

December 31, 2006

To: Walter Anderson

From: Lloyd Etheredge

Re: How the UN Can Foster Policy Analysis, Learning, and International Cooperation to Achieve Its Goals

Proposal:

That the Secretary-General convene an advisory group of journalists, thinktank leaders, and foundation and communication industry executives (e.g., the BBC) to assess how new communications technology can accelerate international policy discussions, learning, agenda-building, and the evaluation of new ideas among government and NGO professionals. (One possibility will be the creation of a Global Affairs Channel, using Internet technology, based on the model of C-SPAN in the United States.)

Background:

In the 1990s I participated in a study of Public Diplomacy in the Information Age organized by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (US). As part of this project I was invited to chair a working group to assess the technical and economic feasibility of a global C-SPAN, using new Internet technology (desktop television). This Global Affairs Channel would acquire programming of international interest from agenda-setting institutions from many sites, worldwide, and make it available on the desktops of government and NGO professionals in all countries. Our modest goal - rather than to dump hundreds of megabytes onto desktops - was to provide busy professionals, in each policy area, with one hour per week of "must see" programming.¹ We hoped that, with

¹ We identified policy topics by the UN Millennium Goals list and a similar list of American foreign policy goals used (in the late 1990s) by the Department of State. We were encouraged by the UN's valuable ReliefWeb (www.reliefweb.int) that helps to plan, and coordinate, international responses to humanitarian emergencies. And which senior State Department officials said was often more useful than reports they received via official cable

sponsorship from the USIA, this high visibility Webcasting channel (and an on-demand archive) would help to knit together an international policy and learning process; provide a degree of due process to help good ideas find supporters; and convey political respect. We also felt that - simply from an American perspective - we had alarming gaps in our knowledge of global policy discussions in other countries - e.g., what Chinese specialists, for example, were thinking about the Middle East or the functioning (and needed reforms, if any) of the international financial system.

We found great enthusiasm for this linkup idea from more than a hundred US and Canadian NGOs, foundations, and thinktanks that we surveyed (a partial list is attached). Many of them invest substantial funds in policy analysis books and Reports, but with the anxiety that - often - only a brief Executive Summary actually will be read in Washington or that the work might be ignored altogether. The ability to convey a one-hour symposium, in a high-visibility channel to a global audience of professionals, was a highly attractive option, and most organizations indicated their willingness to record their material to professional standards, digitize it, and submit it in a standard format at their expense.^{2 3}

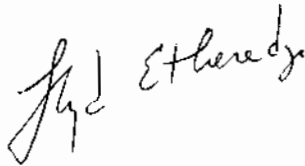
Suggestion

traffic from US embassies, foreign embassies in Washington, the CIA, and other traditional sources.

² We anticipated granting x hours/year of air time to selected institutions, for discussions in broad categories, with specific content to be their responsibilities. A review committee could add programming (in the interest of balance) but could not censor the discussions.

³ We also felt that the C-SPAN model should be improved. In the US, it is difficult to know what C-SPAN will be broadcasting. By contrast, a planning group in each area could help to make journalistic/policy judgments about what the Global Affairs Channel users wanted to see. The Internet also allows archiving, options for abstracts, indexing, ordering copies of reports, etc. to serve needs of different users. Several of these improvements are now used by www.kaisernetwork.org and the World Bank's B-SPAN service.

The United States government decided, several years ago, that public diplomacy would remain “telling America’s story to the world” rather than a serious engagement in problem-solving dialogue and the strengthening of daily/routine working relationships across national boundaries. The USIA/Voice of America’s senior leadership also said (unofficially) that they no longer had the international expertise or people to follow policy-setting institutions and discussions in different countries and to lead such a project. My suggestion is that the BBC probably does have the leadership, credibility, sense of responsibility, and expertise to develop such a project with support from the NGO community; and could take the lead if asked by the Secretary General to evaluate the idea.⁴

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lloyd Etheredge". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

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⁴ My working group envisioned a low budget project. However several signature programs (e.g., weekly roundtables of journalists or interview programs) can be developed by the BBC and serve different “niche” policy audiences. The budgets for international cooperation are increasing - e.g., the Clinton Global Initiative is planning to raise billions of dollars: a Global Affairs Channel would be a natural complement to these efforts and to the bold mandates of UN Millennium Development goals.

Startup Programming for a Global Affairs Channel (partial list - 5/99)

The following organizations have been briefed about the Global Affairs Channel proposal, have indicated their interest to discuss participation, and have designated a contact person.

I. Foundations, Scientific Societies, Universities, NGO's

AAAS (Public Understanding of Science)
American Psychological Association (global linkups of specialists in ethnopolitical warfare, w/ Mellon Foundation and the Canadian Psychological Association)
Amnesty International (US)
Brookings Institution
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Council for Excellence in Government
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Freedom Forum
Harvard Law School (Human Rights Program)
InterAction
International Society for Political Psychology
International Studies Association
MacArthur Foundation
Markle Foundation
MIT: Center for Educational Computing Initiatives and AI Lab
National Committee for US-China Relations
National Research Council
New York Academy of Sciences
Overseas Development Council
Princeton University: Center for International Studies
Sigma Xi
Smithsonian Institution
Worldwatch Institute
Yale Medical School

II. Government Agencies

Center for Disease Control.
Commerce [pollution-free manufacturing].
Defense [humanitarian land mine removal, incl. tests of equipment]
Energy [renewable energy research].
EPA
NIH [their lecture series, which are international crossroads for new developments in research, medical practices, and international cooperation in public health.]
NOAA. [forecasting climate variations in the Southern hemisphere & their impacts].
State [Secretary's Open Forum; developing a Global Disaster Information Network].
USAID.
VITA.

U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS AND STRATEGIC GOALS

National Security:

- Ensure that local and regional instabilities do not threaten the security and well-being of the United States or its allies.
- Eliminate the threat to the United States and its allies from weapons of mass destruction or destabilizing conventional arms.

Economic Prosperity:

- Open foreign markets to free the flow of goods, services, and capital.
- Expand U.S. exports to \$1.2 trillion by 2000.
- Increase global economic growth.
- Promote broad-based economic growth in developing and transitional economies.

American Citizens and U.S. Borders:

- Enhance the ability of American citizens to travel and live abroad securely.
- Control how immigrants and nonimmigrants enter and remain in the United States.

Law Enforcement:

- Minimize the impact of international crime on the United States and its citizens.
- Reduce significantly from 1997 levels, the entry of illegal drugs into the United States.
- Reduce international terrorist attacks, especially against the United States and its citizens.

Democracy:

- Increase foreign government adherence to democratic practices and respect for human rights.

Humanitarian Response:

- Prevent or minimize the human costs of conflict and natural disasters.

Global Issues:

- Secure a sustainable global environment in order to protect the United States and its citizens from the effects of international environmental degradation.
- Stabilize world population growth.
- Protect human health and reduce the spread of infectious disease.