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Engaging the Private Sector for the Public Good: The Power of Network Diplomacy

POLICY BRIEF

By Kristin M. Lord

With the launch of the first ever Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), Washington echoes with calls for the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to play a more prominent role in national security policy. The most surprising advocate for this view is Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. “America’s civilian institutions of diplomacy and development have been chronically undermanned and underfunded for far too long, relative to what we spend on the military,” he observes.¹ The State Department couldn’t agree more. Thus, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and supporters both inside and outside of the U.S. government are arguing for more resources, greater capacities, and clearer authorities for the civilian agencies tasked with implementing U.S. foreign and national security policies. They aim to empower the State Department and USAID by putting more civilians in more places and

enhancing their capabilities to take on a wider range of new and existing national security responsibilities.

All of this makes sense. America needs stronger civilian agencies to respond to the complex national security challenges of the 21st century. But with all the talk of increasing the State Department’s role, and a major review process under way to prepare State for that responsibility, one key question remains. Namely, what shouldn’t the State Department do? If strategy is the marriage of priorities, capabilities, and resources, in what areas is State best equipped to facilitate but not to lead? What should the department leave to others?

Analysis by Anne-Marie Slaughter, the State Department’s Director of Policy Planning and co-chair for the QDDR process, suggests a new way forward. Before joining the Department, Slaughter articulated a new vision of diplomacy for the 21st century, known as “network diplomacy.” According to this vision, “the state with the most connections will be the central player, able to set the global agenda and unlock innovation and sustainable growth.” Slaughter emphasizes, “[N]etworked power flows from the ability to make the maximum number of valuable connections” between governments, corporations, non-governmental

organizations (NGOs), and individuals, and from having the “knowledge and skills to harness that power to achieve a common purpose.”² A key issue, then, is how to catalyze the creation of positive connections in support of national and shared global interests and how to strengthen networks that already exist. These linkages are especially important to the State Department, which builds relationships as part of its core mission but – like many large organizations – is constantly challenged not to let the urgent overwhelm the important and not to let pressing short-term demands overwhelm vital long-term objectives.

The United States is well positioned to take advantage of networks to advance its diplomatic goals, especially in the vital areas of strategic public engagement and public diplomacy.³ In this arena, State can demonstrate a new way of leadership: the power of leading by orchestrating broad networks. The State Department itself would still play a central (and hopefully even more important) role in public diplomacy and its efforts require more resources, more people, and – darn it – more respect. But to supplement the work of the State Department, this paper proposes a new organization, called the USA•World Trust, which would unleash the power of the private sector to further America’s public diplomacy interests.⁴ Reports published by the Council on Foreign Relations, Defense Science Board Task on Strategic Communication, CSIS Commission on Smart Power, Brookings Institution, Center for the Study of the Presidency, and Heritage Foundation, among others, each recommended some variation of such an organization.⁵ If the State Department is truly poised to rethink the future of diplomacy through the QDDR, now is the time to act on these bipartisan recommendations.

By whatever name, this organization’s core mission would be to:

- Amplify independent foreign and U.S. voices in support of American national interests.
- Build long-term people-to-people relationships between Americans and foreign societies.
- Offer to the world a more nuanced vision of America than what is commonly found in foreign media or pop cultural products like Hollywood movies.
- Help create an environment of mutual trust, respect, and understanding where cooperation is more feasible.
- Strengthen the government’s public diplomacy effort by tapping private sector expertise in communications, public opinion research, and new technologies.

The Trust would provide grants to U.S. and foreign organizations able to advance these goals and serve as a hub of collaboration between government agencies and the private sector.

This paper outlines the purpose, activities, governance, and structure of such an organization, drawing heavily on recommendations made in the author’s 2008 Brookings Institution Report, *Voices of America: U.S. Public Diplomacy for the 21st Century*. That report, in turn, drew on the expertise of an esteemed bipartisan board of advisors, a review of existing recommendations, substantial research, and interviews with more than 300 individuals in the public, private, and non-profit sectors across the United States.

To be clear, many of the USA•World Trust’s objectives and activities would not be entirely new. Indeed, the United States Information Agency (USIA), which existed for more than 45 years before being shuttered in a 1999 deal between Senator

Jesse Helms and the Clinton Administration, spent decades experimenting with innovative new communications technologies, commissioning films, creating new exchange programs, sponsoring cultural performances, and organizing exhibits like the one at the famous 1959 World Fair that witnessed the famous “Kitchen Debate” between U.S. Vice President Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev.⁶ Many of these activities were absorbed by the State Department, but at a substantially reduced level. The budget for public diplomacy was cut by roughly 50 percent, and despite renewed interest in public diplomacy after 9/11, funding has increased only slightly beyond pre-1999 highs.⁷

Though many regret the demise of USIA, we should view its absence as an opportunity to ask what capabilities our nation will need for the next fifty years and what institutions should house them.

However, it is worth underscoring that this paper does not advocate simply recreating USIA under a new name. Creating a large new bureaucracy would absorb enormous energy and resources and create competition and overlapping authorities between government agencies. Moreover, the world has changed. Information and communications technologies have proliferated, creating innumerable ways to connect easily and cheaply with foreign counterparts. The number of companies and NGOs with a global reach has exploded. And the U.S. government has come to appreciate the power of the private sector and fast-moving, decentralized, private networks. Though many regret the demise of USIA, we should view its absence as an opportunity to ask what capabilities our nation will need for the next fifty years and what institutions should house them.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND THE POWER OF NETWORKS

Due to the spread of democracy, the wider availability of information and communications technologies that make it easier to mobilize popular support, and the growing number of foreign policy challenges that cannot be solved by any one state, foreign publics have increasing power to facilitate or block the achievement of U.S. national security interests. Whether the United States seeks to combat terrorism or climate change, encourage allies to send more troops to Afghanistan or place harsher sanctions on Iran, foreign publics carry enormous influence. Furthermore, today’s struggle against violent extremism is just as much a battle of ideas as was the Cold War. Though the world has changed tremendously, the ability to win support for a political and social ideal, attack competing visions, and undermine the people and networks that hold those competing visions remains crucial to success.

As a result, new strategies must also include engaging, persuading, and offering an appealing vision to foreign publics. Public engagement constitutes a powerful strategic instrument that can advance America’s broader national security objectives, in concert with diplomatic, economic, and military efforts. Accepting this view does not entail believing that America must change its policies because of foreign opinion. Rather, the United States must be more proactive in reaching out to foreign societies and building communities of shared interests and values. President Obama and Secretary Clinton understand this well. The President has systematically engaged global opinion in a number of major speeches – in Cairo, Ghana, Prague, and the UN General Assembly meeting in New York – all of which spurred extensive outreach campaigns beyond the speeches themselves. Similarly, the Secretary of State has made active public diplomacy an important part of her travels overseas,

incorporating interviews with local media, meeting with business and NGO representatives, and other public outreach efforts.

Yet, the actions of the President and Secretary of State alone are insufficient.⁸ To create the vast web of relationships needed to tackle today's challenges, the United States should also build a dense network of personal relationships and partnerships between Americans and societies globally. Applying Slaughter's principles of network diplomacy to public engagement, the U.S. government should create long-standing institutions that mobilize individuals "to go their own way, come up with their own ideas, and counter orthodoxies at every turn" in service of the national interest.⁹ President Obama and Secretary Clinton can and should play vital roles, but they should also harness the energies of U.S. businesses, universities, charitable institutions, NGOs, faith groups, and private citizens. Consequently, the U.S. government should expand educational and professional exchanges, sister cities programs, jointly produced media products, co-developed cultural activities, joint scientific research projects, co-developed social networking sites, co-produced fundraisers for humanitarian causes, and co-written textbooks. Efforts to expand such engagement could build on preexisting shared interests in education, economic vitality, innovation, and scientific advancement. It would also contribute to mutual trust that facilitates cooperation more broadly.

We must also be honest about the limits of the U.S. government. Like it or not, the President and Secretary of State are not the most persuasive voices to every constituency worldwide. Those attracted to radical Islam are unlikely to be swayed by an American politician, even a gifted orator like President Obama. Those attracted to models of authoritarian capitalism or the populist socialism of Latin America may not be moved by words of

the Secretary of the Treasury or the Secretary of State. Moreover, individuals who would be persuasive (for instance, respected imams, human rights leaders, or authors) may only be tarnished if given a platform or funds by a U.S. government agency. Thus, it is necessary to think creatively about how to support these voices without undermining them in the process.

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If the State Department – and the U.S. government more broadly – can find ways to empower the energies of diverse actors, it will unleash the tremendous creative energies of Americans and their counterparts worldwide. Consider the example of Boeing, which has moved from a model of traditional manufacturing to a "systems integrator" that orchestrates a network of actors who work as partners to collaboratively achieve common goals.¹⁰ This is not outsourcing, but rather the creation of a web of partnerships in which participants pool knowledge, work together, and share responsibilities. The return on this type of investment is exponential; the power of networks enables the investment of creativity, energy, or money to have an expansive reach.

INSTITUTIONALIZING INNOVATION

America needs to engage foreign publics using a diverse range of methods and voices and with greater speed and ability than ever before. Our country needs to appeal to shared interests and values in ways that resonate both locally and globally. However, this presents a challenge. No single entity, even the U.S. government, has the ability to express the depth and richness of American ideals and culture to diverse audiences around the world.

Fortunately, America is uniquely well positioned to meet this challenge. We are a nation of immigrants with roots that extend in every direction. We welcome visitors from around the world to study, work, and travel. Our nation is home to Hollywood and the Gates Foundation, the Peace Corps and Camp Lejeune, Silicon Valley and McDonalds, NASA and the New York Philharmonic, Wall Street and the NBA. All of these institutions hold powerful appeal with different constituencies around the globe. Most importantly, our nation is built upon compelling shared ideals that remain attractive to foreign audiences even when American policies are not. Indeed, publics worldwide increasingly share ideals like support for political pluralism, free markets, human rights, and tolerance.¹¹

Unlike many other nations, America has embraced decentralized approaches to higher education, culture, scientific research, and economic competitiveness, and in the process created the finest universities, most creative arts and entertainment, most advanced science and technology, and the most innovative businesses in the world. The nation is well served when it embraces this diversity, advancing the whole by empowering the many. This pluralistic approach is powerful. It fosters healthy competition and cooperation. It allows for a greater reach and greater creativity than any centralized organization could master. This decentralized approach is worth implementing in U.S. public

diplomacy programs as well, as part of a larger effort to strengthen the nation's global engagement.

Since the objectives of the USA•World Trust are shared by the State Department and other government agencies, the Trust should focus on areas in which it would have a comparative advantage — where it could add value and traverse sensitive boundaries that even the most talented public diplomacy professionals simply cannot tread by virtue of their role as public servants and stewards of U.S. diplomacy. The organization would not compete with the State Department; any attempt to do so would result in colossal failure. Instead, it should constitute a new instrument that would help support the achievement of American national interests, similar to the ways in which the U.S. Institute of Peace assists the Department of Defense (DOD) in developing guidelines for the conduct of stability operations, the National Science Foundation provides grants to support private scientific research, the National Endowment for Democracy supports dissidents and democracy advocates in ways that are different from but complementary to State Department activities, the Wilson Center combines public and private dollars to support first-class research related to foreign affairs, and the U.S. Civilian Research and Development Foundation promotes international science and technology cooperation, especially with the former Soviet Union and predominantly Muslim societies.

To clarify how the USA•World Trust would fit into a broad American public diplomacy strategy, it is useful to recall the five strategic objectives of public diplomacy:¹²

1. Informing, engaging, and persuading foreign audiences in support of specific policies.

This function is, and should clearly remain, the sole domain of the State Department.

2. *Promoting understanding of America, its institutions, values, and people in all their complexity in order to, at a minimum, help publics put information about the United States in proper context and – more ambitiously – enhance America’s appeal.*

This function could successfully be shared by the State Department and the Trust, which would focus on engaging a multitude of different state and non-state actors to advance this objective.

3. *Creating a climate of mutual understanding, respect, and trust in which cooperation is more feasible.*

This function too would be shared by the State Department and the Trust, with the latter focused on facilitating and expanding partnerships between private organizations in the United States and private organizations in partner countries.

4. *Encouraging support for shared values – whether free markets, the illegitimacy of suicide bombing, the need to act against human trafficking, or environmental protection – that support American interests.*

The State Department has long established programs that advance these norms. The Trust would focus on engaging new audiences and new voices that the State Department cannot engage as easily or systematically.

5. *Strengthening the dense network of personal relationships between current and future societal leaders, opening channels of communication that can reduce conflict and confusion, and facilitating the achievement of common goals.*

The State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs supports educational and professional exchanges to the tune of more than 500 million dollars per year.¹³ It also supports the Fulbright program and the International Visitor Leadership program, independent efforts that

engage private groups across the country and around the world. The Trust would focus on working with new groups, such as trade associations, associations of state and local government leaders, scientific organizations, and diaspora groups not currently engaged in such activities. In addition, it would provide an additional funding stream for educational and cultural exchange organizations that wish to innovate or expand their programs.

CORE FUNCTIONS

What specifically would the USA•World Trust do? This paper, and the *Voices of America* report from which these recommendations are drawn, suggest five key types of activities.

Grant-making and Venture Capital

The Trust would invest in programs or individuals that provide more nuanced images of American society, build partnerships with foreign organizations that promote mutual understanding, support foreign voices that advocate for shared values, confront violent extremism and other dangerous ideas or ideologies, or offer seed money to valuable new organizations and projects that have the potential to become self-sufficient.

For instance, the Trust could fund news broadcasts or films co-produced by U.S. and foreign journalists; international distribution of American news or documentary programs such as the FX series *Thirty Days* or the documentary *Spellbound*; co-produced fundraisers such as U.S. and foreign musicians raising funds for an issue of common concern such as polio; extra tour stops and community outreach by groups like the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater; translation projects that bring unfamiliar American perspectives to foreign audiences; speaking tours and media engagements by American technology leaders or Nobel prize-winning scientists; activities by professional societies that build on commonalities despite different views regarding politics, religion or ethnicity; textbooks co-authored by U.S.

and foreign scholars; or educational NGOs with promising business plans for fee-for-service English instruction.

At a time when the U.S. government's heavy reliance on contractors receives abundant criticism, it is important to explain why this model deserves support.¹⁴ The typical purpose of using contractors is to outsource certain functions to organizations that can perform these tasks more efficiently than the government can; the motive is largely economic. The Trust, in contrast, would empower independent voices able to do what government cannot; the motive is not economic. But rather, its objectives are credibility, reach, and effectiveness.

Research and Analysis

The USA•World Trust should commission independent research and analysis, distribute relevant knowledge in a form useful to public diplomacy and strategic communication professionals, lead external evaluation teams by request, and collect and disseminate best practices. To set that agenda, it should consult regularly with practitioners and policy leaders to diagnose their needs. Currently, useful information and insights do exist, but they are not collected or disseminated in a form useful to practitioners. Thus, a key function of the organization should be not only to collect and analyze information but also to work with practitioners to translate that information into actionable programs.

For instance, the Trust could commission studies on the evolving use of technology by young people in a particular country or region, the relationship between development assistance and public opinion, where citizens of particular countries get their news and information and whether those who speak English as a second language get news from a more diverse range of sources than non-English speakers, how to evaluate the impact of public diplomacy programs, or how to tap into the

power of diaspora and expatriate communities. It could commission research intended to teach practitioners and – following the example of the U.S. military – independent case studies designed to capture lessons learned (e.g. the public affairs activities surrounding the provision of disaster assistance or the public diplomacy surrounding President Obama's major speeches in Cairo and Ghana).

Media and Technology Programs

The Trust's media and technology program should seek effective communication tools, compelling media content, and appealing new applications in support of its organizational mission. In some circumstances, the program should commission products for radio, television, mobile phones, podcasts, on-line games, DVDs, print publications, web pages, or other vehicles of engagement. More commonly, the program should search for existing products, test them with international audiences, and adapt them for wider use by the organization itself, government agencies, or appropriate third parties in the United States or overseas. The Trust should also monitor new and emerging technologies, when and how they are employed in different world regions, and where a given technology could be deployed effectively. This effort will require a deep knowledge of other cultures, values, and preferences and how they differ from the U.S. context.

The Trust could also effectively tap the expertise of the private sector in ways the government cannot. For instance, during the research for the *Voices of America* study, the author learned of one major American information technology company that would be willing to detail some of its experts to help the State Department make better use of the Internet. However, it was uncomfortable with the idea of sending them to sit in the government, finding the "neutral territory" of an independent organization more attractive.

Convening, Networking and Outreach

The USA•World Trust would bring together people, resources, and ideas. Introducing the right partners to each other is an under-supplied public good, and one the Trust would be well positioned to provide. For instance, the Trust could convene government agencies, marketing experts, pollsters, and NGOs to draft a multi-dimensional strategy for engaging Arab youth; network with public diplomacy professionals in the field to determine what information or tools they would need to be more successful; convene members of the tourist and travel industry to identify collaborative initiatives to attract more visitors to the United States for longer periods of time; or network with the independent public diplomacy institutions of allied countries (e.g. the British Council and Germany's Goethe Institute) and identify areas of possible collaboration. These institutions cannot easily work with the State Department due to the need to triangulate delicate relationships between themselves, the State Department, and their own foreign ministries, from which they are formally independent.

Visiting Fellows Program

The Trust should host visitors from private companies, universities, NGOs, the armed services, and government agencies for short- and long-term assignments. Visitors would contribute new ideas, expertise, and contacts to the task of improving America's relations within the global community. Visitors could work on special projects, conduct research, apply new technologies to public diplomacy challenges, or develop new media products. Ideally, they could work in multidisciplinary teams, engaging expertise from seasoned diplomats, the private sector, and NGOs.

The result would be a much-needed professional development opportunity for public diplomacy professionals, who currently have far fewer opportunities for such experiences than their military

counterparts. It would also provide the talent to incubate new ideas that are directly useful to the State Department and other agencies.

STRUCTURE

The USA•World Trust should be an independent organization as only this status would give it the freedom to accomplish its core mission effectively. Independence will allow the organization to work with a broader range of actors, offer candid and unbiased analytical research to government institutions and most importantly, stay nimble and flexible enough to circumvent bureaucratic hurdles. Being independent also would free the organization from day to day policy concerns and crises, allowing it to take chances and experiment without the risk of embarrassing senior officials or the U.S. government.

The U.S. government, and the State Department specifically, should have numerous mechanisms to oversee and guide the strategy and priorities of the USA•World Trust. Through a formula of formal independence, extreme transparency of operation, and instruments of "soft power" provided to government agencies and leaders, the Trust would strike the balance of independence and service necessary to serve our nation's interests over the long term.

Formal independence is recommended for several reasons:

1. Credibility and authenticity: For some foreign audiences, the official voice of the U.S. government is the most credible and persuasive voice in the world. But for others, it is not. Sometimes peers (journalists speaking to other journalists or mayors speaking to other mayors) are more influential. Sometimes independent voices from diaspora communities are valuable bridge builders. Especially in populations distrustful of the U.S. government – and there are more than a few of these in the

world – finding new channels to identify common interests and dispel unfair stereotypes benefits everyone involved. The USA•World Trust could engage these independent voices. Its lack of a policy agenda and distance from the formal centers of power in the U.S. government could make it all the more useful, allowing it to fill an important gap in American public diplomacy capabilities.

2. Engaging sensitive audiences: Some formal distance from government would allow the Trust to engage new or controversial groups, such as former terrorists now willing to speak out against terrorism, reach out to politically sensitive audiences (e.g., the Venezuelan or Syrian publics), or work with edgier media that engage young people but are risky venues for government officials who, quite understandably, find such appearances unduly precarious in light of their official status. While engaging these audiences may serve American interests and carry the support of American diplomats, the outsized signals sent or the attention generated when American diplomats take these steps make them overly risky. For instance, the last decade witnessed significant engagement between American and Iranian scientists. Such initiatives were led by non-profit organizations with the tacit support but not the official imprimatur of the U.S. government. Among other things, these exchanges allowed for extremely rare contact between U.S. scientists, who are highly respected in Iran, and hundreds, if not thousands, of Iranian youth who have had all too few chances to meet Americans and evaluate for themselves whether their regime's propaganda about American society is accurate.

3. Risk-taking: An oft-discussed theme in QDDR debates is the need for State Department officials to take calculated risks in order to reap large rewards. Though there is certainly room for improvement in this regard, we should also be realistic about how much risk we want diplomats to accept. Indeed,

there are good reasons for diplomats to be cautious when they are representing the complex policies of the most powerful nation in the world, regarding highly sensitive issues, under the microscope of the global media. The USA•World Trust could fill an important niche by having more freedom to experiment and make mistakes than cautious government agencies. Its status as a small and independent non-profit organization would allow the opportunity to take risks, since it need not be as worried about embarrassing senior officials or the U.S. government. Indeed, like a good venture capital fund, if the Trust does not make mistakes, it is being too cautious to generate the desired return on investment.

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4. Fundraising: The USA•World Trust could actively fundraise and pool monies from government agencies and private funders with greater ease and fewer risks of influence-peddling. Though the State Department is legally allowed to solicit funds, there is a real possibility that the public or private actors will perceive a quid pro quo even if the behavior of government officials is beyond reproach. Moreover, the Trust could act as a “central bank” for long-term fundraising campaigns with multiple stakeholders. For instance, many foreign universities seek help to raise funds for professors of American Studies but the State Department cannot assist due to lack of staff and higher priorities that need attention. To give another example, the Secretary of State is currently raising 60 million dollars in private money to

support an American pavilion at the 2010 World's Fair in Shanghai, a feat at which she is succeeding, but at the expense of unsettling some legislators in the process.¹⁵ The Trust could also form partnerships to pool money with foreign governments, as do the Peace Corps and the Fulbright program.

An important mission of the USA•World Trust would be to focus on what is not currently a high priority at the State Department – but will become a priority in five or ten years.

5. Bandwidth: Even if the State Department receives the resources it needs, the very nature of its work draws attention away from long-term objectives and toward short-term crises. In a complex and dangerous world, this is a near inevitability. To have the space to innovate, incubate, and build new programs – a time-consuming business – a separate institution could insulate those with a long-term focus from short-term policy pressures. Indeed, an important mission of the USA•World Trust would be to focus on what is not currently a high priority at the State Department – but will become a priority in five or ten years. Having not just more people, but people with a mission compatible to but different from the State Department, could give the U.S. government the bandwidth necessary to accomplish both short and long-term objectives.

6. Objectivity and Freedom: The State Department and other U.S. government agencies involved in strategic public engagement need an honest broker that can provide or commission objective analysis and research. Unlike the DOD, which has several Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) at its disposal, the State Department's public diplomacy staff has nowhere

to turn for independent research that is directly relevant to their mission. As countless experiences in the author's home think tank demonstrate, independent organizations have far more freedom to engage diverse opinions, bring together key actors without the usual government-related worries about rank and protocol, and speak frankly. This autonomy is of great service to the government, and when employed constructively, can help its departments perform better.

Independent organizations are also free of the many restrictions that (quite properly) impede the work of government. For instance, Federal Advisory Commission Act (FACA) restrictions not only preclude government organizations from convening experts without notices in the Federal Register or meeting requirements for clearances from multiple government agencies and offices, but also place restrictions on hiring employees to meet short-term needs. Of course, the Trust would maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct and be subject to rigorous oversight. However, a small NGO should not require the same level of bureaucratic constraint as major U.S. government agencies tasked with presenting the official position of the United States overseas or using lethal force to advance American interests.

Governance and Accountability

The USA•World Trust should be governed by a non-partisan board of directors approved by Congress. These individuals should possess distinguished records of service to the country and include members of Congress from both major political parties, as well as individuals from relevant sectors of American society. To select the initial board of directors, Congress should appoint an esteemed bipartisan group that includes senior representatives from the State Department, the DOD, and USAID, as well as representatives from higher education, the business community, the media and

entertainment industries, science and technology, and other sectors.

The Trust should have a clear mandate, charter, and by-laws to guide its operations. This mandate should make clear that the Trust will not engage in policy advocacy and there should be no confusion that State, and not the Trust, is vested with the authority to represent official U.S. foreign policy to foreign governments and societies. To reinforce this role, the Trust should remain small in size and be prohibited from operating posts overseas.

The Trust should embrace transparency, publishing a detailed annual report, submitted to Congress and available to the general public. It should be subject to Freedom of Information Act requests, guaranteeing access to its inner workings and decisions. The Trust should not engage in covert activities or handle classified material for any reason.

To ensure that the Trust serves national needs, it should convene a semi-annual meeting of senior government leaders from the State Department, the DOD, USAID, and other government agencies. As part of its annual report to Congress, it should be required to submit an evaluation from the National Security Council's Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications and the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, as well as other equivalent DOD and USAID representatives. These letters should evaluate the extent to which the Trust is providing the services for which it was created and inform the annual congressional funding decisions.

Budget

The Trust should build the capacity to effectively spend a 50 million-dollar annual budget of seed money from Congress plus substantial funds raised from outside sources. If the Trust is successful, it should be able to attract support from government contracts and partnerships with NGOs and

even foreign governments. As a 501(c)3 organization, the Trust would be able to accept charitable donations. This model is realistic. To give just two

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examples, both the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in the United States and the British Council receive about one-third of their budgets from government sources and use those funds as a critical foundation for further fundraising. Other federally funded organizations such as the Asia Foundation, the U.S. Civilian Research and Development Foundation, and the East-West Center also combine federal funding with non-governmental funds.

However, government funds are an essential foundation for this organization. If the Trust is to serve U.S. national interests, its priorities must be driven by those interests and not the funding priorities of donors. Too many NGOs have altered their mission in order to survive financially. The Trust's mission is too important to succumb to such fiscal pressures. To put the proposed investment of 50 million dollars in context, it represents only a tiny fraction of the defense budget, now over 680 billion dollars.¹⁶ It is a minor investment, which would do much to support national security interests now and in the future. In the best-case scenario, it would help to marginalize and minimize the number of enemies America will face and to strengthen ties to allies with whom the U.S. military may need to fight alongside.

Some supporters of the USA•World Trust question

whether the proposed investment is sufficient. To this question, there are three responses. First, the amount is realistic. In the current economic climate, a larger budget would be difficult to justify. Second, this investment represents seed money that should be leveraged to raise additional funds. Third, the USA•World Trust must prove its worth. Congress can always choose to increase the budget over time, as it did with the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Institute of Peace – though it should be careful not to undermine the Trust’s agility by allowing it get too big.

The culture and ethos of the organization will be a critical factor in its success. The Trust must envision itself as a force multiplier rather than an operational organization and it must take pride in fostering the success of others.

All this said, Congress should only invest in the USA•World Trust if it does not draw already limited resources away from the State Department’s public diplomacy efforts. Though reforms and reallocations are necessary at State, its public diplomacy budget is already painfully small relative to its mission. Of equal importance, the Trust should not be created unless it is given enough resources to make a significant impact. A shell organization, with resources only sufficient to sustain it, cannot even dent the public diplomacy challenges America faces in the future. It would be a waste of taxpayer dollars.

Size and Staffing

The USA•World Trust should be small, with staff numbering in the tens to start and not exceeding 150 for the foreseeable future, if it is to remain nimble and avoid taking on missions best left to others. To remain creative and multidisciplinary,

it should draw staff from a wide variety of backgrounds and welcome visitors from a broad range of sectors across American society. Like the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), program staff should be required to leave after a determined period of time to ensure the constant injection of fresh ideas. A visiting fellows program for government employees would give public diplomacy and strategic communications professionals the opportunity to work on special projects or to participate in teams involving people from the public, private, and non-profit sectors.

The culture and ethos of the organization will be a critical factor in its success. The Trust must envision itself as a force multiplier rather than an operational organization and it must take pride in fostering the success of others. To fulfill its proper role, the Trust’s culture must be distinct from those of partner agencies within the federal government.

EMBRACING NETWORK DIPLOMACY

In creating the National Endowment for Democracy, the U.S. Institute of Peace, the U.S. Civilian Research and Development Corporations, and FFRDCs like the RAND Corporation, the U.S. government demonstrated remarkable forethought and self-awareness, recognizing what its core agencies have the time and inclination to focus on and which tasks should be performed by independent entities. The USA•World Trust would continue this proud tradition, engaging the best of America to support the long-term interests of the nation.

As the State Department and USAID undertake the first QDDR, it is worth considering the full set of capabilities the U.S. government needs to engage foreign publics effectively. The State Department is full of highly talented and skilled public diplomacy professionals who should be part of the solution. Yet their jobs will be easier and their ultimate objectives more attainable if they are part of a broader, international effort that more fully

mobilizes an extensive and diverse network of individuals and organizations, each uniquely poised to connect with some individuals and organizations and not others.

Implementing the concept of “network diplomacy” will not be easy, whether at the State Department or throughout the U.S. government more broadly. It will require the State Department to recognize that an organization such as the USA•World Trust is in its interest and would provide it with a powerful new set of tools, even though it would not control the Trust’s behavior directly. However, network diplomacy is precisely the concept America needs to engage the rest of the world more persuasively and credibly. The State Department should lead the effort to nurture new and sustainable networks that can operate independently with few additional resources from the government. Then, it should step aside and let those networks bloom.

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Endnotes

1. William Matthews, “Can Obama Get Results From ‘Soft Power’?” *Defense News* [online version] (19 January 2009), <http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=3907876&c=FEA&s=SPE>.
2. Anne-Marie Slaughter, “America’s Edge: Power in the Networked Century,” *Foreign Affairs* 88 (January/February 2009): 94-113.
3. The author prefers the “strategic public engagement” because it gets away from the bureaucratic turf battles implied when using the term public diplomacy (seen as something the State Department does) or strategic communications (seen as something the Defense Department does). For the first use of this term, see Kristin M. Lord, John A. Nagl, and Seth Rosen, *Beyond Bullets: A Pragmatic Strategy to Combat Violent Extremism* (Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, 2009). For a discussion of these organizational turf battles, see posts to Matt Armstrong’s blog MountainRunner.us
4. This policy brief draws heavily on Kristin M. Lord, *Voices of America: U.S. Public Diplomacy for the 21st Century*, The Brookings Institution (November 2008), http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/reports/2008/11_public_diplomacy_lord/11_public_diplomacy_lord.pdf. This report was advised by a bipartisan group that included Craig Barrett, R. Nicholas Burns, James L. Jones, Gary Knell, Andrew Natsios, Cokie Roberts, Wendy Sherman, Strobe Talbott, Charles Vest, and William Walton.
5. Lord, *Voices of America*: 17. For a summary of the various reports see also, Chris Paul, *Whither Strategic Communication? A Survey of Current Proposals and Recommendations* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2009). See also Peter G. Peterson, ed., *Finding America’s Voice: A Strategy for Reinvigorating Public Diplomacy*, (Washington, DC: Council on Foreign Relations, 2003); Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication, *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication*, (September, 2004); Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, Jr, eds., *CSIS Commission on Smart Power: A smarter, more secure America*, (Washington, D.C: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007); Patrick Cronin, Helle C. Dale, Stephen Johnson, “Strengthening U.S. Public Diplomacy Requires Organization, Coordination, and Strategy,” The Heritage Foundation, Backgrounder #1875, (5 August 5 2005).

6. For a full discussion, see Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

7. *CSIS Commission on Smart Power, A Smarter, More Secure America* (6 November 2007): 47-48. See also Stephen Johnson, Helle C. Dale, and Patrick Cronin, PhD, *Strengthening U.S. Public Diplomacy Requires Organization, Coordination, and Strategy* (Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation, 2005). See also, Neil R. Klopfenstein, "USIA's Integration into the State Department: Advocating Policy Trumps Promoting Mutual Understanding," (Washington, DC: National War College, 2003).

8. This section echoes points made by the author and Stephen Grand in "To Rebuild U.S.-Muslim World Relations, Obama is Not Enough," *The Huffington Post* [weblog], (26 March 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stephen-rgrand-and-kristin-m-lord/to-rebuild-us-muslim-worl_b_179511.html).

9. Slaughter, "America's Edge."

10. Ibid.

11. See World Public Opinion.org polls such as, "World Publics Say Governments Should Be More Responsive to the

Will of the People" WorldPublicOpinion.org [weblog] (12 May 2008), http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/governance_bt/482.php.

12. For a discussion, see *Voices of America* and Kristin M. Lord, "Strategic Communication 101: What Strategic Communication Is, Isn't, and Should Be," *Joint Force Quarterly*, 56 (January 2010).

13. U.S. Department of State, *The Budget In Brief – FY2010* (May 7, 2009).

14. For a more detailed discussion on contractors, see Richard Fontaine and John Nagl, "Contractors in American Conflicts: Adapting To A New Reality," Center for a New American Security, Working Paper (16 December 2009), http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/ContractorConflicts_FontaineNagl_Dec2009_workingpaper_1.pdf.

15. Mark Landler and David Barboza, "For Shanghai Fair, Famous Fundraiser Delivers," *New York Times* (3 January 2010): A1.

16. U.S. Department of Defense, "Fiscal Year 2009 Department of Defense Budget Released," News Release No. 0090-08 (4 February 2008), <http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=11663>.

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