

Opening Remarks
by
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[A presentation to the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, Washington, D.C., April 22, 1998.]

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Commissioners.

In these opening remarks I want to discuss the implications of the opening-up of international relations (that was emphasized in your recent Report, A New Diplomacy for the Information Age) and suggest one way - a global CSPAN - that new communication technology can begin to increase the effectiveness of American foreign policy.

My recommendation is that a global CSPAN should use Internet technology - and I will explain my preference for the Internet in a moment - but first I want to comment upon four political arguments for the idea.

1.) First, a partial redesignation of USIA's Cold War (one-way, outbound) capacity to create a global CSPAN sends the right political messages. We would acquire discussions of international interest from many sites internationally, and make them available to all countries. The commitment is to support an international democratic process of policy development, not to have the US in transmit mode and everybody else assigned to take notes.

I think this is good politics. The traditional practices of diplomacy were created for a world of absolute monarchs who conducted international relations by the court protocols of the age of the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815). Today, and especially since the end of the Cold War, international leadership is becoming more like running for office in democracies. You do not get elected to the US House of Representatives, or become a Governor, just by telling your own story to the public. You need to listen, and make sure that you also are working with your constituents to do what they want to do. Respect is important, in

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domestic and world politics, and a global CSPAN is a step in the right direction: it can convey extraordinary respect to have policy conferences about the Middle East in Moscow or Beijing conveyed to a global audience.

[And, I suggest, we do have something to learn. As Americans, we really do not know what they are saying about us - or the Middle East - in Beijing.]²

2.) Second, a global CSPAN permits American values to shape the norms of public discussion in the emerging world order. The level of honesty, rigor, and candid analysis of government policies that we take for granted at American universities, or at public policy conferences in Washington, is still a revelation in many countries.

3.) Third, a global CSPAN will start to rebuild political support for USIA from institutions in American society and across government agencies. This is especially true if - as I would recommend - the Broadcasting Board of Governors establishes a mechanism to block-grant the drawing rights for global air time to recognized institutions (like NIH, NSF, the International Studies Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the US Institute of Peace, or the Rockefeller Foundation) to select programming of international interest in their fields. Overnight, USIA is creating a constituency - and helping to support their programs and the goals of their constituents. If you build it, they will come - and it should help with Congress.

4.) The fourth political reason to start a global CSPAN with Internet technology is that Internet technology allows you greater flexibility to linkup - and support cumulative discussions among - government and NGO professionals and others (e.g., researchers, corporation executives, engaged citizens) who can be key actors in international cooperation.

This may be the most far-reaching benefit. And it becomes available because a confluence of technologies is creating a new type of communication system. From the traditional methods of communication - speaking and writing - the world moved to a second era of mass communications. In this third era we are creating a communication technology that is

² Especially if they are saying it in Mandarin. Any language should be welcome, but the understanding of the project should be to make views known as widely as possible, and additional investments in translations, etc. might be helpful.

user-controlled, low cost, interactive, global, and integrated with extraordinary computer power on desktop PCs.

In other words the emerging global Internet is not limited to mass communications - it is not just another way to send current VOA and Worldnet broadcasts to millions of households or to publish electronic versions of printed documents. You can use it this way - but it adds technology that can be more powerful, and in unique ways.

The first handout illustrates this new capacity. It is drawn from a pilot project and supporting Web site at Yale Medical School that were designed to help the international scientific community evaluate these new Internet technologies. This first regularly-scheduled global research colloquium concerns emerging infectious diseases, a field in which the Clinton Administration has wanted to strengthen both research and international cooperation.³

I direct your attention to the fifth page of the handout, the first global briefing that was given by Dr. Ruth Berkelman of the US Center for Disease Control - transmitted as audio, slides, and a transcript by using compressed digital files. Dr. Berkelman was able, so to speak, to address the troops worldwide - 1,200 health, government, and NGO professionals in 140+ countries - and provide an overview of new US initiatives. In one hour she could create a relationship to herself - and to American policy - that would have taken her months of jetting to conferences (and probably would have been impossible simply by writing a journal article.)⁴ And there is a capacity for interaction - for professionals worldwide to ask questions, discuss their own circumstances, and have a cumulative dialogue with leaders in the field. The colloquium series is now in its third year and, with other developments in this field, is slowly building a revolution in international public health.

³ The dramatic outbreaks of *ebola* virus are one example of emerging infectious diseases. AIDS is another example - which, unfortunately, became a global epidemic on four continents before the monitoring systems of the world's governments registered that something was amiss.

⁴ And - just to emphasize - in many cultures the development of personal trust is essential to cooperation. The ability to use audio and video to communicate who Dr. Berkelman is, adds value to simply announcing an American government policy.

Thus, if we are going to build a global CSPAN, my preference would be to take the list of American foreign policy objectives from the State Department's new Strategic Plan (handout 2), and ask grantees to identify the programming that can establish and move-forward agendas for international cooperation. Single conferences from many different sites are okay but - to go beyond our domestic CSPAN - I would prefer to see them organized into regularly-scheduled global colloquia (and supporting Web sites) so that all of the right people, who could make something happen globally, are listening.⁵ This places a tough demand for quality - but I think that it will be worth it.

A couple of technical notes, Mr. Chairman:

First, these Internet-based technologies are the appropriate technologies to linkup government and NGO professionals, universities, scientists, and others who are engaged in international policy. Many are using the Internet already. And the multimedia capabilities are good enough to begin: in the interest of equal time, in addition to my example from Yale, let me draw to your attention (handout 3) the ARCO Forum at Harvard, which is a splendid initiative and now provides high quality audio and about 1 image/minute.

Second: my instinct is that USIA - although its leadership has been preoccupied in recent years - would be the right agency to take the lead. As you may know, there is a trend to bypass USIA, and growing competition among federal agencies to build the American government's international communications systems: NSF has a next-generation Internet on the drawing board; NASA's Science Internet is taking the lead in international health and looking for business; and so forth. But if USIA is ready to begin this fall, I think the package will work.

Third: USIA has the capacity - actually, the unused capacity - to throw the switch and get this underway quickly. The weekly Global Grand Rounds project from Yale Medical School requires about 4-8 megabytes of compressed digital files. USIA has a capacity to deliver a common stream of 8+ megabytes per second worldwide. Thus, one hour of USIA's capacity each week would support (60 seconds/minute x 60 minutes/hour) 3,600 hours/week of

⁵ For example, USAID, the World Bank, UNDP, Canada's IDRC, and other development agencies could create a common Tuesday brownbag for development professionals, with state-of-the-art discussions.

presentations on a global Internet CSPAN. As a result of budget cuts USIA has several hours of unused capacity each day, which is being leased to foreign governments, devoted to a second feed of CNN (so that WorldNet's television screen is not blank), or just wasted. We only need a small fraction of the unused capacity.^{6 7}

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I want to bring to your attention that a discussion of a global CSPAN initiative started, several months ago, in the Commission on Diplomacy in the Information Age that was organized at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. The Commission now has decided to recommend such an American foreign policy initiative in its Report to be published this fall.

I have been asked to Chair the Commission's Working Group on a Global CSPAN, to develop the idea into a practical plan. And so, in the spirit of this proposal, I will now stop - and look forward to your thoughts and our discussion period.

Thank you.

⁶ Many technical details need to be worked-out. Obviously, one of the advantages of the Internet is that not everybody needs to receive the same files, or to be available for a Webcast at the same time. You also can use store-and-forward (or downloading on demand) systems from regional hubs or local servers.

⁷ These user-controlled, do-it-yourself, programs for global networks are affordable: at Yale, once a presentation is recorded by conventional means, it has required about 1.5 hours of a technician's time to digitize one hour of audio, and 0.5 hours to digitize 20-30 slides, at \$65/hour.

I spoke last week with Oberlin College, which is evaluating a project to use the same public domain Internet technology to make 6-8 campus events/year (lectures, acousti-guide tours and slides of exhibits at the Art Museum, and even concerts) available in the public domain - and especially to its alumni, worldwide. They are finding similar numbers with the set-up, recording, and digitizing packages for a one hour event coming to 4 hours at \$20/hour: i.e., after a modest investment in the technology, it is an extra \$80 marginal cost to make a presentation available on the Internet - although the connection charges to many UDCs are a barrier unless prepaid capacities (like USIA's, which pays about \$116 million/year for signal transmission capacity) are used.