago.

Yet enduring challenges remain for PD professionals. They include:

- **Confronting the gap between ideals and reality within the United States with foreign citizens** as domestic news is often picked up and relayed overseas by foreign outlets. News stories on violence, police brutality, and the issues American society confronts every day, such as racism and discrimination, illustrate our enduring value of transparency. But they can also undermine messages about American pluralism, inclusiveness, and tolerance with non-American audiences. PD professionals must be better prepared to address and contextualize domestic events in the field rather than stick to sanitized talking points that do not resonate with foreign citizens.
- **Working within a stymied bureaucratic structure** is difficult for PD professionals to effectively engage abroad. It is essential for diplomats to stay engaged with various stakeholders and maintain important conversations about the United States and its bilateral relationships. Yet there are several roadblocks to ensuring that there is sufficient strategic planning, budgeting, and research to support public diplomacy operations. The bifurcation of PD budgets at State (i.e., the Educational and Cultural Exchange budget and public diplomacy funding stream in the Diplomatic and Consular Programs budget), antiquated laws (i.e., Privacy Act of 1974 and Paperwork

Reduction Act of 1980), and multiple, sometimes contradictory, strategic planning efforts can slow processes and constrain consistent engagement.³

For the time being, the State Department has a very experienced and able caretaker of the public diplomacy family of bureaus in an acting under secretary for public diplomacy and public affairs who is a career FSO. In the past, under secretaries for PD have held short tenures and there have been long gaps in political leadership. Going forward, consistent leadership that focuses on the management of PD operations within State is needed.

Once confirmed, a priority for the incoming under secretary should be to get out in the field and meet with chiefs of mission (COMs) and PD officers. It is critical that s/he gains a firsthand understanding of the environments in which diplomats are working and witness their public diplomacy activities up close—meetings in Washington will not suffice. S/he should also have a strong grasp of U.S. foreign policy and international relations and know how to run campaigns to promote policy, as focusing on communications or marketing as a distinct effort from policy is not adequate. Last, it is imperative that s/he develops strong relationships with the FSOs in Washington and in the field, as they are the linchpins for maintaining thousands of relationships with key influencers that have been developed for decades, across administrations. Establishing a two-way dialogue between the field and Washington to understand which campaign themes and activities resonate the best with local audiences is essential.

Thought leaders and experts consulted for this study made the following additional recommendations for PD going forward:

- **Focus on initiatives that work instead of creating new ones:** There are more than 90 educational and cultural public diplomacy programs directed by Washington, not to mention the scores that originate in the field in response to the demands of local audiences. Before making adjustments or adding new programs to an already-taxed system, the incoming administration should first work with career PD professionals to determine the impact and reach of existing programs.
- **Empower public diplomacy professionals in the field:** PD professionals at U.S. embassies know their local audiences and how policy priorities can translate within the local context; it is important to listen to them and empower them to be responsive to their environments. Not every message or program from Washington will work for every audience. The under secretary and his/her staff need to trust experts and diplomats in the field who can work to shape messages and activities that resonate with the people they need to connect with.
- **Invest in our public diplomacy professionals:** Public diplomacy is primarily about relationships. Foreign and civil service officers are our greatest asset as they are the ones who have cultivated, maintained, and strengthened relationships with key actors through long periods of American history, often in tenuous situations. The Trump administration must focus on their professional

³ U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, “2016 Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy & International Broadcasting,” 10–12.

development and advancement within the State Department. It should also put a premium on recruiting political appointees with technical expertise needed to advance effective PD programs.

- **Continue to take audience research and impact evaluation seriously:** Paying close attention to audience research to help shape and inform programming will be essential moving forward, as will understanding the impact of programs and the reasons for their successes or setbacks. The Obama administration has made significant strides in developing its capacity to do longitudinal impact studies of PD programs. Incoming officials should further develop this work and help decisionmakers and field officers be iterative in their approaches to connect with critical foreign audiences. While the benefits of PD programs are often difficult to capture as they manifest over years, if not decades, it is critical for the maturation of the field and sustaining support from Congress to improve our ability to measure and demonstrate the impact of these efforts.
- **Change the conversation with Congress:** PD requires a toolkit of information, cultural, and educational activities and is not defined by one particular program. It is essential that conversations with members of Congress and their staffs emphasize how PD programs and tools work together and how they apply to various global and bilateral challenges. Too often, briefings are program or bureau specific rather than giving our legislators, and the public, a better understanding of the role that PD as a whole plays in our national security.
- **Seek partnerships with private and civil society organizations:** PD is not just about U.S. government-sponsored programs but complemented by a wide range of other ways that Americans come into contact with and develop relationships with foreigners. PD professionals need to continue to partner with organizations like the Smithsonian Institution and Gen Next Foundation, while also seeking out new partnerships, to receive input about its programs and execute them.

These general recommendations emphasize the big-picture successes and remaining challenges from the Obama administration. Below are more targeted issues that address specific dimensions of PD that are currently relevant to the foreign policy landscape: building and strengthening alliances; countering violent extremism; and dispelling disinformation directed by state actors.

Building and Strengthening Alliances through Public Diplomacy

In the past eight years, the Obama administration has aimed to build and strengthen networks with citizens abroad by focusing on shared values and leveraging America's soft power through education, technology, and our entrepreneurial culture. This has been demonstrated through the creation of the Young Leaders Initiatives and the Global Entrepreneurship Summit; the continuation and strengthening of key educational and professional development programs like Fulbright and the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP); and the production of digital-first platforms to distribute information campaigns on short- and long-term foreign policy initiatives.

Successes

- **Themes:** PD themes have resonated with foreign audiences when the United States is seen as a credible messenger for those topics. These have mainly included: the environment, with a focus on climate and oceans; youth empowerment; women’s empowerment; and entrepreneurship support and development. Themes that also work to promote liberal institutionalism and our security alliances since World War II have been vital for our national security efforts.
- **Tools:** A variety of PD tools have developed via field and Washington initiatives. Educational and cultural tools have included the creation of more vibrant alumni networks, the White House’s Young Leaders Initiatives (YALI, YSEALI, and YLAI), the strengthening of the IVLP and Fulbright programs, and cultural heritage preservation programs. With the help of the Smithsonian Institute, more than 100 American Spaces worldwide have been revitalized and have increasingly become platforms to convene discussions and networks—and for foreign citizens to access U.S. educational opportunities through the EducationUSA network, Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs), and English language instruction. IIP has significantly increased digital outreach tools for U.S. embassies. Last, the State Department continues to provide critical grants to local civil society organizations whose work is aligned with U.S. values and goals.
- **Structures:** There have been some successes in moving public diplomacy closer to policymaking over the last eight years through the creation of more leadership roles at the State Department and the advancement of FSOs on a PD career track to ambassadorial roles. There has also been more focus on strategic planning, research, and evaluation by the outgoing under secretary, in addition to encouraging calculated risk-taking so that officers can reasonably experiment with messages and activities that resonate with key audiences.

Enduring Challenges

- **Themes:** A core challenge facing public diplomacy is the gap between our stated values and our reality. When foreign citizens see incidents of racism, xenophobia, sexism, corruption, human rights abuses, or protectionism in the United States, it undermines the values of inclusiveness, tolerance, pluralism, equality, and justice that our diplomats have long worked to promote.
- **Tools:** Despite the large increase in digital platforms—roughly 200 representing various parts of the State Department—there remains a lack of digital literacy among PD professionals and a risk aversion to engaging foreign audiences online in dialogue. There is also still a siloed approach to PD instead of using a combination of educational, cultural, and informational tools to amplify policy efforts.
- **Structure:** There are multiple structural challenges that PD professionals face at the State Department. The primary challenge is the lack of foreign policy clarity and multiple strategic directions voiced by the White House, secretary of state, under secretary for PD, assistant secretaries in regional and functional bureaus, and ambassadors. It is important that PD professionals in the field and in Washington are able to establish viable feedback loops on the

impact of PD activities based on audience research, digital analytics, and impact evaluations. There must be a focus on how to determine outcomes, and not just outputs. This requires putting a higher premium on strategic planning; monitoring and evaluation; and professional development for PD professionals. In addition, accessing tools and program funds can be difficult because of rigid procurement requirements.

Prescriptions

- **Themes:** Foundational American values have underpinned post–World War II alliances and multilateral institutions and should continue to be at the forefront of our diplomatic engagement. These include standing for democratic governance and human rights at home and abroad. The United States should also continue to support American businesses overseas and promote themes of economic and social entrepreneurship. American businesses are likely to become more important voices in U.S. soft power as they have an interest in managing the environmental implications of climate change, ensuring a stable and peaceful business climate, verifying that their supply chains and operations are free of human rights abuses and graft, and giving back to communities in which they operate and serve. There is also the important theme of American philanthropy and volunteerism, which puts a focus on American civil society and the ethos of civic engagement. As mentioned, it is vital that our U.S. missions abroad have more autonomy in determining how to best communicate these values to their local audiences.
- **Tools:** The PD toolkit is vast. To meet their objectives, PD professionals in the field should use a mix of approaches, including cultural and educational programs (e.g., exchanges and English language education) and American Spaces as convening platforms for open discussions. Foreign audiences continue to demand English language instruction, which PD officers can provide, in addition to facilitating access to American educational institutions through EducationUSA. There is also an opportunity to connect with program alumni more strategically, and for missions abroad to focus on strengthening these relationships over the next four years. Professional development and youth empowerment programs, such as the Young Leaders Initiatives and Youth Councils, should continue to emphasize the value of volunteerism in improving their environments and working toward social justice. In addition, the U.S. government should make better use of public-private partnerships and strengthen its collaboration with one of the most renowned U.S. institutions, the Smithsonian, as a cultural envoy for the United States. The Trump administration should also seek to leverage relationships with the American research community—through the Diplomacy Lab or specific partnerships forged by PD professionals abroad or in Washington—to design activities that resonate more strongly with foreign audiences. In addition to academia, PD professionals must actively seek out partnerships with American businesses while also working to promote travel and tourism to the United States. This is where public diplomacy can help support economic statecraft goals.
- **Structures:** The structural challenges in Washington surrounding intra- and interagency coordination, budgeting, strategic planning, and legal restrictions will need to continue to be reviewed by PD leadership and Congress. Leaders must put a higher premium on strategic planning and research and evaluation, while Congress must consider the legal restrictions that

limit the research that PD officers can do (i.e., Privacy Act of 1974 and Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980). Washington should work to lessen the burden that PD professionals face in being grant administrators at post and free them to facilitate relationships with key audiences. In the field, the United States should use its unique convening power to bring together various stakeholders and initiate important conversations about the United States and its bilateral and regional relationships. Moreover, the incoming PD leadership should prioritize communication with Congress, ensuring that they understand the authorities and resources that enable public diplomacy activities, the value of PD to our bilateral relationships and international institutions, and the networks PD professionals nurture through ups and downs in bilateral relations and global affairs.

Countering Violent Extremism through Public Diplomacy

In November 2016, the CSIS Commission on Countering Violent Extremism released its report, *Turning Point*, which provides the U.S. administration a comprehensive strategy to counter violent extremism, based on 15 years of experimentation and learning. The report’s assessment is that while the U.S. government has invested much in hard power tactics to fight terrorism, it has overlooked the soft power necessary to blunt the appeal of extremist ideologies. Weakening violent extremism is a generational challenge and lasting results will likely not be seen in the next four years. But it is paramount that steady, consistent attention and leadership be applied to stop people from being radicalized to violence in the first place. Public diplomacy has a critical role to play in advancing this strategy.

The role of public diplomacy in helping to counter violent extremism is to leverage American soft power and help inoculate and dissuade foreign citizens from being drawn to extremist ideologies and narratives. While difficult to measure, there have been some successful efforts to counter violent extremism via public diplomacy and U.S. international media campaigns, tools, and structures. Yet core challenges remain in knowing how to geographically target and compete with extremists’ narratives. The fact that the U.S. government lacks credibility as a messenger and partner with key foreign audiences is a significant barrier. Finally, although the U.S. government recognizes that it cannot just be against something—it has to be for something—it has struggled to identify an affirmative message with broad appeal that connects to genuine opportunities and pathways in people’s lives.

Successes

- **Themes:** The most effective messages to counter violent extremism are those that convincingly convey that such groups do not offer a viable pathway and are not what they purport to be. It is important that campaigns not just be about religious extremism, but about all forms of extremism, to avoid perceptions of bias or hypocrisy.
- **Tools:** The U.S. government, recognizing it is not always the most credible messenger with target audiences, has increased its partnerships with third-party organizations in the private sector and civil society abroad. In addition to better identifying these partners, the Global Engagement Center has sharpened the use of data, audience research, and impact evaluations to inform its

campaigns. However, the Privacy Act of 1974 inhibits State in conducting audience research about extremists' activities online. Traditional educational and cultural programs like academic exchanges and professional development programs have continued to be helpful in transforming people's views of the United States through personal experience. On the media front, empowering independent news agencies through grants and convening journalists from Muslim majority countries have been helpful in challenging extremists' narratives through credible local voices.⁴

- **Structures:** The Global Engagement Center, the focal point for counterterrorism messaging at the State Department, has helped improve interagency coordination and synchronization of strategic communications campaigns to combat extremists' narratives. There has also been more openness to bringing in academic and private-sector expertise to influence PD efforts. Last, a decentralized approach has helped U.S. embassies to design programs that reach and influence local audiences.

Enduring Challenges

- **Themes:** In developing themes that are effective for using PD to counter violent extremism, there are three challenges: settling on a shared definition of CVE; developing trust with the communities we need to work with; and recognizing that U.S. strength does not come from "countering" and being on the defense, but from proactively developing networks and advancing a positive vision with target audiences. It is becoming more challenging for the United States to be a credible voice for tolerance and inclusion, given increasing division, inequality, and suspicion of the "other" in our own society.
- **Tools:** The U.S. government is not empowering enough credible voices in the CVE field, in part because of a lack of resources for CVE-specific activities. Civil society abroad needs financial support, especially via small, flexible grants targeted at building community resilience to extremism and intervening with individuals drawn to violence. This requires more agile funding and programming at U.S. embassies. This can be difficult when PD officers are working in conflict environments and where PD resources are already locked into longstanding, branded programs. In such environments, PD officers should be empowered to adapt those programs in order to do CVE work and support frontline CVE actors.
- **Structures:** There are various challenges to overcome when considering PD's structural apparatus. The first is coordination between the White House and the Departments of State and Defense, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the intelligence community (IC). Despite the increased focus on CVE, the U.S. government's efforts are stymied by a lack of clarity regarding which actors are in the lead for many parts of the CVE agenda. Within the State Department, incoming PD leaders must ensure that they stay abreast of relevant research and developments on CVE issues and clearly articulate roles and responsibilities. There should also be a coordinator for the under secretary who identifies the appropriate PD tools and activities that

⁴ While not a focus of this paper, U.S. international media plays a critical role in the United States' outreach abroad. The Broadcasting Board of Governors' Raise Your Voice program, for instance, has used the Middle East Broadcasting Network (MBN) to call attention to local heroes who work every day to combat the influence of violent extremists.

could contribute to CVE objectives, in close coordination with the CT/CVE Bureau at the State Department. There also is not sufficient professional education and development opportunities to support PD professionals taking on assignments where CVE is an important dimension of their work.

Prescriptions

- **Themes:** The United States must develop a stronger narrative that focuses on integrating individuals into the local, regional, and global economy. A more positive narrative would encourage greater tolerance and an emphasis on dignity and justice; generally, this means supporting the development of societies in which people, including minorities and the most vulnerable, have plentiful avenues to find meaning and belonging.
- **Tools:** In order to promote more inclusive themes, the U.S. government needs to empower local civil society actors to spread positive messages organically and ensure that they have the operating space and political support to do so. PD officers should also support the creation and dissemination of books and literature that promote tolerance in schools and via mobile libraries. The State Department needs to use professional development activities such as IVLP more strategically to foster networks between foreign and American business, academic, religious, and civil society leaders to challenge extremists’ narratives and agendas.
- **Structures:** Given the people-centric nature of CVE efforts, civilian leadership is crucial. Improving inter- and intra-agency cooperation and knowing public diplomacy’s role in CVE is also essential to deconflict overlapping activities. The *Turning Point* report recommends an assistant to the president for CVE, based in the White House, to lead these efforts and enhance accountability for results. While structure is important, it is equally critical that the incoming administration demonstrates leadership on CVE and puts greater weight on soft power vis-à-vis hard power. In the field, FSOs must get out of their embassy compounds and engage and develop relationships with local leaders who need the U.S. government’s resources and support to compete with and overtake extremists’ voices on- and offline. Empowering lower-level public diplomacy officers in the field to strengthen their work is essential. Public diplomacy officers must also work closer with their development colleagues at USAID to align and synchronize CVE activities.

Dispelling Disinformation Directed by State Actors through Public Diplomacy

Increasingly we are seeing state actors direct disinformation and covert influence campaigns to shape public opinion around the world. These false narratives are often meant to undermine or muddle U.S. and allied messages and goals, making clear and concerted action more difficult. While some of the technologies and approaches are new, it is crucial to remember that U.S. public diplomacy has responded successfully to similar threats in its history. Many elements of U.S. public diplomacy and international broadcasting were created specifically to defy adversary influence during the Cold War; this experience contains valuable lessons.

Successes

- **Themes:** The United States has historically stood for transparency, liberal democracy, and pluralism, which have proved attractive themes to foreign audiences in the past. America's greatest successes in twentieth-century public diplomacy—the outreach of Woodrow Wilson, Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy, and Ronald Reagan—advanced a powerful and inclusive vision of the future.
- **Tools:** In the era of social media, when audiences can always find material that confirms their preexisting biases or worldview, the most important tactic is to support local voices who are more credible to audiences than a remote voice like that of the U.S. government or Kremlin-sponsored media for that matter. Local fact-checking organizations, like StopFake in Ukraine, have been able to keep the news media and politicians more accountable. Online, the U.S. government has helped develop techniques and tools to prevent internet blocking. Finally, while not a focus of this paper, the U.S. government's international media arm, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, has focused its efforts to "inform, engage, and connect" citizens in the regions most exposed to authoritarian propaganda. New initiatives include the *Current Time* program in Russian and the site www.polygraph.info operated by Voice of America and Radio Free Europe. Finally, the Fulbright, Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX), and other State Department-managed programs are important mechanisms for strengthening societies and leaders on the frontlines of dispelling disinformation.
- **Structures:** The Public Affairs Sections in U.S. embassies throughout Eurasia are essential to maintaining relationships with foreign citizens and coordinating with allied governments to counter negative influence on both bilateral and regional levels. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) PD apparatus also provides a coordinating platform for projects such as Hromadske TV in Ukraine, in which the United States has been one of many donors. The United States also partners with the European Union's External Action Service's counter-disinformation project.

Enduring Challenges

- **Themes:** The powerful and inclusive vision of liberal democracy once articulated by twentieth-century leaders no longer holds the same appeal to foreign audiences. According to the recent World Values Survey, citizens even in liberal democracies are becoming more cynical about democracy's value to society and more open to authoritarian alternatives.⁵ Designs for effective campaigns to deflect authoritarian influence are challenged by the fractures within the American/Western narrative. Appeals to pragmatism do not resonate as strongly as emotional appeals or conspiracy theories tailored to affirm preexisting views. Moreover, in target

⁵ Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk, "The Danger of Deconsolidation: The Democratic Disconnect," *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 3 (July 2016), <http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/sites/default/files/Foa%26Mounk-27-3.pdf>; Pippa Norris, "It's not just Trump. Authoritarian populism is rising across the West. Here's why," World Values Survey, March 11, 2016, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSEventsShow.jsp?ID=255>.

communities (as in the United States itself) facts do not seem to matter as much as people’s interpretations. Attempts to sow distrust and reduce confidence in the American/Western narrative and in liberal democracy itself among a skeptical and apathetic audience seems to be working.

- **Tools:** Implementing PD campaigns is also a challenge as the space for civil society and educational exchanges is shrinking in Eurasia and around the world. In particular, the Kremlin has targeted not just the news media, but nongovernmental organizations and civil society leaders to ensure that the free exchange of ideas is suppressed. In addition to canceling the FLEX program between Russian and American youth, the Kremlin has completely shut down American Spaces outside of the U.S. embassy in Moscow. Without American Spaces, the United States has few platforms to maintain regular relationships with Russian citizens who are interested in American history, society, and culture and perhaps studying in and/or visiting the United States. Because of this closing space, the United States has not been able to conduct the kind of 360-degree audience research needed to focus public diplomacy activities to reopen spaces for engagement.
- **Structures:** There has not been enough regional planning for the United States to work with our allies and synchronize and amplify each other’s activities. While Western nations largely agree on what needs to be done, they have failed to mount a sustained or coordinated campaign to push back on Russian meddling or disinformation thus far. Local partner organizations complain about support coming in small installments, which precludes long-term planning and makes them uncompetitive with hostile external media or local apolitical commercial media.

Prescriptions

- **Themes:** We need to articulate in the broadest terms who we as “the West” are, what we want, why we want it, and what our goals and strategic interests are. In present conditions it is important that American values—such as human rights—be presented as universal rather than geographically specific. This said, in terms of narratives, PD professionals need to tell stories that are not about the United States as much as about local leaders and change-makers. Our programs and narratives must resonate with and be responsive to local audiences. It should not be solely focused on countering the narratives of others. The U.S. government should communicate that people have an inherent right to accurate information and acknowledge that this is a battleground of ideas and worldviews. We can and should defend post-WW II liberal institutionalism and multilateralism, and may find that the twenty-first-century global development agenda—with an internationally accepted set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—could provide a framework to advance such a vision.
- **Tools:** PD tactics to counter disinformation need to be revamped. The White House and State Department should work with Congress on legislation to support properly resourced and stable public diplomacy platforms and programs in countries and regions most affected by disinformation campaigns. In terms of research, the State Department needs to do a better job of listening to target audiences—to understand their needs and the impact (or not) of PD programs and messaging efforts. This means partnering with local NGOs that understand these audiences

better. Audiences consistently request not only news but also entertainment in local languages like Russian, so that they are not dependent on Russian entertainment and absorbing the Russian worldview in the process. Producing this content will require partnering with local news and entertainment professionals. The State Department should try to reopen American Spaces in Russia beyond the U.S. embassy in Moscow. Finally, it should be remembered that U.S. tactics in the Cold War included direct negotiations with the USSR on information/propaganda issues. If media has become an armament and information a tool of policy influence, the United States needs a negotiating process that puts public diplomacy at the center.

- **Structures:** There are two forms of coordination within the U.S. government that need to improve. First, the intelligence community needs to do a better job of declassifying and releasing intelligence that demonstrates Russian and other states' attempts to influence political and social debates and sow doubt and suspicion within the United States and between the United States and its allies. Second, the U.S. government should bring together a brain trust of experts on disinformation (e.g., academics and private sector) to inform the U.S. government's approach to this issue. Within the apparatus of U.S. public diplomacy, the information teams within IIP should be decentralized so that their information campaigns can be more responsive to local audiences. Finally, the U.S. government needs to develop a regional strategy with European and Central Asian countries to rebuild a common agenda for security and development, and to offer the kind of vision that will not only inspire our friends, but in time transform the conditions that lead people to position themselves as our adversaries.

Conclusion

Public Diplomacy has been a central pillar of American statecraft for more than 60 years. Creating and maintaining our relationships abroad with thought leaders, innovators, and change-makers who influence the conduct of international affairs requires continued American commitment and the strategic investment of resources in public diplomacy over the long term. It also requires us to live up to our values of inclusiveness, tolerance, and pluralism at home.

The participants involved in the CSIS- and CPD-organized workshop hope that the incoming administration will work closely with the PD career professionals who are the linchpins for maintaining these relationships and focus on upholding programs that have proven effective and popular in creating greater understanding about American politics, history, culture, and society. This understanding is foundational to facilitating strong partnerships with state and nonstate actors that will advance U.S. national security objectives moving forward.

Building and Strengthening Alliances through Public Diplomacy			
	Themes	Tools	Structures
SUCCESES	Themes where the United States has credibility: the environment, with a focus on climate and oceans; youth empowerment; women’s empowerment; and entrepreneurship support and development. Themes that also work to promote liberal institutionalism and our historic security alliances	Alumni networks, Young Leaders Initiatives, IVLP, Fulbright, cultural heritage programs, Smithsonian-supported American Spaces, EducationUSA network, MOOCs (massive open online courses), English language instruction, digital outreach programs, and grants to local civil society organizations in the field	More leadership roles at the State Department and the advancement of PD-coned FSOs to ambassadorial roles; greater focus on strategic planning and research and evaluation
ENDURING CHALLENGES	United States lacks credibility as a messenger and partner when foreign citizens do not see the country as inclusive, tolerant, and pluralistic	Lack of digital literacy among PD professionals and a risk aversion to engaging foreign audiences online in dialogue; a siloed approach to using PD tools instead of employing a combination of educational, cultural, and informational ones to amplify policy efforts	Accessing tools and program funds under rigid procurement requirements; lack of foreign policy clarity and multiple strategic directions for PD voiced by the White House and different levels of the State Department; legal restrictions to conducting adequate audience research and completing sound evaluations; security limitations in the field that restrict PD officers’ movement and ability to engage with foreign citizens
PRESCRIPTIONS	Understanding that they must be practiced at home to be credible, evergreen American values must be at the forefront of the next administration’s engagement overseas; supporting American businesses abroad and advancing themes of economic and social entrepreneurship; promoting American philanthropy and volunteerism, which puts a focus on American civil society and our core values	Successful tools identified above must continue to be employed; better use of public-private partnerships, in addition to a stronger partnership with the Smithsonian; leveraging relationships with the American research community; actively seeking out partnerships with American businesses abroad while also working to promote travel and tourism to the United States	U.S. missions abroad should have more autonomy in determining how to best communicate U.S. foreign policy goals and American values to local audiences; intra- and interagency coordination, budgeting, strategic planning, and legal restrictions need to be reviewed by PD leadership in Washington and by Congress; Congress must consider the legal restrictions that limit the research that professionals can do

Countering Violent Extremism through Public Diplomacy			
	Themes	Tactics	Structures
SUCCESES	Extremist groups do not offer a viable pathway and are not what they purport to be	Partnerships with third-party organizations and actors; sharpened use of data, audience research, and impact evaluations; selective use of educational and cultural programs; empowering independent news agencies through grants; BBG Raise Your Voice campaign	Global Engagement Center and better interagency coordination; more coordination with academic experts and private-sector entities; decentralization of activities to support the field; expansion of CT Bureau at State to encompass CVE and serve as a focal point for coordination on CVE efforts
ENDURING CHALLENGES	Lacks credibility as a messenger and partner; lack of developing trust with Muslim communities; lack of recognizing that our strength does not come from “countering” and being on the defense, but proactively developing networks with positive messages	Privacy Act of 1974; not empowering enough credible voices in the field; lack of agile funding and programming for CVE-specific activities; restricted movement for PD officers working in conflict environments; PD resources locked into longstanding, branded programs	Lack of intra- and interagency coordination; lack of sector-wide clarity about which actors take the lead in many parts of the CVE agenda
PRESCRIPTIONS	Develop a stronger, more positive narrative that is less focused on preventing radicalization than on integrating individuals into the local, regional, and global economy and encourages creating more tolerant spaces for people to live with justice and dignity	Promote more inclusive themes; empower NGOs currently working in CVE to create space for local actors to spread positive messages organically; disseminate books and educational materials that promote tolerance; use professional development activities such as IVLP more strategically; foster networks between foreign and American business, academic, religious, and civil society leaders	Gatekeeper to identify relevant research on CVE-PD issues and support greater monitoring and evaluation of activities; designated official for the under secretary for public diplomacy that can pull from and align all of the PD tools to support CVE goals; develop professional educational and developmental opportunities to support PD professionals taking on assignments where CVE is an important dimension of their work

Dispelling Disinformation Spread by State Actors through Public Diplomacy			
	Themes	Tools	Structures
SUCCESES	In the past, effective themes have linked to values of transparency, liberal democracy, and pluralism; America’s greatest successes in public diplomacy included a powerful and inclusive vision of the future	Support of local voices who are more credible to audiences than remote ones; local fact-checking organizations, like StopFake in Ukraine; techniques and tools to prevent internet blocking; <i>Current Time</i> program in Russian; educational programs such as Fulbright and FLEX	Public diplomacy structures in the field, such as Public Affairs Sections; NATO’s PD apparatus and joint projects such as Hromadske TV in Ukraine; partnerships such as with the European Union’s External Action Service
ENDURING CHALLENGES	Appeals to pragmatism do not resonate as strongly as emotional appeals or conspiracy theories tailored to affirm preexisting views; in target communities, facts don’t seem to matter as much as people’s interpretations; sowing distrust and reducing confidence in the American/Western narrative among a skeptical and apathetic audience seems to be working	Shrinking space for civil society and educational exchanges in Russia and its periphery; shutdown of American Spaces in Russia; cancellation of the FLEX program between Russian and American youth; lack of audience research to understand how to better connect with citizens in these environments	Not enough regional planning for the United States to work with allies and synchronize and amplify each other’s activities; support given to local partners in small installments, preventing long-term planning and engagement
PRESCRIPTIONS	Articulate in the broadest terms who we as ‘the West’ are, what we want, why we want it, and what our goals and strategic interests are; present values—such as human rights—as universal, not selective; tell stories that are not about the West as much as about our local audiences; communicate that people have an inherent right to accurate information and acknowledge that this is a battle of ideas and worldviews; defend post-WW II liberal institutionalism and multilateralism; leverage the twenty-first-century global development agenda to advance this vision	Work with Congress on legislation to support properly resourced and stable public diplomacy platforms and programs; listen to local audiences to understand their needs and the impact of PD programs; partner with local NGOs who understand these audiences better; provide news and entertainment in languages like Russian and partner with local producers; try to reopen PD platforms in Russia; consider direct negotiations with Russia on influence operations and disinformation campaigns	Declassify and release intelligence, as appropriate, to substantiate Russian attempts to influence political and social debates and sow doubt and suspicion within the United States and between the United States and our allies; convene a brain trust of experts on disinformation (academics, private sector, etc.) to inform local NGOs and civil society networks abroad; decentralize information teams so information campaigns can be more responsive to local audiences; develop a regional strategy with European and Central Asian countries to rebuild a common agenda for security and development

Acknowledgments

CSIS and CPD would like to thank Adnan Kifayat, Moira Whelan, Dr. Vivian Walker, Dr. Nick Cull, Dr. Shawn Powers, and all of the workshop participants for their valuable contributions to this paper and to the field of public diplomacy.

This report is made possible by general support to CSIS. No direct sponsorship has contributed to its publication.

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