

# The National Security Need for Public Diplomacy

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Both Democrats and Republicans agree: public diplomacy is a vital element of our national security.

This fact sheet presents the national security argument for better public diplomacy from a variety of current and historic figures in the U.S. government. The bipartisan perspectives offered here provide a resounding chorus for America to better understand its need to communicate and build mutually beneficial relationships with foreign publics.

This fact sheet should be read in conjunction ASP's white paper on public diplomacy, *The New Public Diplomacy Imperative*.

## Robert Gates<sup>1</sup>

*Secretary of Defense, 2006-2011*

...Much of our national security strategy depends upon securing the cooperation of other nations, which will depend heavily on the extent to which our efforts abroad are viewed as legitimate by their publics. The solution is not to be found in some slick PR campaign or by trying to out-propagandize al-Qaeda, but rather through the steady accumulation of actions and results that build trust and credibility over time.



## Judith McHale<sup>2</sup>

*Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, 2009-2011*

Whether we are strengthening old alliances, forging new partnerships to meet complex global challenges, engaging with citizens and civil society, or charting new strategies in Afghanistan and Pakistan, our national interests depend on effective engagement and innovative public diplomacy. The stakes could not be higher. We must get this right.



Even in autocratic societies, leaders must increasingly respond to the opinions and passions of their people. This has far-reaching implications for our foreign policy and national security. Governments inclined to support U.S. policies will back away if their populations do not trust us. But if we do this right, if we develop relationships with people around the world, if they trust us as a partner, this dynamic will be

reversed. Less cooperative regimes will be forced to moderate their positions under popular pressure. To the extent that we succeed, threats we face today will diminish and new partnerships will be possible.

### **Tara D. Sonenshine<sup>3</sup>**

#### ***Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, 2012-present***

Public Diplomacy today is inextricably linked to national security - it is a critical part of 21<sup>st</sup> century statecraft because how safe we are at home and abroad is a reflection of a global community's shared interests and values that lead to a common understanding of shared burdens and responsibilities.

...One of the most important jobs of American Public Diplomacy is to contribute to the security of the people of the United States. By highlighting the inherent flaws in the extremist message, and by telling America's story, we can help to discourage new recruits to organizations committed to violence. Their message of hate and destruction is resonating less and less as millions of people around the world demand full participation in their societies through genuine democratic structures.



### **Karen Hughes<sup>4</sup>**

#### ***Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, 2005-2007***

People often talk about public diplomacy in the context of the most recent opinion poll but to view public diplomacy as an international popularity contest is a fundamental misunderstanding.

America's engagement with foreign publics is actually a vital foreign policy and national security priority that seeks to promote our national ideals and interests and to undermine our enemies.



### **Colin Powell<sup>5</sup>**

#### ***Secretary of State, 2001-2005***

#### ***Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1989-1993***

The terrorist attacks of September 11 underscored the urgency of implementing an effective public diplomacy campaign. Those who abet terror by spreading distortion and hate and inciting others, take full advantage of the global news cycle. We must do the same..."Right content, right format, right audience, right now" describes our strategic aim in seeing that U.S. policies are explained and placed in the proper context in the minds of foreign audiences.



### **Condoleezza Rice<sup>6</sup>**

#### ***Secretary of State, 2005-2009***

We need to do much more to confront hateful propaganda, dispel dangerous myths and get out the truth. We will increase our exchanges with the rest of the world. America should make a serious effort to understand other cultures and learn foreign languages. Our interaction with the rest of the world must be a conversation, not a monologue. And America must remain open to visitors and workers and students from around the world. We do not and will not compromise our security standards. Yet, if our public diplomacy



efforts are to succeed, we cannot close ourselves off from the rest of the world.

## Michael “Mike” Mullen<sup>7</sup>

### *Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2007-2011*

...Our biggest problem isn't caves; it's credibility. Our messages lack credibility because we haven't invested enough in building trust and relationships, and we haven't always delivered on promises...

...We hurt ourselves more when our words don't align with our actions. Our enemies regularly monitor the news to discern coalition and American intent as weighed against the efforts of our forces. When they find a “say-do” gap—such as Abu Ghraib—they drive a truck right through it...



...We must be vigilant about holding ourselves accountable to higher standards of conduct and closing any gaps, real or perceived, between what we say about ourselves and what we do to back it up.

In fact, I would argue that most strategic communication problems are not communication problems at all. They are policy and execution problems. Each time we fail to live up to our values or don't follow up on a promise, we look more and more like the arrogant Americans the enemy claims we are...

We cannot capture hearts and minds. We must engage them; we must listen to them, one heart and one mind at a time—over time.

## James K. Glassman<sup>8</sup>

### *Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, 2008-2009*

There are areas in the world where Strategic Public Diplomacy is not merely one tool, but, in fact, the best tool, for achieving America's interests...



...During the Cold War, with institutions like Radio Free Europe, the Congress of Cultural Freedom, the publication Problems of Communism, educational and cultural exchanges, and the U.S. Information Agency, the United States became very effective at public diplomacy. Public diplomacy played an essential role in defeating communism.

## Donald Rumsfeld<sup>9</sup>

### *Secretary of Defense, 1975-1977, 2001-2006*

The United States has also lost several tools that were central to winning the Cold War. Notably, U.S. institutions of public diplomacy and strategic communications -- both critical to the current struggle of ideas against Islamic radicalism -- no longer exist. Some believed that after the fall of the Soviet Union such mechanisms were no longer needed and could even threaten the free flow of information. But when the U.S. Information Agency became part of the State Department in 1999, the country lost what had been a valuable institution capable of communicating America's message to international audiences powerfully and repeatedly.



Meanwhile, a new generation of foes has mastered the tools of the information age -- chat rooms, blogs, cellphones, social-networking Web sites -- and exploits them to

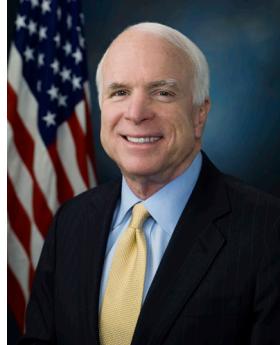
spread propaganda, even while the U.S. government remains poorly organized and equipped to counter with the truth in a timely manner. The nation needs a 21st-century “U.S. Agency for Global Communications” to inform, to educate and to compete in the struggle of ideas -- and to keep its enemies from capitalizing on the pervasive myths that stoke anti-Americanism.

## **John McCain<sup>10</sup>**

### *Senator, Arizona, 1987-Present*

When Peace Corps volunteers dig wells and set up health clinics, they are engaging in public diplomacy. When the U.S. military provides rapid relief to victims of an earthquake in Pakistan or a tidal wave in Indonesia, it is engaged in public diplomacy. Each of these contacts -- at close proximity to grateful people -- are unique opportunities. As Edward R. Murrow once famously said, in public diplomacy, “The real art is to move it the last three feet in face-to-face conversation.” Yet we have no organized way to document such efforts, seek out additional opportunities and raise awareness of their impact.

...our objective is not to force the American way of life on anyone else, but to expose the world to the American story of hope, opportunity, charity and liberty -- professionally and effectively. In this struggle, scholarships are at least as important



as smart bombs.

## **Richard “Dick” Lugar<sup>11</sup>**

### *Senator, Indiana, 1977-present*

Recent polling suggests that support for the United States throughout the world is on a slight increase but remains well below the fifty percent mark in many countries, even among those nations normally considered strong allies. This less-than- positive attitude towards our nation has impacts ranging from national security threats, to lost trade opportunities, to a significant drop in tourism, to parents overseas refusing to allow their children to be educated in U.S. universities.

The sources of this problem are many. Some of these include honest disagreements with our policies and our actions. But many are based on misrepresentations of our goals, values and motives targeted at those prepared to believe the worst about us. Yet, in spite of recent actions to counter these misperceptions, our efforts to present our point of view have not been getting through. It is time to re-think how we conduct our Public Diplomacy.



## **Dwight D. Eisenhower<sup>12</sup>**

### *President of the United States of America, 1953-1961*

If we are going to take advantage of the assumption that all people want peace, then the problem is for people to get together and to leap governments--if necessary to evade governments--to work out not one method but thousands of methods by which people can gradually learn a little bit more of each other...

...I am talking about the exchange of professors and students and executives, the providing of technical assistance, and of the ordinary traveler abroad. I am talking about doctors helping in the conquering of disease, of our free labor unions showing



other peoples how they work, what they earn, how they achieve their pay and the real take-home pay that they get...

In this way, I believe, is the truest path to peace. All of the other things that we do are mere palliatives or they are holding the line while constructive forces of this kind take effect.

### **Harry S. Truman<sup>13</sup>**

*President of the United States of America, 1945-1953*

I am convinced that we should greatly extend and strengthen our efforts to make the truth known to people in all the world.

Most of us have recognized for years, of course, how important it is to spread the truth about freedom and democracy. We are already doing some very good work-through the "Voice of America" and the United States information offices and libraries in many parts of the world, through the exchange of students, through the United Nations and its affiliated organizations, and in many other ways. But events have shown, I believe, that we need to do much more, both ourselves and in cooperation with the other free nations. We must use every means at our command, private as well as governmental, to get the truth to other peoples.



## ENDNOTES

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## **Building a New American Arsenal**

The American Security Project (ASP) is a nonpartisan initiative to educate the American public about the changing nature of national security in the 21st century.

Gone are the days when a nation's strength could be measured by bombers and battleships. Security in this new era requires a New American Arsenal harnessing all of America's strengths: the force of our diplomacy; the might of our military; the vigor of our economy; and the power of our ideals.

We believe that America must lead other nations in the pursuit of our common goals and shared security. We must confront international challenges with all the tools at our disposal. We must address emerging problems before they become security crises. And to do this, we must forge a new bipartisan consensus at home.

ASP brings together prominent American leaders, current and former members of Congress, retired military officers, and former government officials. Staff direct research on a broad range of issues and engages and empowers the American public by taking its findings directly to them.

We live in a time when the threats to our security are as complex and diverse as terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, climate change, failed and failing states, disease, and pandemics. The same-old solutions and partisan bickering won't do. America needs an honest dialogue about security that is as robust as it is realistic.

ASP exists to promote that dialogue, to forge consensus, and to spur constructive action so that America meets the challenges to its security while seizing the opportunities the new century offers.



American Security Project

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