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The Tightrope to Tomorrow: Reputational Security, Collective Vision and the Future of Public Diplomacy

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Summary

A global crisis exists today, driven by a toxic mix of populist politics and disruptive social media. For public diplomacy to respond, it must remain true to its core principles: 1) begin by listening; 2) connect to policy; 3) do not perform for domestic consumption; 4) look for credibility and partnership; as 5) the most credible voice is not your own. 6) Public diplomacy is not always 'about you'; but 7) is everyone's business. These core principles must now be supplemented by the following future needs: 1) reframing soft power as a new category of reputational security, relevant to the survival of vulnerable states; 2) contest disinformation and engage in information disarmament; 3) counter victim narratives; and 4) articulate a compelling vision of the future. This article refuses to abandon an element of optimism and continues to see hope in the ability of humans to connect effectively with one another.

Introduction

There is a pattern to the arrival of new technologies in this world. Someone will seize on them with public hope and predict that the mechanism will deliver Utopia. Someone will seize on them with private avarice and set about finding a way to exploit the mechanism to defraud their neighbour, service humanity's basest desires, or advance the dominion of one over another. Thus the railways and steam ships that the Manchester School of the 1840s believed would bind the world together if the laws allowed free trade became the sinews of exploitative nineteenth-century empires; the radio and newsreel of the inter-war years, which were supposed to educate one and all, became the staple tools of the dictator; and the digital technologies so vaunted a decade ago by writers like Clay Shirky have proven themselves to be potentially damaging to democracy, as well as potentially redemptive.[2] The warning bell against an overly optimistic interpretation of internet platforms was sounded by Evgeny Morozov in a piece for *Boston Review* in 2009 titled 'Texting toward Utopia'.[3] Morozov developed his warning fully in his book *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*, predicting that the internet would be a boon for tyrants.[4] While the debate over the inherent good or ill of social media is set to run on, all accept that there is a question with two sides.

A decade ago, scholars of public diplomacy were among the most enthusiastic about the potential of new technology.[5] Innovations such as Twitter press conferences, virtual exchanges, and embassies on platforms such as Second Life were vaunted as ushering in a new era. The need to think in terms of networks as an extension of the digital revolution was a core insight of writing on the new public diplomacy.[6] Yet scholars of the practice of digital diplomacy,

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2   Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2008).

3   Evgeny Morozov, 'Texting toward Utopia: Does the Internet spread Democracy?', *Boston Review* (1 March 2009), available at http://bostonreview.net/evgeny-morozov-texting-toward-utopia-internet-democracy.

4   Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2011).

5   For works engaging the early evolution of digital engagement, **see** Amelia Arsenault, 'Public Diplomacy 2.0', in Philip Seib (ed.), *Toward a New Public Diplomacy: Redirecting US Foreign Policy* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 135-153; and Lina Khatib, William Dutton and Michael Thelwall, 'Public Diplomacy 2.0: A Case Study of the US Digital Outreach Team', *Middle East Journal,* vol. 66, no. 3 (2012), pp. 453-472.

6   For an overview of the New Public Diplomacy and the emergence of networked paradigms, see Jan Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2005); James Pamment, *New Public Diplomacy: A Comparative Study of*

such as Corneliu Bjola and Ilan Manor, soon noted the difficulty in finding genuine relationship-based examples in government practice.[7] Governments tended to look to digital and social media as just another mechanism to push out the message. The need for real interconnection remains. Today the world stands in a precarious place: a tightrope walker balancing on the wire that was supposed to deliver our collective salvation. Can public diplomacy be part of a way forward, or is it just one more part of the problem?[8]

Any discussion of the future of public diplomacy must be grounded in an understanding of the present. While most observers perceive a moment of crisis today, there is a range of views on its exact extent. Certainly, one element is the return to great-power rivalry as a central element in international relations. There is also the challenge to the communication order associated with the rise of fake news, disinformation, paid trolls and bots.

The two issues broke simultaneously in 2014 with Russia's intervention in Ukraine and simultaneous disruption of media. The world was unprepared for a nation-state lying point blank about deployment of its armed forces in the territory of another, or diluting the debate around a controversial incident by pushing out multiple accounts of it, as if weaponizing not just information, but the condition of post-modernity. The cocktail of military and media excess was swiftly labelled 'hybrid warfare'.[9]

Yet the present crisis is deeper than the need to respond to a single rogue state undermining international media, or even the crisis of multiple states seeking to assert themselves through aggressive use of media, recently dubbed 'sharp power'.[10] The crisis is a symptom as much as a disease in its own right; it speaks of a world in which many states are using foreign policy as a mechanism

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    Policy and Practice (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); and R.S. Zaharna, *Amelia Arsenault* and *Ali Fisher* (eds), *Relational, Networked and Collaborative Approaches to Public Diplomacy: The Connective Mindshift* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).

7   Corneliu Bjola and Marcus Holmes (eds), *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015); Romit Kampf, Ilan Manor and Elad Segev, 'Digital Diplomacy 2.0? A Cross-National Comparison of Public Engagement in Facebook and Twitter', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 10, no. 4 (2015), pp. 331-362. See also Brian Hocking and Jan Melissen, *Diplomacy in the Digital Age*, Clingendael Report (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, July 2015); and, for a historical perspective, Nicholas Cull, 'The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0: The Internet in US Public Diplomacy', *International Studies Review,* vol. 15, no. 1 (March 2013), pp. 123-139.

8   For a full exploration of this question, see Cull, *Public Diplomacy*.

9   The term was coined in András Rácz, *Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine: Breaking the Enemy's Ability to Resist,* FIIA Report no. 43 (Helsinki: Finnish Institute for International Affairs, 2015).

10   Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig, 'The meaning of Sharp Power: How Authoritarian States Project Influence', *Foreign Affairs.com* (16 November 2017), available online at

to rally domestic support and are demonizing their neighbours. Leaders of the new populism around the world are promising to make their respective countries great again, to withdraw from old alliances, rebuild walls and settle old scores. The situation has not been good for public diplomacy. Rising authoritarians have frequently sought to limit the operation of exchanges and the activities of external non-governmental organizations in their territory.

Some have even demonized them as a source of national ills. Consider Russian President Vladimir Putin's condemnation of the work of the National Endowment for Democracy in Russia, or Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's vendetta against that great institution of educational diplomacy and democratization: Central European University. Conversely, but no less harmfully for the optimal practice of public diplomacy today, some nations have embraced the tools of public diplomacy as a mechanism for projecting their narrow national image and agenda, without embracing the underlying implications of exchange: that we all need to listen to and learn from each other.

The coincidence of the same kind of politics in multiple locations speaks to the ubiquity of the context: the aftermath of the economic downturn of 2008; the failure of globalization to deliver prosperity evenly; and dislocation in the realm of communication coming from the new technologies, which both dilute the authoritative and often moderating voice of the legacy media and elevate the more extreme views associated with online communities looping round on themselves. And yet there is no alternative to cooperation. The problems we face — with climate change as the foremost — are simply too great for any one country. The time for using or asserting independence has passed. The world needs to acknowledge its interdependence and use the mechanisms of public diplomacy to see what can be learned across national boundaries to address our collective challenges. The crisis of our times demands specific responses, which *should* be part of a healthy future of public diplomacy, but before addressing those it is important not to lose sight of the underlying lessons of public diplomacy practice thus far.[11]

The best guide to the future of public diplomacy is the trends that are gaining momentum in our own time. The general trends most likely to continue include: 1) the proliferation of actors in the international space, each seeking to engage foreign publics to accomplish their goals, including cities, regions,

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https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2017-11-16/meaning-sharp-power?cid=int -fls&pgtype=hpg.

11   These seven core points were first presented in 2008 in Nicholas Cull, 'Public Diplomacy: Seven Lessons for its Future from its Past', in Jolyon Welsh and Daniel Fearn (eds), *Engagement: Public Diplomacy in a Globalized World* (London: Foreign & Commonwealth Office Books, 2008), pp. 16-29.

non-governmental and corporate actors and actors originating in, or developing on, social networks; 2) the reduction of budgets owing to national-level economic difficulties; 3) an increased emphasis on partnership and collaboration as a necessity for tackling transnational problems; and 4) increased use of technology in public diplomacy, including immersive technology. Against this backdrop, it is important to remember core principles that were part of the discourse a decade ago, but that have even greater significance in our current era of crisis.[12]

Principle One: Public Diplomacy Begins with Listening

Global public engagement must begin with listening: systematically collecting and analysing the opinions of foreign publics. Listening must be done and must be seen to be done. It should be open-ended and unhindered by preconceived categories.[13] New technology has made listening easier, in that software can monitor blogs and Twitter feeds in real time, but practitioners must remember that technology may also place new distance between them and their audience. In public diplomacy, relationships remain paramount.

Principle Two: Public Diplomacy Must Be Connected to Policy

The golden rule of public diplomacy is that what counts is not what you say, but what you do. There is no substitute for sound policy, and actors with a

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12   For the diversification of actors that the literature includes: on corporate diplomacy, see Enric Ordeix-Rigo and João Duarte, 'From Public Diplomacy to Corporate Diplomacy: Increasing Corporation's Legitimacy and Influence', *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 53, no. 4 **(2009)**, pp. 549-564; on the regional approach, see Ellen Huijgh, 'The Public Diplomacy of Federated Entities: Examining the Quebec model', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2010), pp. 125-150; and on city diplomacy, see Benjamin Barber, *If Mayors Ruled the World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

13   For a discussion of approaches to listening, see Andrew Dobson, *Listening for Democracy: Recognition, Representation, Reconciliation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); and for models of good practice (recognized by Dobson), see Leonard Waks, 'Listening and Questioning: The Apophatic/Cataphatic Distinction Revisited', *Learning Inquiry*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2007), pp. 153-161; and Leonard Waks, 'Two Types of Interpersonal Listening', *Teachers College Record,* vol. 112, no. 11 (2010), pp. 2743-2762. On clinical best practice, see Sheila Shipley, 'Listening: A Concept Analysis', *Nursing Forum*, vol. 45, no. 2 (2010), pp. 2833-2849.

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reputation for sound policy will find their power in the world enhanced. By extension, the most important link in any public engagement structure is that which connects 'listening' to policy-making and ensures that foreign opinion is weighed in the foreign policy process. Once sound policies have been identified, they should be publicized by or coordinated with public diplomacy. There is, in addition, a need to coordinate with those partners whose role could be considered 'engagement by deed'. Conversely, actors should remember that in the wired world, a major policy error is seen globally.

Principle Three: Public Diplomacy Must Not Become a Performance for Domestic Consumption

One of the major problems facing public diplomats today is the tendency of some governments to conceive of their work not as a means to engage international publics, but rather as a mechanism to impress domestic audiences. These governments are keen to show their own people all that they are doing to educate the world or to correct 'ignorant' foreigners' misperceptions. They conduct public diplomacy overseas for the purposes of propaganda at home, hoping to give their own people the gift of the world's admiration. Today, the political context of much foreign public engagement requires that it yield measurable results, which in turn threatens to create bias towards those elements of public diplomacy that can most easily show short-term effectiveness. This bias has placed culture and exchange — with their longer horizons — at a disadvantage. If public diplomacy is to retain a mission beyond winning short-term political gain, it will require restraint and vision on the part of leaders.

Principle Four: Effective Public Diplomacy Requires Credibility

The value of credibility has been proverbial since the day when Aesop's shepherd boy first cried 'Wolf!' The problem is that the ways of achieving credibility differ from one element of public diplomacy to another and are harmed if too closely associated with each other. Listeners and advocates need to be close to power; cultural diplomats need to be close to art and the people; exchanges must be mutual to be credible; while international broadcasters are judged by professional journalistic mores. There is a clear advantage to the Anglo-German model of separating elements of public engagement into firewalled units such as the British Council, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World Service, Goethe Institute or Deutsche Welle (DW), coordinated

at the highest level, rather than corralling them all within a foreign ministry. Credibility remains the foundation of all effective public diplomacy, and social networks provide even greater scope for that credibility to resonate. As the volume of information available over the internet grows, the provenance of that information becomes ever more significant. Public diplomacy has its own brands — the BBC, Voice of America (VOA), DW and so forth — and information provided under those brands can have special authority and is more likely to be voluntarily passed by one internet user to a peer, so long as the credibility of those brands is upheld.

Principle Five: Sometimes the Most Credible Voice Is Not Your Own

The desire to be seen to be effective has been one of the factors that have historically pushed actors to place themselves at centre stage in their public diplomacy, regardless of whether their voice is best suited to advance the cause that they wish to help. Some of the most effective cases of foreign public engagement have occurred when actors have empowered others to tell their story. National public diplomacy does well to privilege voices from its regions and minorities. All actors do well to seek out partners who are credible to their audiences. As the survey data collected by the Edelman Trust Barometer has shown, in the era of peer-to-peer technology, the ultimate credibility rests with similarity.[14] This means that effective public diplomacy will be that which enrols 'people like me' and provides them with information that they can pass to their peers. The corresponding conceptualization of engagement is that of a mechanism not for making single communications to a target audience, but for introducing a reproducible idea into a network so that it can be passed among a target group.

Principle Six: Public Diplomacy Is Not Always 'About You'

Public diplomacy is about advancing foreign policy, and that foreign policy may not necessarily concern the image of an actor: it may be directed at engineering improvement of the international environment, or empowering local voices within a target state or states. Once liberated from a narrow obsession with national image, foreign public engagement holds the potential to

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14   For early comment on the trend, see http://www.edelman.com/trust/2008/prior/2006/ FullSupplement_final.pdf.

address a wide range of global issues. It is one of the few tools available to an international actor wishing to engage the international public, who hold the fate of the earth in their hands as never before. More than this, with public diplomacy now aimed at shared issues and using networks, old models of success are redundant. Some governments still have a narrow idea of success in international affairs. They understand the value of networks and relationships, but look for a unilateral advantage at the end of the process. This is untenable. One cannot win one's relationships. Relationships have to be based on mutual interest. The desire to win one's relationships is a symptom of psychosis.

Principle Seven: Public Diplomacy Is Everyone's Business

It is tempting to compartmentalize foreign public engagement as the exclusive preserve of those who draw salaries for working in the field, but this is to ignore both the contribution of 'citizen diplomats' and the 'people-to-people' public diplomacy carried out through formal work like town twinning and myriad positive connections across frontiers. Arguably, the greatest achievement of public diplomacy in the last half century has been the reconciliation between Germany and France, but a process in which local town-to-town exchanges existed for fifteen years before the nationally organized exchange schemes of the 1963 Élysée Treaty.[15]

No less significantly, the citizen plays a role in promoting the message or image that the public diplomat is seeking to project to the world. Just as public diplomacy is vulnerable to bad policy, so it is vulnerable to bad people. If a nation fails to uphold its 'brand', any messaging will be undermined. A small number of people can cause a great deal of damage. Sometimes the key battle in engaging a foreign public lies not in projecting a reputation overseas, but rather in persuading the population at home to live up to a reputation that they already have. It is a task equivalent to that of 'quality control' in manufacturing.[16]

Today, government-sponsored messages are only one mechanism by which to communicate across frontiers. Opinion is also built from the direct experience of individuals meeting. A country's image can be shaped as much by the experience of a returning migrant, or the fate of an asylum seeker, as well

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15   For one of the Élysée Treaty institutions, see https://www.fgyo.org/.

16   Cases focused on improving or maintaining domestic behaviour include that of South Korea, which included work to make its public more globally minded within its portfolio of nation-branding activities in the run-up to hosting Expo 2012 in Yeosu.

as by the words of its highest-ranking officials. Images will always be judged against experience. Citizens of diasporas are a resource for public diplomacy partnerships for their country of origin as well as their country of residence; they are also an important audience.[17] For a society to prosper in the international marketplace of ideas, it is necessary not only to strive to say the right thing, but actually to be what it claims to be. This emphasis on reality in the national contribution underpins Simon Anholt's extension of his work measuring the relative strength of nation brands in the global imagination through the Anholt GfK Nation Brands Index, to provocatively attempt to chart the reality of national contributions to the global good, adjusted by GDP in the Good Country Index.[18] In September 2018, Anholt took his idea to the next level and announced the formation of the Good Country as a country in its own right, with the idea that it could welcome internationally and collaboratively minded citizens from any and all countries and serve as a launch pad for policies that aim at the collective well-being.[19]

Beyond these seven core principles, four future needs have emerged from the present international difficulties.

Future Need 1: Build Reputational Security

The crisis of our moment has raised serious issues about the international order. For example, if parts of Ukraine can be swallowed by a neighbour with relative impunity, who is safe? The fate of Ukraine raises the possibility that public diplomacy, soft power and nation-branding may have been conceptualized in the wrong way. These concepts are often seen as luxuries of the wealthiest and best-known countries. The reality is that, at the other end of the spectrum, smaller or newer countries need to engage to establish reputational security. Reputational security is a place on the high ground of the global imagination. Once established, it means that when a challenge comes — whether from a neighbour contesting sovereignty, internal secession, or a natural threat

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17   For work on diasporas as a part of international broadcasting, see Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb (eds), *Diasporas and Diplomacy: Cosmopolitan Contact Zones at the BBC World Service (1932-2012)* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

18   For the Good Country Index, see http://goodcountry.org. The Index may be seen as a kind of public diplomacy in its own right — 'index diplomacy' perhaps — and the opening salvo in a discussion over what a country should really do to improve its standing in the world.

19   On the 'Good Country' as a country, see https://goodcountry.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/The-Good-Country.pdf.

like rising sea levels — the world cares. Ukraine plainly lacked reputational security. Despite such public diplomacy gambits as co-hosting the European Football Championship in 2012, it was simply not understood as sufficiently distinct from Russia by international audiences to provoke the same kind of reaction as, for example, the Soviet threat to Polish sovereignty, which the West read into the declaration of martial law in Poland in 1981.

Reputation has long figured in international relations. As Jonathan Mercer pointed out in his prize-winning study from 1996 (*Reputation and International Politics*), from the days of Thucydides onwards, leaders of nations have seen the need to preserve reputation as a vital interest and even a justification for war. Yet the scholarship of reputation has focused on the reputation of leaders for resolution or irresolution and the contribution of reputation to the world of deterrence.[20] My argument locates security not in the perception of a national leader as being sufficiently resolute to resist encroachment, but in the perception of an entire state or society as being sufficiently relevant to an international audience for its preservation or continued integrity to be considered a priority. Czechoslovakia in 1938 lacked reputational security and so its dismemberment seemed an acceptable concession to Hitler at the Munich Conference. Part of Britain's success in communicating its war effort to the United States in the vital period of 1939-1941 could be understood as reframing its reputation away from an old emphasis on empire, class and tradition and instead emphasizing the nobility of its suffering — the democratic values of a country engaged in a 'People's War' with a reputation for honesty.[21] It was an image for which the United States was willing to risk war to support and defend. Reputational security had been achieved, and just in the nick of time.

The quest for reputational security helps to explain the national branding efforts of Kosovo, its attempts to win diplomatic recognition and its work to be present in international cultural platforms such as the Venice Biennale of art and architecture. Reputational security concerns also seem to be a driver of Taiwan's engagement of foreign publics. Nation-branding is simply too relaxed a frame for the reality of the goal. Similarly, Kazakhstan's hard work to build a

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20   Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), especially p. 228. Mercer showed the limits of assumptions around reputation in leadership, arguing that 'fighting to create a reputation for resolution with adversaries is unnecessary and fighting to create a reputation for resolution with allies is unwise'. Interestingly, Mercer suggests that whether for resolution or irresolution, reputations are seldom malleable. This is consistent with data on national reputation at the level of brand, collected over time by researchers such as Anholt.

21   For a sustained study of this campaign, see Nicholas Cull, *Selling War: British Propaganda and American Neutrality in World War II* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995).

reputation in its first 30 years of independence are not solely about attracting investment, but reflect a deeper need to be relevant beyond its borders. Hence the government of Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev hosted Expo 2017, initiated a cycle of inter-faith conferences, launched its Astana Film Festival and invested in an externally oriented university sector. The model is that of Singapore rather than Dubai. The hope is to be both relevant and better connected.

Aids to this connectivity include the use of English as the language of instruction for all science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and the decision to abandon the Cyrillic alphabet of the Soviet era and adopt the Latin alphabet going forward. The desire to be known is such that even virtual slanders like the 2006 comedy film *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* are understood as 'gifts' by some Kazakh officials. Being known as the 'Borat country' gives Kazakhstan a place on the mental map of Western audiences, which Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan lack. It is a starting point from which more accurate knowledge and an awareness of the country's relevance can be built. Without meaning something to the world, there is much less at stake should a rapacious neighbour decide to compromise Kazakh sovereignty. Foreign public engagement is one way to build reputational security.

Future Need 2: Effectively Contest Disinformation

The surge in disinformation requires a response to return stability to the international environment. While it is tempting to respond to fake news in kind, the collective response of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to the crisis has avoided compromise to established news values. Western media should be careful not to demonize the Russian people while attacking their leaders, and might do well to adopt the same strategy as historian Alban Webb found in the BBC Russian Service in the 1950s: focus criticism on issues rather than personalities.[22] Western countries should certainly be careful not to conform to the stereotypes promulgated by their enemies. Thus far the Western allies have worked to *expose* disinformation and distortion where it is happening. Support for the famous Ukrainian fact-checking website StopFake and other activities,

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22   Alban Webb, *London Calling: Britain, the BBC World Service and the Cold War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 60 and 130.

such as the European Union External Action Service's Disinformation Review, are part of this.[23]

Yet this is not enough. It is also crucial that Western allies *engage* audiences that are under pressure from disinformation and hybrid threats through the established channels of public diplomacy, including cultural relations, exchange and international broadcasting, to assist in the construction of resilient societies that are better able to cope with such threats. There is a need to *enhance* indigenous media — a public diplomacy of empowerment to support the local creation of reliable news depicting the world authoritatively from the location under threat. In a city like Narva, the Russian-speaking border town in Estonia, the answer to a 'one-size-fits-all' message from Moscow is not a 'one-size-fits-all' message from Washington, DC, but instead to work to provide media that fits the complexities of that particular community, which seeks to be simultaneously Russian-speaking, Estonian and European. Finally, it is worth remembering that the answer to a communication problem may not necessarily lie in the field of communication. Perhaps weaponized information needs an information disarmament process; certainly that was part of the solution to the media challenge of the Cold War in the late 1980s. The clearest example of this is the way in which the US government successfully pressed the Soviet Union to stop claiming that AIDS was a US-made bio weapon, by threatening to suspend all US–Soviet scientific cooperation.[24]

Future Need 3: Effectively Counter Victim Narratives

In the marketplace of ideas, the meme of the victim narrative has become the fat little cuckoo chick pushing other ideas out of the nest. The victim narrative is an ideal message to resonate in the self-obsessed closed loops of social media. It tells the audience that its community has a special story of suffering and needs to be attended to before the needs of others can be considered. Such narratives kept communities apart in the 1990s and — with symmetrical embrace — fuelled the decade's ugliest disputes, including Israel/Palestine and the break-up of Yugoslavia. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, they drove recruitment to the global jihad. In the second decade they are fuelling

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23   On StopFake, see http://www.stopfake.org/en. The homepage of the EU's counter-disinformation effort is https://euvsdisinfo.eu/.

24   Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1989-2001* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 467 and 474.

the new populism. Public diplomacy needs to consider how victim narratives of the past were diffused and to look for ways to overcome them using the kind of resources that were devoted to countering violent extremism in recent years. We have been here before. Victim narratives and mutual fear were part of the antipathy underpinning the great struggles of the twentieth century. These struggles were not simply overcome by force of arms, but by communicating a vision. The challenge for our generation is to achieve the same result without the trial by fire.

Future Need 4: Articulate a Compelling Collective Vision of the Future

The best way to overcome negative and divisive messaging is to circulate a truly compelling alternative. The answer in the United States to the intra-community resentments that were released during the early years of the Second World War was a greater vision of national cohesion. In California, the answer to resistance to vaccination was a greater vision of child health, which placed vaccination in context as a component in a desirable whole.[25] In the case of our present international system, the ultimate answer to narrow narratives of national suffering must be an inclusive vision of the future.

Consider the tightrope walker evoked in the second paragraph of this article. Tightrope walkers have a simple secret. In order to stay stable on the high wire they fix their eyes on their destination: the far end of the wire. If they cannot see the end they turn around and focus on their point of origin. If they are looking at neither, they will wobble and fall. Much the same is true for nations. Stability requires either a clear sense of a future destination or a vision of the past. The crisis of our moment is based on so many leaders around the world drawing their stability from visions of the past. Beyond simply trying to correct the mutually antithetical visions of the past, our collective public diplomacy should also consider ways to turn the tightrope walker around and articulate compelling visions of the future. The history of public diplomacy suggests that such turnarounds are possible; indeed they are the chief way in which the great international crises of the past were solved. Consider the Great War, the Second World War and the Cold War. The road beyond these

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25   On the role of the 'vision' in counter propaganda, see Nicholas Cull, *Counter Propaganda: Cases from US Public Diplomacy and Beyond* (London: Legatum Institute, 2015), available online at https://www.li.com/activities/publications/counter-propaganda-cases-from-us -public-diplomacy-and-beyond.

conflicts required the articulation of a vision of the future so attractive that not only allies found it compelling, but adversaries also. The visions sprang from many places and defied any one country's attempt to claim ownership; however, US presidents were essential to their dissemination. Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan were all masters of presenting collective visions of the future. Yet they did not speak alone. Their messages were carried by the public diplomacy apparatus of their respective era, and participants from many nations shaped the presentation. The greatest communicators of the era were part of the process. During the Great War, for example, when the British government realized that it needed to present a vision of the future to the German public, it hired the man best known for his writing about the subject: H.G. Wells.[26] The problem in that case was not the lack of the vision's plausibility, but the failure of the post-war settlement to live up to wartime promises.

Despite the current obsession with hurts and glories of the past, some public diplomacy actors are already articulating visions of the future. The United Nations, for example, has rallied member states behind its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030.[27] Positive visions of the future were part of Expo 2017 in Astana and underpin plans for the Dubai Expo in 2020.[28] Other projects focusing on the future include a remarkable project by the City of Oslo to demonstrate its commitment to the future by building a library of the future. Designed by Scottish artist Katie Paterson, this is not simply an eco-friendly new space, but a collection of books commissioned from and delivered by one major author each year, which will not be published until 2114. Participating writers announced so far include Canadian Nobel laureate Margaret Atwood and *Cloud Atlas* author David Mitchell. The library has also planted a forest of 1,000 trees to provide paper for the pages when the time comes.[29] A like-minded project from 2015 by film director Robert Rodriguez and actor John Malkovich produced, in association with a cognac company, a feature film called *100 Years*, which will not be released until 2115.[30] In a similar vein, a team affiliated with the Hebrew University in

26   On H.G. Wells' war propaganda work, see J. Lee Thompson, *Politicians, Press and Propaganda: Lord Northcliffe and the Great War, 1914-1919* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1999).

27   See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld.

28   Nicholas Cull, 'Soft Power's Next Steppe: National Projection at the Astana EXPO, 2017', *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, vol. 13, no. 4 (2017), pp. 269-272.

29   For information on the Future Library, see https://www.futurelibrary.no/.

30   On *100 Years*, see https://variety.com/2015/film/news/john-malkovich-robert-rodriguez -100-years-1201644846/. I owe this reference to Alexander Cull.

Jerusalem has chosen to mark the centenary of Einstein's theory of relativity not by looking back or reiterating his achievement, but by seeking out one hundred visions from visionary thinkers in our own time and anthologizing them in a way that can inspire the next generation in the way that Einstein fired our parents and grandparents.[31]

The era of social media has opened up fresh possibilities, but it has not erased the relevance of the rich history of public diplomacy or the knowledge of seasoned practitioners. On the contrary, the lessons of our collective experience seem even more relevant in an age in which communications play an unprecedented role. Whether the communications travel electronically at the speed of light or in hand-delivered notes written with quills and spread at the speed of a horse, the underlying foundations remain as valid today as they were when the term 'public diplomacy' was coined in the 1960s, or in previous centuries when generations practised the art oblivious to its name. We have seen that people can be driven apart by fear, but they can also be drawn together by hope. Public diplomacy can be the mechanism for communicating that hope, but still more importantly, when given the right vision and the right interconnection, public diplomacy can be part of the process by which the publics themselves become the hope.

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31   For Genius 100 visions, see http://genius100visions.com/.