

U.S. ADVISORY COMMISSION ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Minutes and transcript from the January 25, 2023 quarterly public meeting to examine the **Future(s) of USG Public Diplomacy**.

U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy Quarterly Meeting
Wednesday, January 25, 2023 | 12:00 PM - 1:15 PM ET
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room SD-106, 201 1st Street, NE, Washington, DC
with on-line (WebEx) access

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

TH Sim Farar, Chair
TH Anne Terman Wedner

COMMISSION STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dr. Vivian S. Walker, Executive Director
Ms. Deneysel A. Kirkpatrick, Senior Advisor
Ms. Kristy Zamary, Program Assistant

MINUTES:

The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy met in an open virtual session from 12:00 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. on Wednesday, January 25, 2023, to present the [2022 Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting](#).

A distinguished group of leaders in the field of public diplomacy from the Department of State discussed **Future(s) of USG Public Diplomacy**. Panelists included **Rodney Ford**, Senior Advisor and Executive Assistant, Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs; **Elizabeth Trudeau**, Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Global Public Affairs; **Scott Weinhold**, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs; **Karl Stoltz**, Deputy Coordinator for Policy, Programs, and Operations, Global Engagement Center; and **Paul Kruchoski**, Director, Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources.

ACPD Executive Director Vivian Walker opened the session, and Chairman Sim Farar provided introductory remarks. Vivian Walker moderated the Q&A and Commissioner Anne Wedner provided a discussion wrap-up and closed the meeting. The speakers took questions from the Commissioners and the audience, as detailed in the transcript below.

AUDIENCE:

Approximately 154 participants registered and 44 attended this in-person public meeting. Sixty-six logged on to the WebEx platform to view the event virtually including:

- PD practitioners and PD leadership from the Department of State, USAGM, and other agencies;
- Members of the foreign affairs and PD think tank communities;
- Academics in communications, foreign affairs, and other fields;

- Congressional staff members;
- Retired USIA and State PD officers;
- Members of the international diplomatic corps; and
- Members of the public.

Note: The following transcript has been edited for length and clarity.

Vivian Walker: Hello everyone. I'm Vivian Walker, the Executive Director and Designated Federal Officer for the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy.

Along with our Chairman, Sim Farar, and Commissioner Anne Wedner, it is my true pleasure to welcome you today to this quarterly meeting, and to see so many familiar faces among you. A warm welcome too to our on-line audience.

As a reminder, this meeting is being held in partial fulfillment of the Commission's Congressional mandate to keep the American public informed about U.S. Government's public diplomacy activities.

Today, we are pleased to be rolling out the ACPD's 2022 Comprehensive Annual Report. (I think many of you picked up a copy on the way in.) The report is also available on our website. In addition to providing a full overview of U.S. Government activities in public diplomacy in Washington and in the field, this report is packed full of data. It is meant to serve as a resource for public diplomacy practitioners, as well as researchers and policy makers.

We are also honored to welcome a distinguished group of leaders in the field of public diplomacy from the Department of State, who are going to reflect on current and future challenges and opportunities for public diplomacy.

Our panelists include Rodney Ford, Senior Advisor and Executive Assistant to the Undersecretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs; Elizabeth Trudeau, the Acting Assistant Secretary for Global Public Affairs; Scott Weinhold, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs; Karl Stoltz, the Deputy Coordinator for Policy Programs and Operations at the Global Engagement Center; and Paul Kruchoski, Director of Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources.

As you can see, every major component of public diplomacy within the Department of State is represented today. I know that you all agree with me when I say that this group collectively represents an extraordinary wealth of experience and expertise, both in Washington and in the field. Speaking as a former public diplomacy practitioner, I am grateful for their extraordinary commitment to the work.

Just a few words about process, and we'll get started. After ACPD Chairman Farar provides us with opening remarks, we will turn directly to the panel discussion. Panelists will speak consecutively, with no break between them.

Following their remarks, we will open the floor to Q&A. Our in-person audience members will have the opportunity to line up behind the microphone and pose questions.

A full transcript of the proceedings will be available in about a month. We'll let you know when you can access it on the ACPD's public website.

With that, it is my great pleasure to invite to the podium the Chairman of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, Mr. Sim Farar.

Sim Farar: Good morning. Thank you, Vivian, and all of you who joined us today with my distinguished colleagues from the Commission. We have Vice Chairman, Bill Hybl, who unfortunately was not able to attend today, from Colorado Springs, Colorado, and Anne Wedner from Miami Beach, Florida, Stanford, California, and Chicago, Illinois. I'm pleased to welcome you to our quarterly meeting. Thank you for coming.

Before we begin, I wanted to thank and acknowledge our amazing staff. You have all met Vivian Walker, Executive Director, Deneysel Kirkpatrick, Senior Advisor, and Program Assistant Kristy Zamary. They are a fantastic group. I want to thank you all for helping us out and putting this together. Thank you very much.

Today, we're very pleased to present the 2022 version of the ACPD Annual Comprehensive Report of Public Diplomacy. If you haven't picked it up yet, it's very heavy. We're charging by the pound, so help yourself to a copy.

We've been doing this for three-quarters of a century. The commission represents the public interest in regular reviews of the U.S. Government's global information, media, cultural, education, and exchange programs.

This annual report serves as a unique reference document, highlighting public diplomacy strategies and resources used to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives. The report also assesses the effectiveness of these activities and provides actionable recommendations for change.

Additionally, the report serves as a platform for innovation, assuring that the U.S. Government's public diplomacy initiatives remain effective and consistently competitive in a global information environment.

Finally, the 2022 report spotlights how practitioners are helping to strengthen democracy worldwide through the integration of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility into public diplomacy programming.

Once again, thank you for joining us. As always, we sincerely appreciate your continued interest and commitment to the practice of public diplomacy. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

Vivian Walker: OK, as promised, we are going to roll right into our panel. It is a great pleasure to welcome Rodney Ford. You're welcome to sit down or come up to the podium.

Rodney Ford: I'm happy to sit here if that's fine. And I will try to be brief. I want to get to the questions. We were discussing earlier how important it is to have a discussion and answer your questions. And thank you to the Commission. Thank you to Vivian and Deneysel, whom I've known for a while. Thank you for your commitment to public diplomacy and for having us here. And, to my fellow panelists whom I've also known for quite a while, it's a pleasure to be here with you. They are all experts and I'm looking forward to a good conversation today.

Last year Deputy Secretary Sherman asked all the undersecretaries to come up with what she called a placemat, which is basically a 6-month vision for what it is that we want to do. So, Liz Allen, for whom we are all happy because she has just been nominated to be the next Undersecretary [for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs]—came up with four priorities for the R family. I'll run through those quickly, and you'll see as we go down the line that they address what we do in the R family.

The first priority to make sure that public diplomacy is central to our foreign policy. And the folks who have worked on PD for a while understand the PD is policy. We still fight that in the building and the interagency. But it is important that we integrate it throughout the department, and we ensure consistently that PD has a seat at the table. It is also reinforcing the connectivity between Washington and the field and the interagency, making sure that what we do in Washington has a positive impact on our colleagues in the field. So that is first and foremost what we have been working on.

Secondly, we've been working on what Liz calls "future-proofing public diplomacy." And that's thinking through the whole process holistically: that's the structure, that's investing in and training our people; that's redefining our permission structures. The overall goal here is really to institutionalize an audience-driven approach for communications, for programs, and for products. We also understand that in order to know our audiences better, we have to listen to our audiences. That helps our policy in terms of engaging and building trust in relationships with those audiences. We often call it tending the garden, which is very important.

Thirdly, and you will hear more about this from Karl, is countering disinformation across the enterprise. We all know that our adversaries are well resourced. They're centralized. They have state propaganda machines, and they are often unburdened by accountability, truth, or ethics. In today's environment, as you know, it's much easier to sow disinformation than it is to counter it.

And then finally—and as evidenced by Deputy Secretary Sherman traveling to Cleveland yesterday—it's telling the foreign policy story to domestic stakeholders. We must be accountable. That's part of the reason why we are here today, and that's part of the role of the Commission—to tell the American people—to show the American people—that we represent their interests and why it matters.

As part of that effort, as Sim mentioned, we are also focused on DEIA, broadly and specifically. That focus is embedded in our public diplomacy programs and in how we, as a State Department,

can be more representative of America. And in practice, in the field, that means engaging across regions and countries, across social and cultural structures, across ethnic and economic groups. It matters in the participants that we recruit and select for our academic exchange programs, and it matters in who successfully competes for our PD funding opportunities.

I'll leave it there and turn it over to Liz.

Elizabeth Trudeau: Thank you. I'll move fast. I'm Elizabeth Trudeau. I'm from Global Public Affairs. I'm also a huge fan of ACPD. Thank you all for coming.

And as my fellow panelist Rodney said, we've known each other for a long time. It's like being up here with your friends talking about something you care about a lot. And we're just grateful for the opportunity to talk to you.

When people think about the Bureau I'm a part of, they tend to think of the spokesperson at the podium. They think about a Tweet, or a video, or a livestream. They think about our very successful hometown diplomat program, where members of the Department, Civil Service, Foreign Service, go to their hometowns to talk about foreign policy.

But I want to back it up a little where Rodney leaned in and talk about how we're thinking about the work. He said something incredibly important that is framing how we're approaching what Global Public Affairs does. And that's knowing our audience--all the way through our work.

Who is our audience? Who do they trust as a messenger? Where do they get their information? When do they want to hear that information? And how do we evaluate that? That now is across all of our programs. Because I think that people in this room understand that sometimes the United States is not the best messenger. We are no longer in a time where we can send a Tweet and pretend to ourselves that "we've messaged". As Rodney said, we're "tending the garden" and we've got to make the best use of taxpayer dollars to assure we're doing it well.

That's also flipping it back to research. How are we evaluating our work? How are we verifying that we are advancing U.S. foreign policy through our public affairs and public diplomacy work? We have an entire section of our Bureau that focuses on research – that does message testing, evaluates audience analysis and looks to make sure that we are getting that bang for buck.

We're looking at tech. I will not pretend that the United States Government is at the cutting-edge of tech. But we're getting there. We're catching up. We are leveraging our connections, and we are in the game. There are platforms that we don't touch—rightly so. But we work with people who may be better messengers than us on those platforms because--again, to get back to my first point--we need to be where the audience is.

Integration is also important. You will hear from my colleagues from GEC and ECA that we are doing soup to nuts public diplomacy, from an exchange program in Uganda all the way to information about what the PRC is putting out in countries around the world. We're aware of what they're doing, and we use that knowledge as leverage to advance our positive message.

I'll leave you with one thought--the information environment is a contested space, make no mistake about that. We need to put our A game on. We are better when we are reflective but also proactive, when we are integrated, but also grade our own work.

I'm very grateful for the ACPD for providing this forum. I look forward to your questions.

Scott Weinhold: Thank you. I'll start with the same thing, which is thank you very much to the ACPD, Chairman Farar, Vivian, the Executive Director, a great partner, and a great practitioner. I'm very pleased to be at this venue. And as Elizabeth said, we have the right team here. These are the people I go to when I have questions.

At the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs, ECA, we do exchanges. We do more than that, but that's our bread and butter. In looking at the future(s) of PD, the title for this panel, I'll talk about things that are changing, things that are different in the world of exchanges.

The first point I'll raise—and this is going back quite a while—is the virtual versus in-person issue. Going back as far as—a blast from the past—1992, presidential candidate Ross Perot said that we need to close all our embassies and replace them with fax machines.

Going back 15 years, when we first began to use digital technologies, people started saying, “why don't we strap on a VR [virtual reality] headset? You can visit New York using VR”. In fact, we did try to use VR and I heard stories of people getting physically ill. Maybe that wasn't the right message.

With the pandemic, of course, we did a lot virtually. But all of our studies and metrics continue to show that in-person contact has an enormous impact. It's transformational in people's lives.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't do virtual. We've had enormous success with it, especially in training and learning programs. Our English language Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) train hundreds of thousands of people. These MOOCs have been really effective in some of the toughest areas to reach, like Russia or China because people can just log on.

There's always going to be room for virtual programming. We can't bring every person to the United States. We also have our American Spaces, almost 600 of them in over 130 countries, where people can have an in-person experience around an issue that they care about without having to travel internationally. There are always options.

But everything that we see, to this day, indicates that the in-person experience matters. There's a reason why the International Visitor Leadership Program has been around for 80-plus years and Fulbright Program for 75-plus years. These in-person programs really make a difference. We don't see that changing any time soon, even with all the new tools that are coming out.

One thing that has changed in the last couple of years is an increase in concern about what we are calling “participant care.” Much of it is related to mental health challenges experienced by our exchange visitors, especially the younger ones, the high schoolers. Some of it is related to the

pandemic. Everybody has seen media articles on how the pandemic has affected students, especially high school students.

Concern about participant care goes both ways. This is also about the young Americans that we send overseas as well as the foreigners who come here. The real rise in the number of people experiencing serious mental health issues is something that we are trying to address.

We have noted, especially among American exchange program participants overseas, the expectation for more attention and support. It is not enough that their host institution will take care of them. They expect assistance every step of the way. We have been working with the health insurance companies who provide mandatory coverage to our exchange program participants to add a robust mental health aspect to services provided. I don't think that's going away.

And then finally, a related issue--crisis. We are focused on how we respond to, and how we deal with, our exchange visitors, during a crisis—whether it's a natural disaster, a war, a major terror attack, or a mass shooting. One example that comes to mind is the effort we made to assure accountability in the wake of Hurricane Ian in Florida.

We are giving this same level of attention to our American Fulbrighters overseas. We are building in new crisis response mechanisms, that, formerly, were left to the local implementing partner and U.S. embassy overseas or to the local authorities in the United States. Thank you.

Karl Stoltz: Thank you, Scott. And thank you to all my fellow panelists for setting the standard of being concise, and also not speaking from notes, which scares me to death. Because now, I have to follow that lead. But, as others have stated, we are among great friends here, friends of public diplomacy and friends of the ACPD. Thank you all for your work, and for your support for the merits of public diplomacy globally.

The Global Engagement Center is rather new--five years old. We're still a toddler in some ways. But I think the future of public diplomacy fits in with what we're doing right now. I'm going to begin with a little bit of reminiscing here. I'm going to go further than Scott [Weinhold]. He went to '92. I'm going back to 1986 (before some of you were born) when I joined the Foreign Service, to talk about how things have changed and how things have stayed the same.

Some things have not changed since 1986. For example, when I came on, Rick Ruth was a Senior Advisor in ECA. And he still advises in ECA today. So that's good to hear - a little continuity.

In 1986, one of our greatest concerns was propaganda and disinformation coming from Moscow, Tehran (after the Islamic Revolution), and Beijing. They were working, at one point, as a communist—or Islamic--bloc to undermine Western ideals and interests globally.

We may have used the Wireless File or article alerts or WorldNet back then instead of memes, webcasts, and podcasts. But the issues remain very similar, and our goals have not changed: to support the free flow of fact-based information around the world, to empower government

officials, journalists, concerned citizens, scholars, and others, and to connect through dialogues and exchanges to help everyone embrace the open market of education and ideas.

Disinformation and propaganda are very much in the headlines now, but after 9/11, every single embassy and every single officer said they were doing counterterrorism. Because that's where the money was. Now, we see a lot of people around the world suddenly doing disinformation because that's where the interest is and the opportunity to make a difference.

Today we see Russia in the headlines spinning a web of lies to defend the indefensible. China has a more subtle web of coercion and domination of political, economic, and information discourse in many countries. The Iranian regime suppresses women's rights and human rights at home while continuing to try to export revolution abroad. We continue to see, ever since 9/11, terrorist groups using social media to recruit new members and to spread their hostile ideologies everywhere.

The real difference between 1986 and today is, obviously, the ability of everyone to communicate on their own, to be their own editors and publishers via the internet and social media. When I started, the first thing a public diplomacy officer did was to look at the institutional analysis and figure out who were the editors, publishers, and key academics that we needed to get to know to spread our messages in that country. They were the gatekeepers who managed access to information.

Now, everyone does institutional analysis. Every single person on social media is an editor, publisher, and communicator. It is very challenging to reach every individual in the information space. At the same time, it is very easy for well-funded adversaries to spread disinformation and misinformation to large audiences without the controls that, previously, more experienced editors, publishers, and scholars were able to provide.

The Global Engagement Center's mission is to detect the manipulation of information, working with posts to help expose malign efforts, and to build global coalitions to resist and counter them. The GEC also works to train ordinary citizens to recognize disinformation so they do not get fooled again. We have a variety of ways in which we can help posts to do that, which I can discuss in the Q&A session.

The bottom line is that we are in a new world information war, a new phase of which may have begun on February 24 of last year. This is a war of competing ideologies, in which authoritarian governments are attempting to overthrow the current rule-based order based on democratic values and principles. In promoting a policy of "might makes right," these autocrats not only control content for their citizens but also spread their influence and power to other countries.

This is not a time to be passive. It is imperative that we fight and win the information war. There's no prize for second place. If we allow the influence manipulators and the liars using social media as a tool to spread their message of hatred and autocracy globally, we're all going to suffer for it. That is the fundamental mission of the GEC--to empower our overseas missions and our international partners to fight for the free flow of information. Thank you!

Paul Kruchoski: Thanks, everyone. I am Paul Kruchoski, the Director of the Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources, better known in State as R/PPR. I think we have the most fun acronym.

Fundamental to the work of R/PPR is to build for the future. I want to talk about that future, and how PD fits into it, in three parts, starting first with a lay of the land, then talking about what we are already doing to prepare for that future, and then putting some questions on the table.

One of the things that's so wonderful about PD is that it's just not us and our counterparts at State that do all of the work, it's all of you too, whether it's our colleagues in Congress, or people who work in citizen diplomacy. It's a collective endeavor, and that's part of what makes U.S. public diplomacy so special.

To begin with the lay of the land and today's operating environment, three things come to mind. The first is a clear demand for more work in public diplomacy, in part because every one of the major policy issues on the table involves public opinion. Publics have a role in policy in some way, shape, or form. We can't do work on climate change without people. You need governments, you need businesses, but you also need the public.

You can't work on issues of democracy without people. You can't figure out how you tackle things like global health security without public interventions and shifts in public behavior. Even issues that seem to be governmental such as security relationships and alliances, are actually founded on public support—like NATO. Every single one of the future focused foreign policy issues that we are working on today involves more public work than before.

Then you add in a much more competitive information environment, which Karl [Stoltz] addressed. It's much noisier. The old institutional analysis now includes everyone. And that comes not only from government stakeholders such the PRC and Russia, who are very heavily engaged, but also from non-governmental actors.

It's hard to get anyone's attention today in the digital media space. Expectations are high for PD outputs. Press releases don't cut it. You have to think about how you manage multimedia platforms, how you use data to identify and understand your target audiences. This demand for more, this competition and complexity, really define where we are today and where we need to go for the future. That means that PD needs to be more and better and different.

The last time I was here on an ACPD panel was in 2019, just before COVID. We were talking about PD Modernization. Brian Heath and I laid out three things that we were going to work on: getting the structure in PD sections right, getting the tools that we give people right, and getting the skills for people right. I want to talk a little bit about these efforts—the substantial progress we've made, and what remains to be done in the future.

We are about eight months away from being done with the Public Diplomacy Staffing Initiative (PDSI), a 10-year long project to reorganize every single overseas public diplomacy section. We'll be done in September of 2023--it's really close. For those of you who are PD practitioners and lived through this process, you know how momentous this major change initiative has been.

For those of you who are not familiar with the PDSI, it is at its core a major rethinking of the way we do PD, focusing on more team-based work and building a framework that integrates multiple skill sets into PD sections. The PDSI moves away from the old job descriptions that were last updated in the Carter Administration to something that reflects the way modern communication and public engagement is practiced, to include positions for monitoring and evaluation, strategic planning, and online community management. [For more information, see the 2021 ACPD special report on the PDSI: [Putting Policy & Audience First: A Public Diplomacy Paradigm Shift.](#)]

The PDSI is not just about staff positions. It's about creating a system and structure for work that builds team cohesion around common objectives. The PDSI allows us to link key audiences to strategic goals, and develop programs based on a clear understanding of audiences needs and interests. Earlier, Elizabeth talked about the importance of audience orientation. We care about audiences because they have a direct impact on our ability to meet our strategic goals. The PDSI has created the foundation for a two way conversation with audiences that is mutually respectful, that listens and takes in information. It also creates the framework for future engagement.

We've also done a lot of work in making new training opportunities available. Just this week we put out a new course out in response to a National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) mandate this week using public diplomacy evaluations and monitoring data. That's a big step forward. Last fall, during the Global Public Affairs Officers workshop, we also put out our first set of doctrinal documents to establish the foundation for a common PD practice, codifying it and writing it down so that we have some common nomenclature and shared ideas. This will help us to regularize our practices, introduce more people to do the work and get them up to speed faster.

Finally, with respect to PD tools, we've done a huge amount of work on updating technology. We've consolidated into a single contact relationship management (CRM) system for the Department. We've included the CRM with our strategic planning and data analysis tools on a common Salesforce platform.

That gives us the ability to integrate the data into diplomacy that we've all been talking about since the publication of the 2014 ACPD special report on [Data Driven Public Diplomacy](#). That's been incredibly challenging, but incredibly good work for us to do because it lays the foundation for future conversations about where we go next, and how to make individual PD teams more successful over time.

Beyond that, the people on this panel and our teams are working on many other forms of support such as improving creative content, including video production, expanding access to audience data, and providing training in audience data collection and usage. Those are the sorts of tools and resources that our front-line practitioners need to be successful.

We've done a lot to prepare for the future. But we're only part of the way into that journey. There are a lot of open questions about structure, organization, and programs. One of them concerns people. Public diplomacy at its core is about people. Our ability to do good public diplomacy depends on having the right people doing public diplomacy work for the Department and for our implementing partners, whether they with ECA or the NGO sector.

How do we make sure that those people want to come and work with us? The labor market has changed dramatically over the last 3 to 4 years, and it will continue to change. How do we make sure that public diplomacy is the place where the smartest and most creative people want to be? Because that creativity really matters in creating compelling work.

How do we make sure that D.C. works right? So much of the D.C. public diplomacy apparatus supports front line operations in the field. How do we continue to better think about ways to deliver programs and services that get our front-line practitioners what they need as quickly as possible?

We are set up at the Department to tackle country and regional issues first. But as Karl [Stoltz] said so articulately, these issues are actually global in nature. There is one global information environment. So much of what we do now is global in scope. How do we think about coordination, structure, and process to get that right? These are some of the defining questions for public diplomacy for the next five to ten years.

Thank you. Back over to you, Vivian.

[Applause]

Vivian Walker: Thank you so much.

That was an excellent overview, beginning with Rodney's summary of the priorities of the office of the Undersecretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. It was good to hear from Liz about the continued importance of knowing the audience, doing the research, and leveraging tech capabilities. Scott reminded us that, when it comes to public diplomacy, people come first and negotiating that "last three feet" remains vital. Karl's comments on the enduring nature of information warfare highlighted the vital role of the Global Engagement Center. Paul helped us to understand the evolving dynamic between people, tools, and policies.

I'm sure there are many questions. Fortunately, thanks to the brevity and conciseness of our panelists, we have a lot of time in which to discuss them. Our first question always goes to one of the commissioners. Anne Wedner will start us off.

In the meantime, I encourage you to line up behind the microphone. We will take your questions in turn. We look forward to a lively discussion.

Anne?

Anne Wedner: You guys were fantastic today. Thank you so much for coming. We want to continue the discussion.

When I joined the Foreign Service in 1998, I was motivated by the ideological struggle between our democratic society and the communist society. And everywhere around us, there were plenty of scholarly works about the Marxist interpretation of this and that, and there was nothing that

concisely captured what would have been a democratic-capitalist interpretation of society.

Now, we're in a much more multipolar world in which, as you described it, the information environment as a contested space with many more actors. I'm glad to see that we're focused on this competition, and that you're interested in partnering with other countries. When we were in Japan recently where we heard that the Japanese government is interested in working with us on communications in the region.

We were in Japan recently, where they talked about wanting to go the final mile with us and maybe even take the lead as spokesperson.

There's a lot of exciting things going on. But one thing that we never developed was that tome, that set of readings, those ideas that really captured the answer to the question, what is democracy? And why does it matter? Now we find ourselves struggling with how best to communicate American values internationally and domestically. We have issues on college campuses especially, where people don't understand or prioritize democratic values, for example.

So when are we going to get to that collection of ideas? What would you like to see in a set of readings, or entertainment, or other media that might express who we are? What can we capture to make that clear?

Vivian Walker: That goes to everyone, right?

Elizabeth Trudeau: It's a great question. And I think the answer is it's not going to be one tome. It's not going to be one set of documents because the best thing about the United States is our diversity. It's the fact that you could put a group of 100 Americans in a room, and every single person would represent their own history. Not just the markers we physically see, but what their country means to them, to their families, how they got to this place, where they are as an American.

You make the really important point, which is storytelling. Because we, as public diplomacy practitioners, must focus on how we are telling the story of the United States and what we stand for. I'm so glad you mentioned the United States. I'm leaving here and I'm going on a plane to Kansas City and St. Louis specifically to talk about why foreign policy matters to the American people.

I will do little recruiting for the Department and touch base with some of our implementing partners out there, but the most important thing is to tell the story. To explain, for example, why what happens in Ukraine matters to the people of St. Louis. We need a narrative that can flex, that is audience-specific, that is told with full humility.

I may not be the right storyteller for everyone. We must be nimble in getting the right story tellers to the right audiences. I think the most important thing to remember-- and this gets to Paul's point about future-proofing public diplomacy—is the need to build in agility. We must stop doing what doesn't work.

Paul Kruchoski: I have two concise thoughts, one of which is that I couldn't agree more. It's not one story--it's many stories. It's how you tell and collect those individual stories, those individual pieces of writing, in a way that allows people to draw meaning from them.

It's also part of what I've so enjoyed about the ECA programming I worked on—distilling the common elements out of diverse experiences. The work is less about the rating and more about the experience.

We're coming up on the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. This strikes me as a wonderful opportunity for everyone to do some thinking about where we have come together over the last 250 years.

Karl Stoltz: Thanks for the great, provocative questions, exactly the kind that we need. I'm going to go to a Russian expression because I've served several times in Moscow. The Russians like to joke “v Pravde net izvestiy, v Izvestiyakh net pravdy” [Russian] which means, “There is no news in the truth, and there is no truth in the news.” This is a Russian joke with a double meaning based on two important legacy newspapers in Russia: *Pravda* and *Izvestia*.

But I completely disagree with that premise. When I think about all the different and diverse democratic countries in the world, and all the different ways in which we define democracy, the one thing that matters the most to us is truth. Truth from those in power. Truth from our elected representatives. Truth from the media. Truth from justice. Truth from business.

Our democracies are tested when that doesn't happen and when people do not believe what they're being told by someone. But at the fundamental core of every democracy, from New Zealand to United States, and everywhere in between, is the belief that we elect officials who tell us the truth.

In Russia, in the PRC, and in many other countries, there is no expectation that officials tell the truth. It's the opposite--people don't expect to hear the truth, and therefore don't believe anything they're told.

Just a little anecdote. When I was in Moscow the last time, we were monitoring global media to see what they were saying of interest. We were interested in knowing which media around the world amplified Kremlin statements. We discovered a TV station in Texas and a newspaper in Iowa that were quoting what the Kremlin spokesperson said every day. We thought, OK, this is odd. Are they misinforming the population of these small towns in Texas and Iowa?

When we looked further, we discovered that they had very low numbers. In fact, they weren't actually reaching anyone in the United States. These obscure websites had very accurate local weather forecasts, but all the rest was straight out of the Kremlin narrative.

Then we realized what it was. The Russians created these fake websites to misinform their own people. The Russian people did not believe anything that a Russian newspaper would say to them, but if the information was presented as coming from a newspaper in Iowa or a local TV

station in Texas, they would believe Kremlin lies. The Russians were using disinformation to disinform their own people. That's the difference between us and them, I think—between democracy and autocracy. We don't need to create fake websites in another country to talk to our own people. Thanks.

Rodney Ford: I would just add that at the root of public diplomacy, people are looking for authenticity. To Karl and Elizabeth's point, I think that when we are representative of America and American democracy, when we tell the truth about what's happening in America, then people are more likely to believe in us and relate to us.

We need to be honest about who we are, what we're doing, what we're trying to do. Our Founding Fathers talked a lot about this being an experiment, and it is. There's no guarantee that this is going to work. But I think we all believe in it and that's why it works.

We must remain authentic to what we're trying to do and keep doing that. This all goes back to some of the core themes in our public diplomacy programming.

Scott Weinhold: Just to complete the set here. I have not worked in Russia, but I spent 15 years in other closed societies, mostly in China and Vietnam. I want to talk to Rodney's point about authenticity, the "show and don't tell."

The International Visitor Leadership Program, as most people here probably already know, brings people to the United States for three weeks, and we do our best to show the United States, warts and all.

One quick anecdote. I won't say which country it's from, but it's from a closed society. As a PAO overseas, you always meet with IVLP participants when they return home. This person we sent was quite anti-American, which is the right person to send. He was a real fire-breathing Marxist, and when he sat down with me, he said: "You know, I went over convinced that the United States was on the edge of class and race war," that the tensions were so high that the oppressed lower class was ready to rise up. This was maybe 10 years ago.

In each city he went to, he snuck (his word) out of his hotel room at night and went down to the hotel back offices where the dishwashers and the maids were. And he would say, tell me your story of oppression. And he said every single one of them answered, "I am so grateful to be here. I'm sending money back to my family in Guatemala or wherever. My children are getting a good education. I feel like they have a shot to move up in the world."

His mind was blown because he thought we were going to show him a subjective tour of the United States. The authenticity came in because he saw it for himself. It's really the "show, don't tell."

In closed countries, when you work in an embassy, you can't just say we're going to do a program on human rights. Nobody will come. And your electricity might get cut off. But you can have a program in which you can say, let's talk about the U.S.'s struggles with class, race, or gender. Discussing these issues in an official embassy program sends a very powerful message.

Vivian Walker: Thank you so much.

I see we have a question. Please introduce yourself for the record.

Andy Loomis: Thanks. Andy Loomis. I work at the State Department in R/PPR. Good to see you, Sim, and Anne.

We're here in the Senate. I know we all have these niche issues we want to resolve with Congress. But I'm also curious about the big picture. What's the message that you want to send more regularly to Congress, specifically the House and Senate? What do you think Congress needs to better understand about your individual programs?

Elizabeth Trudeau: America's image matters in the world. It matters not only what people think about us, but it matters to advance our foreign policy. And I think Scott addressed it well. We need to lead with humility, and we need to lead showing warts and all. Because the ideal of America is that we still get up the next day and we try again.

It's not just within Washington, but it's across this country. And it's not just the elected officials but also my cousins in Tallahassee. I want them to see that America matters in the world.

In an internal town hall this morning, the Secretary [of State] said that when America is not at the table, either the void is filled with people who don't share our values, or worse, no one leads. And that's chaos. Our image matters. Public diplomacy matters. And America has got to be at the table.

Paul Kruchoski: I'll go in a slightly different direction. We should be asking [members of Congress] where PD is contributing to the issues they work on. We often talk about PD as a functional issue set, up here on the Hill. Totally the wrong way to approach the question.

I think some of the most useful conversations we've had are when people are looking at a broader issue like the Russian invasion of Ukraine, I'd say, what's the PD angle on this? What are you doing? How are you engaging? And it ends up producing constructive conversations and really putting PD in context. We don't do nearly enough of that.

We're always trying and in 2023, we're going to make a point of doing that a little bit more proactively. But if you are working on the Hill and you don't see PD at the table or in a briefing where it should be represented, come ask us about the PD angle. We're certainly happy to tell you because there's almost certainly something there.

Scott Weinhold: From the ECA perspective, I would just say we have a great deal of gratitude for the long-standing bipartisan support for foreign exchanges and public diplomacy programs going back literally decades. It's fantastic to see that and to be able to have the resources to carry out our programs.

Karl Stoltz: Like Scott, I would express appreciation on behalf of the Global Engagement Center for all the bipartisan support we get on the Hill. We were basically a creation of people on the Hill who recognized the need to have something like the GEC five or six years ago. And we're very grateful for that.

We would like to see our sunset clause removed soon. It's been stuck for various reasons. If the Putin regime, and the People's Republic of China, and the Islamic Republic of Iran expire in the next year, then I have no problem with us expiring as well. But if they don't, we need to continue the fight beyond next year.

Vivian Walker: Great. All right. Next question?

Lynn Weil: Thank you very much for affording us this opportunity to ask questions of the panel. And thank you to the panel for your excellent presentations, as well as to the Commission for holding this event, particularly in this location.

We are in the middle of the Senate, and in fact, just around the corner and down a couple flights from the Office of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. If there any colleagues here from the SFRC or from the House Foreign Affairs Committee, or better yet, from the Appropriation Committees, it would be really nice if you could carry these messages back to your bosses. I'm sure the Commission will have some advice as well in writing at some point as takeaways from this event.

My name is Lynn Weil. I used to work at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, doing public diplomacy oversight. But I didn't know exactly what public diplomacy was like until I started to work at the State Department, in R/PPR—cool not only for the name, but also for the issues they delve into.

Unlike Karl Stoltz, I need to speak from notes, so I jotted down two brief questions and one comment because I know there are other questions. There have been so many good subjects here. But I wanted to address those raised by the last speaker, Paul. I hope to have a chance to talk with you again later.

The fact that PDSI is finally coming to fruition is very exciting. The fact that it's taken 10 years might be surprising to some. My jaw dropped when I heard that. But on the other hand, it's not all that surprising because it's a blink of an eye in a big bureaucracy where face it, tradition counts for a lot, as well as process. And it's at the heart of national security, which is important.

I just wanted you to drill down on two points you raised. One, you mentioned the importance of resources in terms of people but also funding. Public diplomacy is underfunded relative to its importance. I hope you'll address that.

As to the question of setting down common ideas and nomenclature, how do you plan to socialize that across the State Department and the interagency? It ain't easy. Judith McHale did something similar a few years ago and it got pretty far. But this really needs to be done with all the might of the interagency behind it.

The one point I wanted to make is that attracting and retaining the right people is key. I totally agree with you on that. I hope you are able to do the same, bringing folks into R/PPR and keeping them there, because it's not just the name that's cool. Thank you.

Paul Kruchoski: I do think we have the coolest mission and some of the most interesting issues. On the first point very briefly, I completely agree. We ran an exercise in 2019 that we briefed on the Hill called the Strategic Resource Review. It did three things: it looked at where our resources were, and where we might want to realign them based on some modeling exercises. It also looked at what would it take to actually do the mission well, based on the issues I outlined at the top of my remarks. The review concluded that to do the mission well we would need to increase our resources by 80%.

When you look at this relative to what Russia and the PRC spend, it pales in comparison. The overt funding that Russia puts out is roughly comparable to ours. But we're not just up against Russia. All the data that we have suggests that China spends well more than \$10 billion dollars per year. And while I think that qualitatively we have a lot of strengths on our side, you also can't make up huge resource disparities without attempting to close the gap.

I've been really thankful for the partnership we've had with many of our colleagues on the Hill. We have been working on closing that gap in follow-up conversations, but we have a long way to go still. Part of our job at State is to demonstrate that we are making good use of the resources we have and are continuing to modernize, to ensure that we're efficient and effective. That we're making realignments between countries and regions, and that we're thinking about questions like how we tackle global issues more effectively.

Finally, we have really moved a long way in how we engage with the interagency. Karl and the GEC do an incredible amount of work. Elizabeth Trudeau and I sit in on an unreasonable number of meetings, but the connective tissue with some of our interagency partners, I think, is better than it's ever been. Much of the work on doctrinal concepts has been done closely with PME institutions. We are trying to figure out how we can infuse our work into the war colleges and other places where the broader strategic national security environment is being taught. It's a work in progress. We launched in November, so we are three months in. We have a lot of engagement ahead of us that I feel quite good about.

Vivian Walker: Thank you. Let's move to the next question.

Dr. Emma Bryant: Thank you so much. My name is Dr. Emma Bryant from Bard College. My question relates to the interagency comment. A few months ago, there were releases from Facebook and Twitter of psyops believed to be attributed to the DOD. The releases included some misleading and false posts ranging over a long period of time. Although they also showed that the State Department's own messaging had greater engagement and global reach, such releases are damaging to trust. We are also seeing many cyber attacks that release sensitive documents.

Could you comment on how these kinds of trust issues are being managed and how this has an impact on what you do in terms of open messaging and trying to restore trust? Thank you.

Elizabeth Trudeau: I'll start. I think it's a good question. When I was a spokesperson, John Kirby, who's familiar to many of you, told me one thing: "You can be fast, or you can be right. Pick one." And I think about that every day, especially when these guys are making me talk first.

You hit the nail on the head, absolutely. People need to be able to trust us. As Karl noted about our adversaries in the information space, the one thing the United States does have is trust. Our adversaries can throw money. They can throw lies. They can throw disinformation. We speak on behalf of the American people, and we absolutely have to work to earn that trust every single day.

Certainly, for the State Department, that's our number one priority. If we do something wrong, we say so, and we correct it. And we correct it in the same way we got it wrong. We don't bury the correction on page 23.

I'm glad you raised it. It's something that we are very focused on, and I'm very proud of our work at the State Department on that issue.

Paul Kruchoski: Just two more things, one of which is, part of the reason we make you go first is because you are fast and right, which saves a lot of us from going first and being wrong.

The conversation about Stanford Graphika is one issue. There are many other things that diminish or break trust in the United States. To your earlier point about U.S. image, it isn't just the words we say but it's the actions we take.

I think one of the most important things for the United States to continue to do is to lead with truth and overt public engagement because all of the evidence that I have ever seen dating back to the Cold War is that overt and honest content is what ends up carrying the day. It is in our strategic interest to lead there whenever we possibly can.

Karl Stoltz: I can't follow these two very well, but I want to add one thing. I may not, at the time, have had wonderful things to say about Julius Assange, or Ed Snowden, or FOIA requests. But the reality is that America is a successful democracy because of whistleblowers. When we are not truthful, inevitably something comes up and we get called on it, and we admit that we are wrong. And we fix it. I think that's one of our greatest strengths.

I can guarantee you that if somebody notices the government in Russia making mistakes, they're not going to be successful in a whistleblowing campaign. I'm really glad I'm in a country where whistleblowers exist.

Vivian Walker: Thank you. All right. I think this will have to be our last question, unfortunately, so we can respect our panelists' time. Please, go ahead.

Julie: Hello. My name is Julie. I'm a PD officer on my second tour currently as an IVLP program officer. Go ECA!

My question is about a population that I don't hear much about--the over 100 million people in the world right now who are forcibly displaced. How do refugees intersect with PD work, both on the information side of the house, and also on the cultural exchange side? Thank you.

Scott Weinhold: Thank you, Julie. I'll start with exchanges.

My last post overseas was Kabul, Afghanistan. It did not end the way I thought it would, but I was there right until the bitter end. A lot of people got out to other parts of Central Asia and the Middle East. We're really proud that so many posts and American Spaces in those areas are doing specific programming for displaced Afghans. That is also something we've seen for Ukrainians. Many posts and American Spaces in Europe are doing programming specifically for them.

We take the refugee issues seriously. Recently I met with Ambassador Tracy on her way out to Moscow and talked with her about the hundreds of thousands of people who have left Russia and how the ECA suite of programs might be applied to those displaced persons. Of course, that's just scratching the surface, and does not address the millions of displaced folks from conflicts in Africa and elsewhere.

Immigrant diasporas also play a big role. In fact, as you've heard the Department is now making a point of engaging with those cities in the United States with large diaspora populations. Some are refugees, others are migrants of different types. Immigrant diaspora populations can play an important role in how their home countries view and interact with the United States.

I'll let Elizabeth talk about the information side of it.

Elizabeth Trudeau: I love this question. Because it also ties into what we've all been talking about here, which is telling the story. You know, 100 million people—it seems like a daunting number. But you have to tell the story of each of those individuals.

The overarching goal, the reason all of us are here, is to impact policy and to make a difference. The way that you engage people is by making policy relatable. It's not telling the story for people. It is letting the stories of those who have been either internally displaced or forced to flee be heard.

It is also about helping people to understand how they can make change. Last week the State Department rolled out a program called Welcome Corps--that's C-O-R-P-S—at [state.gov](https://www.state.gov) which provides Americans an opportunity to better understand the people we're talking about and welcome them to the United States as well.

Vivian Walker: All right. Well, thank you so much for the wonderful questions and even better answers from our distinguished panelists.

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To close out the session, I'd like to invite Anne Wedner to the podium. Thank you so much.

Anne Wedner: I'm subbing in today for [Commissioner] Bill Hybl who could not join us.

I just want to say this was a really great conversation. Thank you so much. Hopefully, you'll come back next year when we roll out the report again.

We appreciate your continued indulgence of our panels and hope that you're getting some value out of them.

We hope you'll join us for the next public meeting out in Palo Alto, California. We are going to be partnering with Stanford University to take a look at democracy and public diplomacy. The meeting is tentatively set for April 13.

Again, thank you all for coming. And thanks to Vivian, Deneysel, and Kristy for putting this together.

[Applause]

END OF TRANSCRIPT