

Nov 04, 2016 by [Craig Hayden](#)

Facing Resource Nationalists With a Clear, Credible Public Diplomacy ^[1]

Joshua Kurlantzick, in "[Can Public Diplomacy Counter Resource Nationalism?](#)," paints a rather alarming geo-strategic picture for the United States. The recent Shanghai Cooperation Organization showcased the warming relations between oil-rich Iran and Russia with the budding super-consumer, China.

Kurlantzick argues that these nations, along with Venezuela and Bolivia, constitute a nascent alliance of authoritarian regimes united not so much by ideology, but in their opposition to the United States. They represent a resurgence of "resource nationalism" not seen since the early 20th century.

Kurlantzick goes to great lengths to show how increased coordination between these nations herald problems for the United States. To forestall this future, he offers two basic strategies for the U.S. -- peel China away from the authoritarian oil producers, and engage in more vigorous value-driven public diplomacy.

This last point is understandably short in this essay, yet Kurlantzick's short treatment of PD raises some important questions. He cites Julia Sweig's study for the Council on Foreign Relations, that showed U.S. support for democratic institution building yielded significant gains in popularity. What Kurlantzick does not elaborate is what a compelling promotion of our values might actually look like. The future he depicts seems ever more likely if the U.S. continues to tout its current brand of "democratization" in the Middle East.

Contemporary U.S. foreign policy rhetoric has done little to encourage increased dialogue with foreign publics, and much to drive the "resource nationalists" into each others company. Kurlantzick is right to call for more public diplomacy, yet it appears a rhetoric that credibly conveys the merits of American values has yet to be communicated.
