



## **Public Diplomacy Recommendations**

American Foreign Service Association  
QDDR Public Diplomacy Working Group

### INTRODUCTION

The consolidation of Public Diplomacy into the Department of State had not been fully implemented when 9/11 dramatically altered the priorities and contours of American diplomacy. The internet, the 24/7 news cycle, and social media also revolutionized the patterns of international communication. The ease and speed of these channels of communication led in turn to the entry of non-traditional actors with significant public diplomacy agendas and presence in the global marketplace of ideas.

Active duty Public Diplomacy officers often report a sense of powerlessness, loss of purpose, and pressure to focus on too many goals. They discuss an imbalance between short-term advocacy and long-term relationship building, a sense that Public Diplomacy has become “Washington driven” rather than “field driven,” and say that Public Diplomacy leaders in Washington and the field must shoulder responsibility without being given the needed authority.

The AFSA Public Diplomacy working group makes recommendations for the QDDR that address policy, administration, and a new Public Diplomacy.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Public Diplomacy Policy

- State should formally acknowledge that the Public Affairs Officer is the principal coordinator of communication, information, exchange, and education programs on the Country Team and ensure this is implemented. This principle must be embedded in Foreign Service roles and management.
- Program priorities for overseas posts should derive from each Mission's plans, not from generic Washington mandates. Ambassadors and country teams are best positioned to determine bilateral policy goals and judge how to integrate Public Diplomacy priorities into their overall Mission objectives.
- The Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs must institutionalize communication, collaboration, and alignment between State and other government Departments. To maximize effectiveness, this Under Secretary position should be held by those with extensive prior U.S. Government experience, as well as experience in public diplomacy.
- DoD, USAID, DEA, and DOJ are only a few of the government departments with public affairs agendas and exchange programs directed at overseas publics.

### Public Diplomacy Administration

- The practice of staffing senior levels of the R Bureau (up to and including the Undersecretary) with political appointees is a factor in all of the Public Diplomacy problems outlined in this paper. Long waits for nomination and confirmation of political appointees have weakened leadership and delayed innovation. Their shorter time horizons and a focus on domestic impact have not fostered long-term strategic planning. Unfamiliar with the Department, they have not focused on the administration of Public Diplomacy. Political appointments in the R bureaus must thus be kept to a bare minimum, and significant international and cross-cultural experience should be necessary qualifications for future appointments.
- The Department should undertake a comprehensive, top-to-bottom management review of the Public Diplomacy function. The review must include recruiting, training, staffing, career development and sequencing, professional education, authorities, and budgets at post and in Washington.
- International Information Programs (IIP) should be restructured as a new Bureau of Public Diplomacy dedicated to supporting posts and staffed by a balance of Foreign and Civil service positions. The most recent inspection of IIP documented uncertainty over its strategy, role, products, and priorities. Charging the new Bureau with supporting overseas posts, and staffing it with significant field experience, would clarify and focus its efforts.
- The bureaus and offices that report to R have too few positions for FSOs, particularly at the Senior Foreign Service level. A share of supervisory positions in the R world should be designated for FSOs, and the majority of DAS positions should be filled by Public Diplomacy SFS officers rather than by political appointees.
- PD assignments should be controlled by R in the same way as Consular assignments are controlled by CA and DS assignments are controlled by DS. R should define and maintain career paths for Public Diplomacy officers, assuring individual career development that also strengthens expertise in the Public Diplomacy function -- in Washington and in the field.

### A New Public Diplomacy

- The goal of the above recommendations is nothing less than a new Public Diplomacy for the United States. The Department must undertake a long-term effort to embed innovation and a spirit of enterprise into Public Diplomacy. Top-down structures that centralize decision making and prescribe global visions and/or solutions no longer work as they are too cumbersome, inflexible and slow. When the dominant feature of international communication is rapid disruption and change – manifested in different forms in different countries and regions – Public Diplomacy in Washington and the field must be highly professionalized, adaptive, capable, and innovative.
- While USG Public Diplomacy must accept and engage on those terms, it remains true that real dialogue only occurs through building solid and durable relationships. Public Diplomacy professionals balance

these contradictory demands daily – speed and innovation versus the long-term engagement that respects the unique environment of each country—and the Department must pursue policies and create the institutional mechanisms that promote excellence over adequacy.

- To ensure that this effort has the authority and sense of purpose to engineer such change, the Secretary should appoint a working group and give it the power to conduct the necessary review and execute the recommendations such a review would generate. This working group would serve, in essence, as a Center for Public Diplomacy Excellence empowered to find the right mix of policy and administrative structure for a new Public Diplomacy.

Members of the working group on Public Diplomacy can provide more comprehensive discussions of any of the points in this paper, along with more specific recommendations on request.