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A Strategic Approach to U.S. Public Diplomacy

By Barry A. Sanders

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CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy

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A Strategic Approach to U.S. Public Diplomacy

Americans sit uneasily on the world's perch. They obsess over what other people think of them. It was not always so. More than one hundred years ago, the astute English observer James Bryce commented that "[the Americans] are now not more sensitive to external opinion than the nations of Western Europe, and less so than the Russians … A foreign critic who tries to flout or scourge them no longer disturbs their composure; his jeers are received with amusement or indifference."[1] Throughout the Cold War, the Soviet propaganda machine pumped out a steady flow of attacks on everything the United States did and stood for. Critics in Europe, Latin America, and Asia staged frequent "Yankee Go Home" demonstrations. The People's Republic of China incessantly referred to Americans as "running dogs of capitalism." Westerners sympathetic to the USSR, including the 10 to 15 percent of voters who regularly voted for the communist party in France, Italy, and other friendly countries, echoed every attack. English philosopher Bertrand Russell declaimed,

> The United States today is a force for suffering, reaction and counter-revolution the world over. Wherever people are hungry and exploited, wherever they are oppressed and humiliated, the agency of this evil exists with the support and approval of the United States…. [The United States intervened in Vietnam… to protect the continued control over the wealth of the region by American capitalists…. People have come to see the men who control the United States Government as brutal bullies, acting in their own economic interest and exterminating any people foolhardy enough to struggle against this naked exploitation and aggression.[2]

In those days, scathing criticism did not faze Americans. They dismissed the vitriol. Americans saw the comments of their adversaries as angry words, nothing more. Now, with no organized adversary (but plenty of disorganized adversaries), Americans

engage in perplexed self-examination as a response to every negative image expressed abroad.

While polling shows that, over time, positive foreign perceptions of America are more common than negative ones[3], the negative views are the ones more frequently and more loudly voiced in the streets and the media of the world. People who support America and its positions may feel that, as the leading world power, it does not need an active expression of their approval. Applause is not news and does not find its way into the newspapers. Also, in the case of America, with its democratic system and its responsiveness to criticism, those who object to its policies hope that America will listen and be swayed by their views. There is some flattery implicit in these attacks. As the United States prepared for the 2003 war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the world erupted in anger expressed against America. Hardly a critical word was uttered against the tyrant Hussein, except seemingly obligatory expressions about his being a nasty dictator who should be removed somehow (but not by any forceful manner which the United States proposed).[4] Was it that the United States and its policies were so much more despised than Hussein, or was it that, unlike Washington, Baghdad was impervious to criticism?

In many nations in which free expression and demonstrations are not permitted, venting against alleged American treachery is practically the only state-sanctioned form of angry public political speech. Finally, expressions of the negatives may predominate in foreign discourse because anti-American predispositions are concentrated in the minds of those abroad who form the media and cultural elite, who regularly articulate their views publicly, and who are inclined to an illiberal point of view.

Americans are wise to be more thin-skinned than in the past and to take the critics seriously. The world has changed. It was

always true that the images of America and of Americans affected commerce, immigration, and tourism. Now more than ever, foreign views of the United States also affect its national security. Security, national and otherwise, is the ability to control outcomes. It is the ability to be sure that ventures end well and unfortunate events either do not occur or their consequences are avoided or minimized. The American capacity to control outcomes unilaterally was never complete, but today everyone realizes that the United States cannot achieve its ends or confront threats to its welfare alone. In the 1990s Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called the United States "the indispensable nation" in its role in the Bosnian conflict. She meant that the United States was a required participant in any major international engagement that would succeed. Until the United States joined the project, the European Union had met no success in dealing with the former Yugoslavia. The United States was the critical ingredient. She did not assert that it could have succeeded by acting alone.

The risks of going it alone were on display in the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Despite the administration's claim of a "coalition of the willing" of over thirty nations, the refusal to participate and active interference of major nations such as France, Russia, China, and Germany harmed the war effort and tagged the entire engagement with the opprobrium of "unilateralism." Turkey denied the United States entry to Iraq through its land, and the United Nations refused to take the burdens of occupation off of the shoulders of the United States. The United States bore the entire financial cost of the war. Post-war pacification was delayed by years.

Some of the increasing reliance on coalitions to solve international issues reflects shifting relative power relations. The United States, for all its economic power and unique military capability, is not far ahead of some other nations when they act together. Both its economic and military leads will increasingly

become subject to challenge by aggregations of countries. In China's case the growth is both economic and military. In the case of the European Union, there is economic growth arising from the admission of new members and consolidation. Both can compete with the United States more closely than in the past. Also, the capability to frustrate American purposes grows when problems find their way to international bodies such as the United Nations and NATO, where the formal influence of the United States is as one vote among many. The power of the United States to persuade other nations to follow its lead on their own or in the context of a multinational organization is steadily shrinking as the spread of democracy and universal open communications have made many more national leaders, including autocratic leaders, responsive to the opinions of their populations. The United States can no longer discount the passions of the "Arab street" or any other street. The careful effort to provide Osama bin Laden and Islamic burial at sea is a reflection of this realization. All of these changes mean that the importance of the image of America abroad to the United States' foreign policy and its national security continues to grow. Resentments prevent collaboration. The future of American power lies in its ability to be at the center of all the varied webs of international relationships. The United States' reputation among the leaders and the people of other nations determines how well it can assume this role.

Another change propelling the importance of the image of America to national security is a paradoxical result of the United States' large military machine—the rise of asymmetrical warfare by non-state actors. Today's enemies frustrate the United States with small arms, conventional explosives, and ideas. The United States has declared a worldwide war against terror. It is actively fighting insurgencies in a number of countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Negative images of the United States are heavy burdens in these fights. In the Vietnam War, the United States spoke of the

need to win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese. However, the American military had no idea how to do so, made little effort to do so, and failed in that effort and in the war. In Iraq and Afghanistan, this objective moved to the center of military strategy in American counterinsurgency doctrine. In June 2010 a young Afghan university student declared, "The Americans are here for their own reasons, for their own benefit. If they really wanted to bring peace to Afghanistan, they could have done so already, whoever was in charge."[5] To win in Afghanistan, the United States has to turn this image around. Relying on the Pentagon to burnish the nation's reputation speaks volumes on the role that images play in national security.

Given the importance of the images of the nation, how can the United States enhance them to its advantage? Of course, the ability of government to influence imagery of the nation is limited. Images of America are not features of America or its government; they are creatures of the minds of people abroad. Many of the images have been developed over centuries and change only gradually. The United States and its people can take actions that add to the store of images, but they cannot erase what is already in people's memories.

Still, with a well conceived selective approach, much can be achieved. The United States must not lose sight of the fact that its historic and current store of imagery in the world's minds has been and remains a most valuable asset. America is still the globe's finest national brand. This truth leads to a fundamental operational principle: do not sell to people what they have already bought. Instead, focus on the image problems that affect the United States, and deal with them. Even America's archenemies recognize that it developed a republican and democratic form of government and is a proponent of that philosophy. They acknowledge that it advocates personal freedom and human rights, free markets, progress, modernity, and scientific and technological advancement. Irreconcilable anti-

Americans know the United States is a rich nation—and they hate it all the more for it. They know it prizes individuality, and they scorn that. They fly American airplanes, use American computers and software, occasionally drive American cars, often wear American brands of clothing, frequently eat at McDonald's, and regularly watch American films and television. Those are undisputed features of American imagery for friend and foe alike. Admiration for them does not improve behavior. Attempts to propagate these images are redundant and meaningless at best.

This was not always so. During the Cold War, totalitarian governments were quite successful in hiding the facts of life outside from their people. The Soviet Union managed to sell to its population the idea that they were living in a worker's paradise. Richard Nixon's Kitchen Debate and the American display of consumer wares that surrounded it in Moscow made sense as an effective stroke against the negative imagery of Russian propaganda. Now, with the end of hermetically sealed societies and the growth of the Internet and global communication, only North Korea seems to have some success hiding the facts from its people. Now, the image of American wealth needs no marketing abroad.

Some well-known aspects of American life that seem like virtues to Americans can unexpectedly backfire. In the immediate aftermath of September 11, the Bush administration retained advertising executive Charlotte Beers as its undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs. She generated an advertising campaign shown in the Arab world focusing on the happy, prosperous lives of Arab Americans to counter the idea that the United States is anti-Arab or anti-Muslim. The campaign was derided for its ineffectiveness and obtuse misunderstanding of the mind-set of the Arab audience. Arabs in poor homelands know well the prosperity of their cousins who managed to do what they cannot: emigrate to the United States. Those who leave are often not admired by those who are left behind.

Prosperous Arab Americans have achieved a dream that is denied to those who cannot get visas or who for other reasons cannot follow in their footsteps. Showing the success of other Arabs rubbed salt in the wounds of thwarted ambition in societies where envy is a natural, open response. Showing that those who managed to enter through the gauntlet of American impediments to immigration are doing well is not pleasing to those left behind; it is infuriating. The Bush administration needed to understand the image of acceptance and prosperity through the lens of the average foreign Arab person's predisposition toward the émigrés.

Since there are images enough in every mind to support positive or negative opinions, attention should focus on the ways of thinking that summon the imagery. Change them and you change the expressions of imagery. Persuasion will not change predispositions against the United States based on devotion to traditional culture and religion, holding a privileged position in an old way of life, and commitment to an illiberal world view. On the other hand, predispositions based on admiration which might morph into resentment in the face of frustration, are important targets to affect opinions. These are the emotionally tinged love-hate relationships that are fluid and offer both danger and opportunity to the United States. To the extent that the American concern with its image is concentrated on national security and foreign policy, it should target its efforts on these predispositions and images that are volatile and important.

There are repeated themes voiced by people abroad who resent the United States in ways that convey disappointment in its policies or a kind of unrequited love that smacks of frustration and envy. If the United States can establish the following five positive images in the minds of foreign observers, it would deal with most of these critical concerns of foreign publics:

The United States is steadfast and honors its commitments.

The United States is an open society with an open mind.

The United States accepts its obligation to act in the interests of others.

The United States is compassionate to others and cares about their personal safety.

The United States acts consistently with its philosophical principles of democracy and human rights.

These are the images that matter in executing foreign policies based on the need for collaboration with other nations. These are the areas in which the United States must overcome foreign skepticism. There are other images that matter in international commerce and culture, such as technological skill, quality, glamour, etc., but they need not be the focus of promotion by the government. Government should legislate and negotiate the environment in which the free flow of commercial goods, services, and cultural activities flourish, but it can rely on the private sector, with its enormous advertising budgets, to trumpet these marketing virtues abroad.[6] On the other hand, advancing crucial images that affect how the nation conducts its international affairs depends on the government. Sometimes these messages can best be sent by the practice of public diplomacy—communicating directly with foreign populations about American actions and intentions. At the same time, to be trusted, the United States must live by its own description.

Considering the first of these images, steadfastness and reliability are qualities best exemplified by action rather than words. A reputation for inconstancy that comes from a history of changing administrations and priorities worries potential partners. In the giant game of poker that is international relations, being caught bluffing a

few times too many is disastrous. The concern that the United States had too often threatened and too seldom acted during the George H. W. Bush and Clinton administrations was among the motivating factors in George W. Bush's decision to carry out his threats to invade Iraq in the face of vocal international opposition.

In that case and many others, there are those who say they despise the United States both for the nature of its policies and for not clinging to them resolutely. Of course, ineffective and unwise policies should not stubbornly be pursued, and the voices of foreign and domestic critics may accurately point out flaws in policies. However, if a policy is the wise course for the United States, it is right not only to maintain it but also to explain it and defend it. Changing policies to appease foreign critics would be inappropriate and counterproductive. The people who oppose the United States because it supports a position or a group that they dislike are likely to see a change in American policy in response to such complaints as a sign of irresolution, vulnerability, and confusion. Any support the United States wins from such critics is likely to be momentary at best. Most often, such tactical reversals win no support at all. Abandoning one side of a dispute to please the followers of the other side invites the bitter enmity of the jilted party while making no friends among their enemies. Also, in insurgencies, as in Afghanistan, people who have to choose between the Americans and the local adversaries will choose the locals, however much they might fear and despise them, if they think the Americans will abandon them.

The second image that the United States is an open society is an article of faith among Americans, but not among people elsewhere. Once in the United States, people are free to move and free to prosper if they can. The nation's reputation for opportunity for those within its borders is secure and deserved. However, the exclusionary nature of its immigration laws and even its rules affecting tourist and business visitors are legendary and deeply resented abroad. Lately,

the debates about undocumented aliens, whose illegal presence is a side effect of the exclusionary laws, have exacerbated the image of America as a closed society. The barred door turns all the good images of life in the United States into sources of resentment so that the image of closure has a multiplier effect in building ill will. "Yes, it is good, but only for the privileged few." Here too actions will trump words. An immigration reform that mixes a more generous, gracious, and efficient route for more people to make legal entry with more consistent enforcement of immigration laws (and fair treatment for the people now in the country illegally) will help. For temporary visitors, who are more numerous than immigrants, the nation must streamline its visa process and treat applicants with courtesy and efficiency that is presently lacking. Changes in these areas will not need to be sold to people; they will see them personally. As with the Arab viewers of Charlotte Beers' commercials who envied the successful émigrés, avoiding the sting of rejection prevents admiration from curdling into resentment and vengeance.

Being a physically open society is a start. The United States must also be an emotionally and intellectually open society. America's old image of being inward looking and ignorant of the rest of the world has not dissipated. It has grown. This is inconsistent with world leadership. To genuinely be open to other ideas, its government must listen to others. If the United States ignores the views of others, it adds to their resentments. The Cairo newspaper *Al-Ahram* editorialized, "We must stand up and postulate the outrageous assumption that in order for us to know the American people, appreciate their ideals and value system, they will have to know the same about us, the Arabs."[7] A fourteen-year-old Jordanian girl commented, "We should be telling the Americans what is happening here… . They don't understand us. They think they know us. I have nothing against Americans. I just don't like the way they think."[8]

Karen Hughes, when she was undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs in the George W. Bush administration, covered the world on listening tours. Since then, the Obama Administration has modestly increased the budget for public diplomacy in the State Department and instructed the embassies around the world to expand their exposure to people "outside the traditional elites" of the nations to which they are posted.[9] In his address to Cairo, President Obama, said, "There must be a sustained effort to listen to each other; to learn from each other; to respect one another; and to seek common ground."[10] These sentiments recognize the importance of this issue, but they have raised expectations and run the risk of disappointment, with its attendant dangers.

Listening to others will never be easy. Bureaucracies do not listen well to anyone. All nations, not just great powers, have their own priorities. Nations' foreign policies cannot be tailored to suit foreign opinion. However, in listening to others, the United States will learn (at least it will learn what they are thinking), and the act of listening itself is an emollient. In some ways, the relationship between the United States, in the glory of its power, and the many smaller nations of the world is metaphorically parental. To the junior partner in this relationship, there is nothing worse than being ignored. The only thing the Pakistanis have decried more than the involvement the United States has in their affairs is the period after the Afghan war of the 1980s, in which they say the United States ignored them. The act of listening will be noticed and appreciated. The efficacy of this process can be seen in the practices of American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, where consultations with village elders has become a major part of their engagement. It works.

Listening is only one step in being responsible for the well being of others. Overwhelming American power disenfranchises all non-Americans. People everywhere have become dependent on the United States to act on their behalf because it is often the only

nation that can. Americans must accept the obligations that come with unfettered power over the lives of others—the obligations to act in their interest as well as in America's own interest and to take into account their views. This is not noblesse oblige in the traditional sense, arising from self-important social pretensions or from unfairly imposed colonial mastery. It is the necessary result of having power, even legitimately attained power, over other people's futures. As Libyan rebel Ali Abdelsalam said in August 2011, "We expect more from America—they're the most powerful country, and they can do anything."[11] Therefore, Americans must be concerned with criticism from abroad to a degree that is far greater than in all prior ages when they competed with the Soviets or with a group of other powers for world leadership.

The image that America acts only in its self-interest is one of the most deeply ingrained current critiques of the United States. It is partly driven by the need of any American government to justify major foreign initiatives domestically on the basis of the self-interest of American taxpayers. The domestic arguments receive full attention abroad. Typically, there is a multiplicity of motivations for any act by the government or anyone else, and the ones emphasized will be those thought to be most persuasive to the audience in question. The skeptic abroad will latch onto the self-interested logic sold to the American audience as the only reason to act, and consider high-minded rhetoric about his nation's best interests to be a cover story. In view of the mixed motives in all such actions, the critic is seldom entirely wrong. In World War I the Wilson administration had to justify war as a way to make the world "safe for [American] democracy," as opposed to all Fourteen Points of high-minded motives that came later. When the American public heard the noble motives, they recoiled from them and the burden of international responsibility they would have imposed on the United States. Franklin Roosevelt could not justify engaging in World War II before there was an attack on American soil. In Vietnam Lyndon

Johnson needed to concoct an attack on an American destroyer as a provocation.

Nations normally act only in their own interests. The United States is unique in its pretension to broader principles and its determination to spread them by example or by intervention. People elsewhere, and not just people with an anti-American predisposition, will not take at face value American protestations of disinterested motivations. Thus, in Iraq the charge that the invasion was carried out to obtain Iraqi oil has been given worldwide currency despite the fact that the United States could have bought all the oil it wanted from Saddam Hussein if it abandoned its own boycott. When actions by the United States involve military force or occupation, the other inevitable charge is that the motivation is to assert imperial control. In its position of world power, people everywhere are alert to any sign of neocolonialism. Even non-military intervention to assist in democratic change can be resented. In August 2011 the chairman of the Egyptian secular and liberal Wafd party claimed that America does not want for Egypt to become the largest democratic country in the region… The aim of American funding for Egyptian NGOs is to create chaos and to overthrow Egyptian values and traditions."[12] Denying these accusations in a public relations campaign only gives them credence. The only cure for these charges is to be true to the principles that the United States announced for its action and, in the case of military intervention, leave when the job is over. Over time, repeated faithfulness to announced purposes will reinforce the image of acting unselfishly, and turn the critics who are subject to being turned.

Both listening to others and acting in the interest of others are special duties attending the position of world leadership. They come from the fiduciary relationship that pushes aside the usual expectations of sovereignty. Consistent therewith, there is a general expectation that the United States will show compassion for those

who suffer poverty, injury, and disease. It must not ignore a tsunami in Indonesia and Thailand, an earthquake in Haiti, or an earthquake and flood in Pakistan or Japan. It cannot be indifferent to disease and genocide in Africa. These tragedies are opportunities, and in most cases the United States has been alert and useful in being first on the scene, often ahead of the local government. For a nation searching for ways to prove its goodwill such calamities provide the demonstrations. With that in mind, the anti-American government of Myanmar and the Taliban in the mountains of Pakistan both forbade humanitarian outreach from America in the face of killer floods, claiming that the United States was really attempting to infiltrate the region with spies. In Nigeria, Muslim populations were told by their clerics to avoid polio shots because the Americans were trying to kill their children in an anti-Muslim plot. These sorts of reactions by adversaries testify to the effectiveness of massive acts of compassion in affecting predispositions toward America. Conversely, as the dominant power with a global reach, the United States' failure to appear at disaster sites promptly and effectively would invite blame for the entire catastrophe.

To make compassionate intervention work, the nation must not be shy in claiming credit—but only to the extent it is deserved. Packages of food should be marked as "A Gift from the USA." News of the work being accomplished should be broadly circulated. In the business of persuasion, there is no benefit to misplaced modesty. Besides, the display of American efforts spurs on greater gifts by other countries that wish to share the limelight.

The attention to natural disasters and disease highlight a basic fact about human existence: people care most deeply about personal safety for them and their families. This pertains to the images of America in war zones. As the United States uses lethal force in pursuit of its interests or principles or for the benefit of others, it destroys lives and shatters the sense of personal safety of many

whose lives are not directly touched. Military action will always disrupt personal security. It kills people. It closes schools, disrupts water and electricity, and wrecks buildings and roads. Plans for children's futures are set aside. Businesses are shut and family wealth obliterated. The American government sees the higher stakes. The American government might see the benefits of a more responsive, less brutal regime to be created in the country in question. The American government might see the greater safety in a region to be gained by the removal of a tyrant who is a threat to broader peace. Often, the local population sees little of that.

The counterinsurgency strategy of the United States military acknowledges that limiting collateral damage to the lives of people in war zones is critical to the image of America. More than ever in the past, it has taken on the tasks of building schools where they were destroyed or where they never existed, making water and electricity available to the civilians and policing communities to assure personal safety. Their enemies confirm the importance of this issue by sabotaging these activities. They attack their countrymen (and coreligionists) in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to demonstrate the failure of the Americans and the American-supported central government to deliver personal security. Most people are apolitical. They care deeply about their own safety and futures and those of their children. Satisfying these concerns in the midst of a destructive conflict is a struggle that is central to both winning these wars and establishing the image of compassion that is inseparable from world leadership. As a result, the United States military has become its most important tool of public diplomacy.

The final critical subject to target is the widespread image of American hypocrisy. If the United States is to maintain its leadership position in a world where it must rally other nations and people to its side, it must be seen to tell the truth. The United States is constituted in ways that invite the accusation of hypocrisy. It is a nation founded

on broad statements of principle. Its people identify as Americans not by their genealogy but by their acceptance of the liberal democratic principles of the Constitution. Over the years the principles have grown in number. In application they often conflict. Moreover, there are many times when national security dictates that principles be abandoned. In this fashion, the United States has backed numerous dictators over the years. Were it a normal nation and not founded on oft-proclaimed principles, no one would care. But it is not a normal nation, and the accusation stings. It is at the heart of a frequent sense of disappointment among foreign observers.

Advancing these five ideas globally would create a much greater receptivity to American foreign policy initiatives in this increasingly collaborative world. To do so, the United States will have to implement a modern and reinvigorated program of public diplomacy. All the tools of public diplomacy must be used. Historically, the United States had been effective in speaking to foreign publics. Through the Cold War, it used the CIA and the United States Information Agency (USIA) to reach across the Iron Curtain and inform populations that were starved for real news. In the 1990s, with the Soviet confrontation over and with news freely available in most of the world, the USIA was dismantled, its global system of facilities closed, and its radio stations transferred to the Broadcasting Board of Governors. Radio Free Europe, Voice of America, and other stations stayed on the air, but the other public diplomacy functions languished. After September 11, the Bush administration sought to rejuvenate this effort with renewed funding and attention. It tried, unsuccessfully, to broadcast advertisements on existing Middle Eastern media. It started its own radio and television broadcast networks in the Middle East, Radio Sawa and Alhurra. The State Department resumed sponsoring goodwill trips by entertainers and other cultural figures. There have been calls for it to reopen the American libraries that used to be common features in third-world capitals,[13] as well as various suggestions that a public/private

partnership like the Corporation for Public Broadcasting be set up to fund and direct such activities.[14] The Obama administration's Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Office has declared its intention to open American Centers and American Corners in foreign cities to showcase its culture and technology and fill the gap left by closing the libraries.[15] With these and all other tools of the public relations profession, the United States can explain why and how it acts abroad.

To be effective, an information campaign in any medium has to be well conceived and audience tested. It cannot be patronizing or unbelievable. It is best when telling the truth plainly. A well-executed broadcast and Internet public diplomacy program focused on the five messages outlined above would be aimed at mitigating the predispositions borne of frustration and disappointment in people's minds. It would spread popular American culture, and transmit word of American political and social programs, give straightforward news of events in and about America, and offer a friendly outlet for the dissemination of the messages that the American government wants to convey. Moreover, it would operate interactively and listen to people abroad. It would speak in their languages; use local spokespeople rather than Americans; offer non-political programming as well as news; offer choices rather than dictate what can be seen and heard. Most importantly, it would build a reputation for honesty. Its credibility would set it apart from the other sources of information. There is no escape from the need to do this robustly. World opinion cannot be surrendered to foreign governments, the press corps, or the bloggers of the World Wide Web.

Still, there are limits to what can be achieved in influencing the minds of others. Whatever the United States does, there are some people who harbor antagonistic predispositions and who will not accept new imagery or opinions. Enlightened American policies and communication will not help with the people in the West and the developing world who are hoping for the failure of America

and Western bourgeois society. Such people are irreconcilable, and Americans need to live with that. Americans will have to live in the same world with Pakistani journalist Ansar Abbasi, who told Judith A. McHale, President Obama's undersecretary of state for public diplomacy, "You should know that we hate all Americans. From the bottom of our souls, we hate you."[16] Dedicated xenophobes, romantics, and those in traditional societies whose positions are threatened by change shun reconciliation with the United States. At a given moment they might express hatred only of a particular American president or policy, but they hated the predecessor and will hate the successor too. As in the case of most fears and prejudices, the problem is within them rather than with the object of their fixation. For someone who despises all things foreign, the United States will always be an outsider. For a devotee of the illiberal romantic worldview centered on mysticism, decline, and irrationality, the United States is a foil. To his mind it represents the contrast with all that he values. As such, nothing the United States does can be accepted. For the person whose life is defined by opposition to real or imagined oppression by the establishment, the leading power, whoever it is, becomes and remains the target of his ire. All its acts are despised. To a member of the elite in ancient societies such as a shaman, an imam, or a warlord, whose ways of life will be threatened by change, the American position as leader of the new way, the Western way, makes America a permanent enemy. The practical concern these people have for the loss of their status and well-being may be magnified by traditional and religious modes of thinking that attribute bad events to the connivance of the devil. The United States becomes the personification of the devil. It cannot better its image in their minds by good policies, good deeds, or good words.

These are people whose attitudes are not subject to persuasion and who will ascribe the worst images to the United States regardless of its demonstrated intentions and actions and regardless of any

artful programs of public diplomacy. Only by falling from its top spot as the leading world power and as the avatar of liberal democracy can the United States avoid their contempt. The nineteenth-century European powers, who invented the Western system and who ruled so many colonial peoples, have now escaped third-world opprobrium by the expedient of continually declining in power and influence. The anti-colonial America that succeeded them is called upon to pay a price for their imperialist pasts. The Europeans, with their miniscule defense budgets and self-abasing language, do not mind having America bear the burden of imagery for the entire West. It is the price for occupying the seat of primacy in the world.

Those holding irreconcilable biases are adversaries. America must treat them as such. It does not need to wring its hands over each unfair accusation, obsessively examining the mirror to see if its face is really as ugly as they say. Often, accusations hurled at the United States by its adversaries are words used as weapons rather than words that convey meaning. America remains the most powerfully attractive symbol of a nation. The great challenge for American public diplomacy is to support and perpetuate the belief in the open minds of a majority of people everywhere that their dream of America is tangible and attainable; that the America they imagine is the America of the real world. The United States has to reinforce the particular pillars which support that belief. If it does so, over time, as in the past, the nation will continue to enjoy a world that speaks of it in admiration.

Endnotes

1. James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth,* vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 846.
2. Bertrand Russell, *War Crimes in Vietnam* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), 112, 117-118.
3. Pew Research Center, *Views of a Changing World* (Washington, DC: The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, June 2003), 19.
4. In April 2003 Indian novelist Arundhati Roy, who had called the U.S. invasion of Iraq a "racist war" bringing on "starvation" and "mass murder," wrote that, "At the end of it all, it remains to be said that dictators like Saddam Hussein, and all the other despots in the Middle East, in the Central Asian republics, in Africa and Latin America, many of them installed, supported and financed the US government, are a menace to their own people. Other than strengthening the hand of civil society (instead of weakening it as has been done in the case of Iraq), there is no easy, pristine way of dealing with them." (Quoted in Ian Buruma, "Wielding a Mighty Moral Club," *Financial Times*, September 13, 2003.)
5. Laura King, "In Afghanistan, Doubts Grow, Weariness Deepens," *Los Angeles Times,* June 24, 2010.
6. See Kristin M. Lord, "Voices of America: U.S. Public Diplomacy for the 21st Century," Brookings Institution, November 2008, 11, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Files/rc/reports/2008/11_public_diplomacy_lord/11_public_diplomacy_lord.pdf.
7. Sonni Efron, "Reaching Arabs Via Airwaves," *Los Angeles Times,* August 26, 2002.
8. Ibid.
9. Office of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, *Public Diplomacy: Strengthening U.S. Engagement with the World*, February 2010, 13, http://mountainrunner.us/files/dos/PD_US_World_Engagement.pdf.
10. Barack Obama, speech at Cairo University, June 4, 2009.
11. David Zucchino, "Libyan rebels embrace U.S. and its flag," *Los Angeles Times,* August 5, 2011.
12. Yaroslav Trofimov, "Egypt Incites Anti-U.S. Trend," *Wall St. Journal,* August 10, 2011.
13. Thomas Friedman, "Shoulda, Woulda, Can," *New York Times,* May 27, 2004.

14. See, e.g., Kristin M. Lord, "Voices of America: U.S. Public Diplomacy for the 21st Century," Brookings Institution, November 2008, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Files/rc/reports/2008/11_public_diplomacy_lord/11_public_diplomacy
15. Office of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, *Public Diplomacy: Strengthening U.S. Engagement with the World* (February 2010), 14, http://mountainrunner.us/files/dos/PD_US_World_Engagement.pdf.
16. Helene Cooper, "U.S. Officials Get a Taste of Pakistanis' Anger at America," *New York Times*, August 20, 2009.

Author Biography

Barry Sanders, a CPD Advisory Board member, is President of the Board of Commissioners of the Recreation and Parks Department of the City of Los Angeles, Chairman of the Los Angeles Parks Foundation and immediate past President of the Board of Commissioners of the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. He is also an adjunct professor in the Communications Studies Department at UCLA. He teaches courses entitled "The Images of America around the World," "Public Diplomacy," and "Architecture as Non-Verbal Communication."

Sanders is Chairman of the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games. This organization is independent from the United States Olympic Committee and has been engaged in promoting the Olympic Movement since 1939. As Chairman, he led the effort to bid for the 2016 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. In September 2007 he received the Olympic Spirit Award from the United States Olympic Committee and the William May Garland Award from the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games. As a supporter of amateur sports in Southern California, he represented the Los Angeles Sports Council, the America's Cup Organizing Committee, the LA84 Foundation, the San Diego ("ARCO") Olympic Training Center, the Special Olympics and the Los Angeles Olympics Sports Festival. He headed the legal team for the Salt Lake City Organizing Committee in its bribery scandal. He is a Director of the Los Angeles Sports Council and of the Los Angeles Sports Council Foundation.

Sanders is an international corporate lawyer. He recently retired from the partnership at the global law firm of Latham & Watkins after practicing with the firm for over 35 years. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Pacific Council on International Policy. He is presently on the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles Opera, and a member of the Board of Visitors of the UCLA Geffen School of Medicine.

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