New Trends in American Public Diplomacy

George P. Schultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center
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Dr. R. S. Zaharna
American University
9/11 Wake up Call for Public Diplomacy

“I’m amazed that there is such misunderstanding about what our country is about. We’ve got to do a better job of making our case.”

President George W. Bush, October 11, 2001
Why do they hate us?

- Don’t understand us
- Don’t know us

= Information driven campaign
They hate us more

- Anti-American intensified
- Anti-American spread

= public diplomacy backfire
The Culprit . . .

American policy?

The purpose of public diplomacy is communicate and obtain support for American policy – even for unfavorable policies and even with unfavorable publics
The Culprit - Culture

- Rarely do communication campaigns produce the same result in different cultures.

- Hidden cultural assumptions undermined their effectiveness
How Miss Culture?

• Focus: American Public Diplomacy (international language of diplomacy)

• Miss: *American* Public Diplomacy (American cultural assumptions)

• Focus: studying “the Other” culture
• Miss: role of own American culture
Public Diplomacy

Just as culture influences the communication of a people, so culture influences the public diplomacy of a nation.
American Style –
Domestic & Foreign Publics

• American style -- *positively* resonated with American public

• American style -- *negatively* resonated with Arab publics
American Public Diplomacy

- Communication = Information
- Problem: don’t understand or have info
  Solution: supply more or better info
- Agency: advanced technology
- Complaint: information overload
American Public Diplomacy

• Preferred Channel = Mass media
• Efficient
• Credible
• Familiar
Arab Public Communication

• Communication = Relationships

• Problem: strained or broken relations
• Solution: mend or sever relations
• Agency: mediator, negotiator
• Complaint: relationship overload
Arab Public Communication

• Preferred Channel = Interpersonal
• Effective
• Credible
• Familiar
American Style Messages

• Direct
• Facts, evidence, argument
• Future-oriented
• Individual appeal
• Self-Promotion
Arab Style Messages

• Indirect
• Metaphors, analogies, rhetorical questions
• Past-oriented
• Collective/Communal appeals
• Credit to the Creator
American Public Diplomacy

Focus = Message

Create idea

Produce appealing format

Disseminate efficiently
American Assumptions

• Speaker detached from audience
• Message is culturally neutral
• Message can speak for itself

• Content is important
Arab Assumptions

- Speaker and audience linked
- Message *not* culturally neutral
- Audience ultimately determines what the speaker said

- *Context* is important
American Public Diplomacy

Result

• Achieved content goal

• Neglected context

• Power of rumors -- mass media vs. interpersonal communication
New Trends --
Relationship Building Approach to Public Diplomacy
Types of Relationships

- Professional
- Personal
- Community

- Diplomatic
- Regional / Issues
- Personal
- Community

-- (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000)
Goals of Relationship Building

• Initiate – create new or expand existing
• Develop – build upon
• Enhance – strengthen
• Maintain – protect and preserve
Benefits of Relationship Building

- Better predictor of audience behavior
- Allows proactive approach later
- Acts as buffer if crisis occurs
SMART -- Relationship Building

• Scan – survey and assess current state of relationship
• Map – construct strategic plan for relationships goals / activities
• Act – field test strategic plan and assess initial effectiveness
SMART -- Relationship Building

- Rollout – implement revised strategic plan
- Track – monitor effect on public’s perceptions and behavior

(Bruning & Ledingham, 2000)
Relationship Building Mindset

• Focus on two-way / interaction
• Exchange and reciprocity
• Add personal / social connection in activity
• Build trust (credible, reliable, stable)
• Find mutual interests & goals
• Demonstrate interest & involvement
• Build commitment (continuity)
Relationship Building – Specific Applications

- Speeches
- ‘Being’ vs ‘Doing’ visits
- Communicate interest vs need
- Pictures, gifts, symbolic tokens
- Highlight contributions, cooperation
- Embassy website
- Find a way to ‘pass the baton’
New Trends in American Public Diplomacy:

Relationship Building

Dr. Rhonda Zaharna
American University
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