

British Public Diplomacy in the ‘Age of Schisms’

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with Martin Rose

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- Mark Leonard, *Going Public: Diplomacy for the Information Society*, May 2000
- Mark Leonard, *Public Diplomacy*, June 2002 (supported by The British Council, BBC World Service, Norway-UK)
- Mark Leonard, *Public Diplomacy and the Middle East*, February 2003 (supported by The British Council)
- Mark Leonard and Andrew Small, *Norwegian Public Diplomacy*, June 2003
- Mark Leonard and Andrew Small, *Implementing Public Diplomacy*, 2004

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Introduction: The Setting

There is a big contrast between the cacophony of debate in the United States on the political and diplomatic fall-out of Iraq for US grand strategy, and the relative lack of public and political debate about how the United Kingdom addresses changing perceptions of Britain and British foreign policy as a result of Iraq. This is surprising, as the consequences for the UK are arguably even greater than for the US. As the world's only superpower, the US can still induce or pressurize many countries into going along with its priorities (even if the costs are going up) by virtue of its raw power. The UK, by contrast, must rely much more on its ability to persuade others of the merits of its case and – perhaps even more important – its ability to be seen as a trustworthy and principled partner. In recent years British foreign policy has been based on three key pillars: the international rule of law, European engagement, and engaging the Americans in a progressive project for international community. Today we must face facts: the fall-out of the Iraq crisis leaves each of those pillars in a questionable state of repair. It has also had a corrosive effect on general, non-specific, trust in the UK in many parts of the world.

Since 1997, the British Government has worked hard to create a new atmosphere of trust with our European partners and the developing world. On the political side, Tony Blair set out a vision of the international community that draws on and encapsulates the values of the centre-left. His first term, refreshingly, replaced memories of Margaret Thatcher's foreign policy with an appeal to a vision of an international community. Beef wars with Europe gave way to support for the Euro; memories of support for apartheid were banished by inviting Mandela to address the House of Commons; and the ghost of inaction over Bosnia and Rwanda was laid to rest with swift humanitarian interventions in Kosovo and Sierra Leone. By and large, these gestures were welcomed and accepted by our partners (with grudging suspicion in some quarters, and enthusiasm in others).

On the cultural side, Tony Blair promised to transform Britain into “a young country” and set out his determination to renew our national identity, and to craft a sense of nationhood which reflected the reality of Britain at the end of the 20th century. The backdrop to this was a sense that British image abroad was often out-of-date and damaging to our political and economic goals. Research showed that the biggest problem for Britain was that we were tarred by out-of-date associations: seen as a country in decline, stuffy, traditional, white, racist and imperialist. The creation of Panel 2000, the work of the British Council and the rebranding of the British Tourist Authority (BTA) have all had an impact on the face of Britain. Although many people mocked what became known as “Cool Britannia”, the polls show that this concerted set of activities has started to have an impact. Clearly, this kind of identity and image engineering can only work when it reflects substantial change in a society: this transformation did what such renewals do best – drawing attention in a focused and orderly way to a reality that was already coming, unsung, into existence.

In 2002, this work continued as the British Government launched a Public Diplomacy Strategy Board to co-ordinate the work that the government does in communicating and building relations with publics around the world – trying to bring together the activities of the FCO, the British Council, the British Tourist Authority and UK Trade and Investment. For the first time they have agreed a common public diplomacy strategy – with two themes, titled ‘dynamic tradition’ and ‘principled and professional’.

An article in the *Canadian National Post* in the summer of 2004 reflected well the international commentary: “Of course, the re-branding of all re-brandings is that of Cool Britannia in the mid-1990s.” Britain (Trademark) is the case study that every politician under the age of 40 must know. The country's image of a nation of bad food, stultified class-ridden society, stodgy pasty people wasting away in council housing, and strikes, was firmly entrenched all over the world. Within a year, the new story of Britain was crafted and told: The New Britain was creative, multicultural and achingly hip, with a well-trained and highly motivated workforce.....The marketing team reconfigured Britain as a hub, importing and exporting ideas,

goods, services, people and cultures. It was non-conformist. Britons were silent revolutionaries who had created new forms of organisation. The country had a long-established ethos of fair play and voluntary commitment. The 800-million pounds a year spent by the Foreign Office helped successfully sell the story abroad. And at home, Britain was re-energised.”

At the same time, much thought was going into the definition of cultural relations as a voice at least partially distinct from that of public diplomacy in its traditional sense. This thinking focused in particular on the trust deficit noted above, and stressed the advantages to the UK of organisations including, but not limited to, the British Council, which are able to win a particular kind of trust precisely by being palpably at arm’s length from government. The Foreign Policy Centre described this as a spectrum of activity defined largely by its time-frame, with Cultural Relations work characterised by its long-term nature. But in many ways the more important dichotomy could be seen as between work that is visibly governmental and work that is visibly non-governmental. Seen in this light, Cultural Relations can deliver short-term as well as long-term impact, as long as its independence is constantly stressed and acted out.

The time has come to look again at how Britain is perceived in the world, and on how the hundreds of millions of pounds we spend on diplomacy and cultural relations can best be used. In many ways a new gulf has opened up between the professed aims of British foreign policy and the way they are perceived around the world. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the Iraqi campaign, it is impossible to deny that the events of the last two years have changed the way that Britain is seen. In broad terms, Britain’s participation in the overthrow of Saddam and the occupation of Iraq have served to reinvigorate some of the residual doubts about Britain: is Britain really committed to Europe; or is it a Trojan Horse for American power (as De Gaulle argued)? Has Britain really put its own imperial past behind it, or does it still feel it has a right to invade and occupy developing countries? Is Britain really a multi-faith, multicultural country – or is it a Christian country that is launching new crusades against Islam?

The World After Iraq

Of course, Britain's changing image cannot be seen in a vacuum. These questions are being asked at a time when the world has been plunged into disorder. In many ways 2003 was the year that crystallised a series of global schisms - and Britain was right in the middle of many of them. During the Cold War, the world was shaped by a single schism - one that became the defining feature of geopolitics and subordinated the interpretation of all other schisms to its logic. Fifteen years after the end of the Cold War the old blocks that shaped the contours of the post-war world have started to splinter in violent and unpredictable ways. The West, above all, has started to fragment: into Europe and America, 'New' and 'Old' Europe and 'Big' and 'Small' Europe. At the same time, the Arab and Muslim worlds are in the grip of a series of bitter civil conflicts - pitting moderate against extremist Islamists; and régimes against civil society. As China, India and Brazil continue their rapid growth, they have led a new self-confident movement from the South to take on the North and have raised the prospect of a major global power transition, with all the potential fractions this entails.

Although many of the new divides have economic and political interests at their heart, the way they are expressed is often through culture, and owing to the lack of trust, it will often be impossible to address underlying economic and social differences before progress is made in the cultural sphere.

For argument's sake, this paper identifies six 'cultural divides' under three broad heads:

Political

Power-based order vs Rule-based order
Realpolitik vs Liberal Internationalism

Religious

Traditionalism vs Liberalism
Faith-based vs Secular government

Economic

Power vs Powerlessness
Pro-globalisation vs Anti-globalisation

These divisions neither fit into the old categories of the Cold War – nor do they fit into neat civilisation boundaries. Instead they form a number of cross-cutting divisions that create new and surprising communities of interest. France and Turkey find themselves united in their commitment to secularism; whilst religion plays a very important part in public life in the US and the Middle East. It is important to realise that this is not an 'Iraq' or '9/11' effect – many of these tensions have been building up for a long time, but were suppressed by the weight of the Cold War bi-polarity.

What is more, these divisions do not seem just to be about diplomatic wrangles – but clashes between publics, where public opinion for the first time in many years is shaping and pressurising foreign policy decisions. The last decade is full of examples of popular perceptions, rather than governments, setting the pace for international diplomacy. In Kosovo, a powerful military coalition risked defeat, not in the field, but in the media battleground for public support, as governments in Greece and Italy struggled to cope with volatile popular opinion. In Rwanda, ethnic conflict was mobilised through inflammatory radio broadcasts to civilians rather than by military command chains. Recent anti-globalisation demonstrations have revealed a new diplomatic environment where state and non-state actors compete for the public's attention. After the BSE (mad cow disease) crisis in Britain, the French government violated European Union law and continued to ban British beef, largely in response to public fears about safety. And the global competition for investment, trade, tourists, entrepreneurs, and highly skilled workers extends the influence of foreign publics beyond the political to the economic. But, above all, the sheer scale of popular mobilisation over Iraq and the consequences of this have been greater than anything since Vietnam.

A New Diplomatic Environment

Together these schisms seem to be pointing to the development of a new diplomatic environment. The last year has shown that achieving political change now means developing new coalitions by using a wide range of policy and communications tools to respond to a world where:

- The spread of democracy and – perhaps to an even greater extent – the flexing of extra-democratic populist pressure mean that governments are increasingly constrained by public opinion, which makes the legitimacy of policies increasingly important.
- The priority of multilateralism means that political action increasingly depends on mobilizing international coalitions, placing great importance on winning over public opinion in partner countries.
- The revolution in information and communications technology means that information travels more quickly, is more diffuse and is increasingly responsive to individual markets; we are also witnessing the new phenomenon of transnational public opinions operating and competing in a global space.
- Globalisation means that governments are increasingly reliant on attracting international trade, investment, tourism and talent to drive their economies.

This new environment has two key characteristics. First, there is no longer a clear dividing line between domestic politics and foreign policy – because the political debates in one country affect the welfare of publics in other countries. Second, there is a dynamic relationship between who you are and what you do – where your identity forms an enabling or disabling environment which can be enhanced or damaged by particular actions or policy choices. That is why identity needs to be acknowledged – and cannot be separated from policy-making.

The term ‘public diplomacy’ is often a euphemism for propaganda. But the proliferation of information in open societies (and, increasingly, in closed ones as well) makes it much more difficult for governments to control information. Attempts to distort the truth will eventually be exposed and therefore will create even greater scepticism of governments. Moreover, because most ideas that people absorb about a country are beyond the control of national governments – books, CDs, films, television programmes, or brands and consumer products with national connotations – governments

can only have an impact at the margins by seeking to clear paths for the most positive messages to reach mass audiences while working directly to influence the opinions of niche audiences. We need though to be clear that the efficacy of these positive messages aimed at mass audiences, in contexts of popular hostility, is dubious, as US public diplomacy campaigns in the Middle East have tended to illustrate in the last two years.

If public diplomacy is to be aligned with the major challenges of the new century, a significant shift in thinking is required. At the 'hard' end of the spectrum, governmental, message-orientated public diplomacy work needs the goals, target countries, campaigns and operating principles that have been shaping current public diplomacy initiatives to be reconsidered. In one major instance, this has already started to take place. The manifest difficulty of, and the pressing need for successful public diplomacy in the Middle East has led to a greater preparedness among some governments to countenance non-traditional approaches to campaigns in the region and to question the effectiveness of Cold War tools. Yet it is a mistake to believe that this is simply a regional aberration and that the usual methods can be deployed elsewhere. As we will illustrate, although the depths of hostility are not the same, gaps in worldview and significant public opinion challenges are also features of our relationships with key allies, major new powers and other parts of the developing world. The principles and practice of trust-building we set out need to be the rule for public diplomacy, not the exception.

In this paper, we set out five key lessons for British Public Diplomacy:

- Public diplomacy must be at the heart of our diplomatic strategy – not the 1990s variant of Cool Britannia but a strategy designed to show that Britain is a principled power that believes in international law, global development, and European unity. Public diplomacy today depends on reflecting truth, not fiction, so success will depend on reality. Public diplomacy in the future must focus as much on politics, and cultural divisions, as it has done on economics in the past.

- Public diplomacy requires much closer integration of public diplomacy and policy – consistency of action is the most important way of genuinely demonstrating commitment to ideals and ensuring that charges of hypocrisy cannot be levelled. This requires a rigorous assessment of the public diplomacy implications of certain policies at the earliest possible stage, as these are likely to have just as much impact on Britain's interests as the immediate consequences of the policy itself.
- British public diplomacy must focus much more strongly on traditional allies and industrialized countries and not just on threshold/developing nations. We need to be prepared to contemplate the transfer of resources from threshold nations to the developed world, where it is appropriate, and a concerted attempt to work with other like-minded countries on shared outcomes.
- Governments are poor spokesmen. 'Official public diplomacy work' must be paralleled by a continuous, concerted attempt to develop a parallel 'people-to-people' conversation that works through NGOs, diasporas, political parties and other non-governmental avenues.
- There needs to be a revolution in the tone and character of British public diplomacy so that it focuses on trust and mutuality – rather than simply on message delivery.

The Age of Schisms

In order to develop a new strategy for Britain it is valuable to set out a new map of the world – and to understand the new cultural schisms that define it. We take culture as meaning 'goals, values and pictures of the world' – that is to say our worldview, the entire fabric of our self-image and our relationship with our society and the world.¹ We argue that 'cultural' factors underlie many of the divides that have recently become the most important for policy-making.

¹ Isaiah Berlin, quoted in Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington, eds., *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 163.

We shall set out in this section some general descriptions which will help to define fault-lines in a number of real-world cases. These fault-lines are not permanent divisions, separating allies on one side from opponents on the other - the fissures criss-cross like crazing on old china, and people, nations and cultures will quite naturally find themselves in very different places when considering different issues.

One of the most popular 'simplifying' explanations of the post-Cold War world, Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of Civilisations', has chosen cultural conflict, in an even more essentialist sense, as the Rosetta stone of modern geopolitics. Huntington's thesis, though hotly argued and largely refuted, has nonetheless set the terms for much debate about the world since 1989.² But while it may be possible (if of dubious use) to draw a map of the world by tracing the outlines of cultures, this kind of map would not represent the set of fault-lines that concern us here. The blocs which our fissures separate are not monolithic, nor ethno-political. As Brian Barry notes, 'Civilisations will clash only if there is something specific to fight about. Difference as such is not a source of conflict. What causes conflict among [for instance] adherents of different religious faiths is their leading to incompatible demands'.³ All sorts of divisions can exist between groups that have distinct cultures, but there is no compelling reason to suppose that cultural antagonisms are always the root of such divisions. Differences of political and economic interest are very potent forces, and what are seen as markers of identity – nationality, race, religion – are often less important than we assume, in the genesis of conflict.

Worldviews

As well as this sort of case - of incompatible demands or conflicting interests - there are some cases where differences in worldview can amount to actual conceptual frontiers, frontiers across which gaps in

² Including the very need for a simplification of a parity with Cold War clarity, which Samuel Huntington questionably describes as a 'paradigm', challenging his critics: 'What is the best simple map of the post-Cold War world?' and 'Got a better idea?' in 'If Not Civilisations, What?' (*Foreign Affairs*, Nov/Dec, 1993).

³ Brian Barry, *Culture and Equality*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), p. 24.

understanding and communication really do lead to divides of a deeper kind. At its most extreme, two parties, while appearing to communicate, talk past each other, and completely fail to understand each other. This may be the case with much of the discourse today between US and Chinese leaders. Another example of this may be seen in the case of the trans-Atlantic divide. Robert Kagan's description of US and European understandings of 'multilateralism' illustrates this well.⁴

Without a clear sense of the other party's perspective and the assumptions under which they are operating, differences of this kind easily lead to suspicions of bad faith, claims of hypocrisy and worse. When Americans believe that heartfelt European concerns about genetically modified organisms (GMOs), for example, are simply protectionism; when America's aspirations for the spread of democracy are seen only as imperialist; and when these genuine fears of imperialism are seen simply as anti-Americanism, lack of understanding can produce a corrosive and self-reinforcing lack of trust. It is this, rather than any difference in *values* between the quarrelling parties, that can turn a division which is apparently amenable to rational dialogue into something that seems irreconcilable.

Provenance can also lead to an idea being accepted or rejected. Unilateral US proposals for important reforms of this sort, from the Middle East Partnership Initiative to the Greater Middle East Initiative, have met enormous hostility and suspicion largely *because* they are American. This has led to their pragmatic replacement with more 'locally-owned' plans. Attitudes to these initiatives have little to

⁴ Robert Kagan, *Paradise and Power*, (New York, Grove / Atlantic, 2004), afterword to the paperback edition, p. 144. He writes: "Most Europeans would argue that if the United States seeks to gain international legitimacy by any use of force, it must avoid acting 'unilaterally' and must embrace a foreign policy of 'multilateralism'. And most Americans would agree - so long as they did not look too closely at what Europeans mean by the term. For when Americans speak of 'multilateralism', they mean a policy that actively solicits and gains the support of allies. For most Americans, even those who proclaim themselves 'multilateralists', a UN Security Council authorisation is always desirable but never essential - 'multilateral if possible, unilateral if necessary'. It is a means to the end of gaining allied support. It is not, for the vast majority of Americans, an end in itself."

do with their inherent quality: traction is impossible without trust, and trust is the currency of the symbolic sphere, where the *ownership* of a reform plan is often much more important than its content.

The Importance of Public Opinion

As far as possible, we shall look at these fissures at the level of popular opinion, as well as among political élites, drawing on some of the major polls that have been conducted over the last few years. The increasing importance of the divisions between and among publics is very clear. For most of the 1990s foreign policy issues were relatively unimportant factors in opinion-polling: they are now very high priorities – and so they shape, and sometimes limit, governments' options to a much greater extent than they did a decade ago. Tensions between the US and Europe over Iraq owed as much to massive popular pressure on European governments as to any basic diplomatic differences between governments.

Growing awareness, and fear, of 'asymmetric' attacks – terrorism – has also emphasised the cultural splits we are discussing, carrying world publics in very different directions. With some of the greatest security threats to the West now coming from terrorist and other organisations that are not states, it is a vital security objective to ensure that these organisations do not have a comfortable operating environment - that is, support from the broader population amongst whom they work. Effective policies for dealing with these new security challenges are quite different from those of the Cold War, and publics require much more active persuasion, and much more clarity and integrity of information, if they are to support them. Responses to the threat of nuclear war or Russian invasion had much broader and less questioning support than do responses to the threat of terrorist attack, which are coloured by deep popular scepticism about pre-emptive wars and about the principle of régime change for 'terrorism-sponsoring' states. The scope for ignoring or papering over underlying divisions is rapidly diminishing – public attitudes now shape foreign policy in too many different ways.

Cultural divides

Boiled down to their essentials, there seem to be two kinds of cultural divide, into which the three sets of conflicts which we explore below may be seen to fit:

- 'Bottom-up' divides, which have their roots in differences of understanding - the conceptual frontiers that separate mental worlds, and which can create incompatible, culturally rooted demands.
- 'Top-down' divides, that are primarily political or economic, but which express themselves by seeking out cultural fault-lines, and take on cultural shapes.

This schema is deliberately rough-and-ready. It is not our purpose to re-ignite doctrinaire historical arguments about the fundamental drivers of politics and social change. We are clear that culture can be, in some circumstances, a driver in itself; and in other circumstances a symbolic level on which very different conflicts are reflected. In either case, we cannot look at the 'fissure' or the 'divide' without paying close attention to its cultural dimension. Into the first category fall the deep conceptual divides between faith and secularism, or nomad and peasant. Into the second the huge array of global problems that seem to defy logic because of their cultural accretions: the dehumanisation of opponents that takes place in Israel/Palestine or Rwanda, or Kosovo; or the deliberate adoption of symbolic baggage, like the Israeli and Palestinian flags sported by Protestants and Catholics in Belfast.

Political

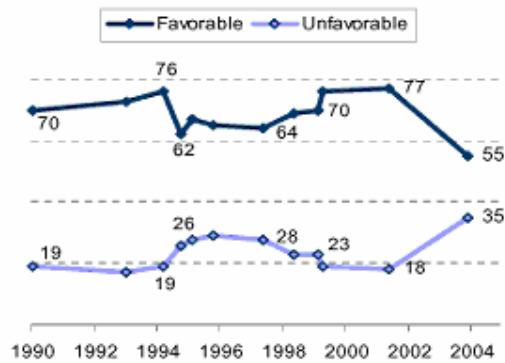
A set of fault lines has opened up over the future shape of international politics, exposed most vividly during the Iraq war and endorsed by most subsequent public opinion surveys. On one hand, a gap has opened up concerning attitudes to force and its legitimate use in the international arena. On the other, there is a widening gap concerning the objectives of intervention – and in particular whether

it is either desirable or feasible to attempt the radical transformation of other political systems.

Power-based order vs Rule-based order

During the 1990s any difference in view over international intervention seemed to be based on political leaders' being more, or less, reluctant to act; and on public opinion which was – it was assumed – very unwilling to tolerate the loss of soldiers' lives. At the height of the disputes before the Iraq War analysts were able to argue that polling evidence⁵ (discussed below) showed only a fairly modest disagreement about means. This cannot be said any more: large proportions of European voters say that they are simply not prepared to countenance war at all; and American support for the UN in opinion polls has collapsed to its lowest levels in recent history, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: American Ratings of the UN Slip



Source: 'A Year After Iraq War', Pew Global Attitudes Project (March 2004)

⁵ See, for instance, Anand Menon and Jonathan Lipkin, 'European Attitudes Towards Transatlantic Relations 2000-2003: an analytical survey', *Research and European Issues*, Notre Europe, N° 26, May 2003 (available at <http://www.notre-europe.asso.fr/IMG/pdf/Etud26-en.pdf>).

Poll results in Europe and the US show very different mindsets about patience with 'drawn-out' diplomacy, preparedness to resort to military means, and the value of international institutions and international law. In no country in Europe does a majority of respondents see the need for higher defence spending – on average, only 22 per cent of Europeans – Poland recording the highest level of interest at 41 per cent. In every other country, the majority of respondents, sometimes by a fair margin, believes that too much is being spent on defence. 54 per cent of Americans agree with the proposition that the best way to ensure peace is through military strength, as against only 28 per cent of Europeans. Another poll shows that solid majorities in Britain, France and Germany believe that countries need UN approval before the use of force, compared with a minority in the US. But apparently even UN approval is not by itself sufficient for most Europeans. In the most widely quoted figures, at least 41 per cent, and typically a majority, in every country in Europe other than the UK simply reject the position that 'under some conditions, war is necessary to obtain justice'. And while solid majorities of over 70 per cent in the UK and the US would support their government's taking part in military action against Iran if the UN Security Council decided to force it to give up weapons of mass destruction, the same figures are below 50 per cent in every other country except France (56 per cent).⁶

Nor has this simply been a question of 'the US versus the rest', with other countries trying to tie the superpower down with international treaties and multilateral organisations. In fact,⁷ polls show that in several non-European countries, such as Pakistan, Jordan and Morocco, opinion is just as divided or uncertain on the need for international consensus before using force as in the US.

Realpolitik vs Liberal internationalism

The period following the end of the Cold War has seen an important division resurfacing not just over means in international politics, but

⁶ Transatlantic Trends 2003 (German Marshall Fund of the United States and the Compagnia di San Paolo, 2003)

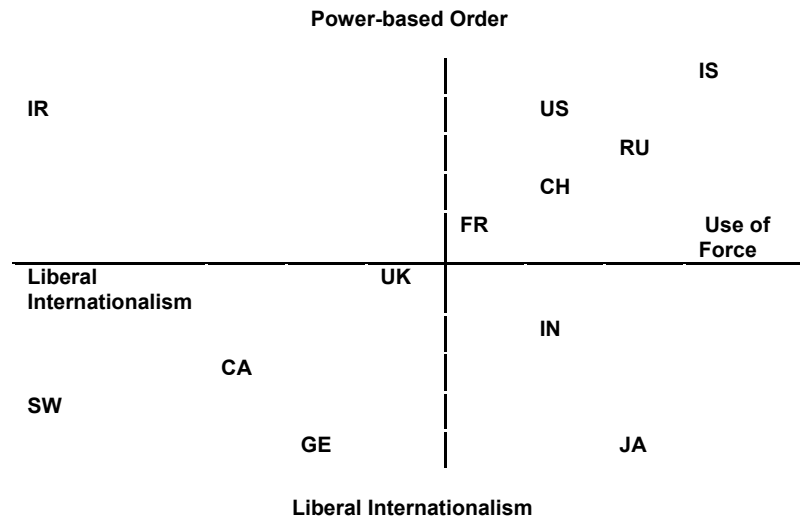
⁷ Ibid.

over objectives. It is a division between 'pragmatists' who take the view, on many different (and often conflicting) grounds, that other states' domestic political arrangements should be left alone; and 'idealists' who want to propagate their own political system – to establish (in the case of the West) liberal democratic states across the world.

This debate could be – wrongly – portrayed as a division between imperialists and anti-imperialists, but it is not that simple. There are big differences within the 'idealist' camp about the most appropriate way to achieve their ends, of universalising a political system (so that a simple reading of 'idealists' as imperialists doesn't work); and there are 'pragmatists' on whom, despite their apparently 'hands-off' attitudes, the imperialist cap fits much better. Some 'pragmatists' are happy to see imperial control exercised over another country for a time without being too concerned about the political system left behind at the end; some 'idealists' are keen to export values but without any recourse to force. The issue of agency – who does the dirty work – can also obscure people's positions. There are 'idealists' who want to see political transformations take place but will not, for instance, countenance the US being the country to take the action.

The two sides are not made up quite as one might expect. On the face of it, the US, with a 'single, sustainable model' of progress stipulated as the basis for its 2002 national security strategy, seems, for the present at least, to represent the most obvious brand of revolutionary liberal internationalism. But Europeans have been 'silent' revolutionaries in their own 'Near Abroad', creating incentives through the EU accession process for countries to change their entire domestic political systems, without recourse to traditional imperialist methods. Both Europeans and Americans are differentiated sharply from various 'status-quo' multilateralists such as China, which have elevated mutual non-interference in domestic affairs into a guiding principle, the very opposite of Europe's, despite the shared commitment to rules-based order. Figure 2 attempts to summarise, notionally and for illustrative purposes only, where selected countries might fit on the two important political divides referred to above.

**Figure 2: Map of Selected Countries' Positioning on Two Divides
Use of Force and Liberal Internationalism/Liberal internationalism and
Realpolitik**



UK=United Kingdom, US=USA, CA=Canada, CH=China, FR=France, GE=Germany, IN=India, IR=Iran, IS=Israel, JA=Japan, RU=Russia, SW=Sweden

Religious

The second set of cultural divides is defined by the re-emergence of religion as a political and social force – what Gilles Kepel has called the 'revenge of God'. One fault-line is largely concerned with religion's role in society, the second with its role in political life.

Traditionalism vs Liberalism

Societies across the world are still distinguished by moral-religious divisions that at one time seemed likely to become much less important, but have instead unexpectedly taken on renewed force. It has been widely assumed that modernity comes in one – Western – model, and that secularism is an inevitable component of it: this seems increasingly questionable. The fall of Communism, and the

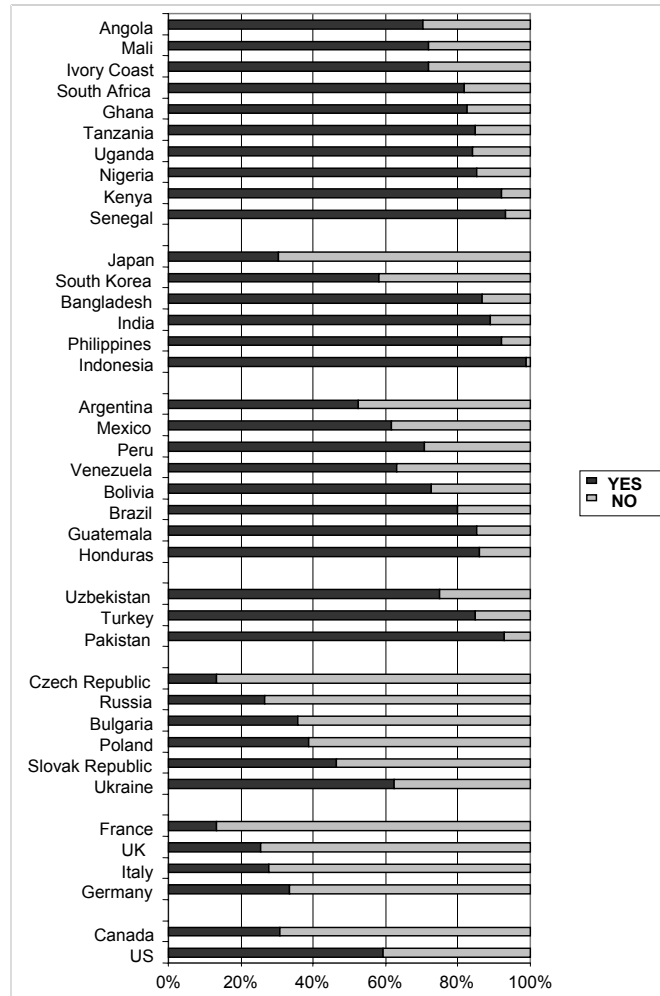
resulting ideological vacuum, contributed to a Christian resurgence across Eastern Europe, and Islamic revivalism in Central Asia, lending further momentum to the religious revival in the US, Israel and the Middle East that had been taking place through the 1970s and 1980s. Traditionalists in very different societies have sought to assert their claims against the 'atheistic', reason-based liberal order - some defending their position through dialogue, maintaining the importance of the shared past in giving continuity, meaning and value to life; others through a more comprehensive rejection, with a fundamentalist appeal to truth on the basis of incontestable (because divinely revealed) scriptural authority. The implosion of Marxism as a reference point seemed, briefly, to be about to deliver a bright new dawn of liberalism. The reality was otherwise. Instead of the secular, modernist universalism of Marx, liberals had to confront new challenges – post-modern, religious and relativist.

Among a set of indicators drawn from the World Values Survey, the data demonstrates clearly that traditionalists in virtually all cultures favour, in principle, religion, absolute standards, traditional family values and large families; they reject divorce; and they take a pro-life stance on abortion, euthanasia and suicide. Liberals in all cultures tend to take the opposite position on all of these. As the poll data in Figure 4 below indicates, this division is characterised by a difference in worldviews that is quite profound; and even countries that have been relatively untroubled by these divisions now face them through their more traditionalist immigrant communities, who quite often resist liberal values in the social sphere in the name of culture.

Faith-based vs Secular Government

A second dividing line is marked out by attitudes to the role of religion in government. Most, though by no means all, western countries have seen a diminishing (in some cases almost to nothing) of religion's formal role, and have seen the spread of religiously orientated government in countries such as Iran and Afghanistan as repressive and illiberal. But two new phenomena are challenging this trend. Figures 3 and 4 provide useful indicators on this subject.

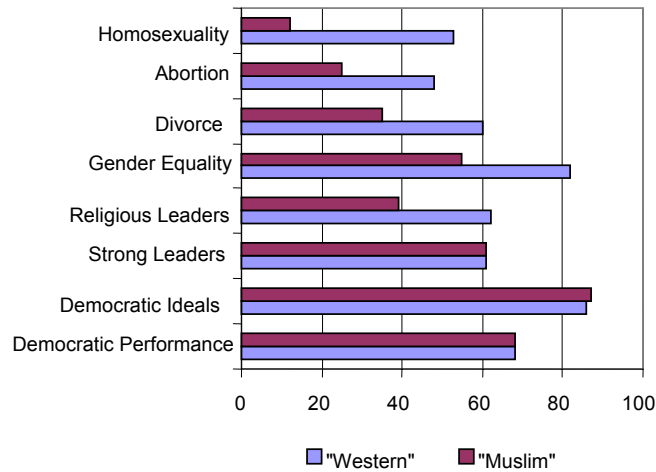
Figure 3: Is It Necessary to Believe in God to be Moral?⁸



Source: World Values Survey, pooled sample 1995-2001, April 2002.

⁸ Cited in *Islam & the West: Testing the Clash of Civilizations Thesis*, John F. Kennedy School of Government Harvard University Faculty Research Working Papers Series

Figure 4: Approval of Political and Social Values in Western and Muslim Societies

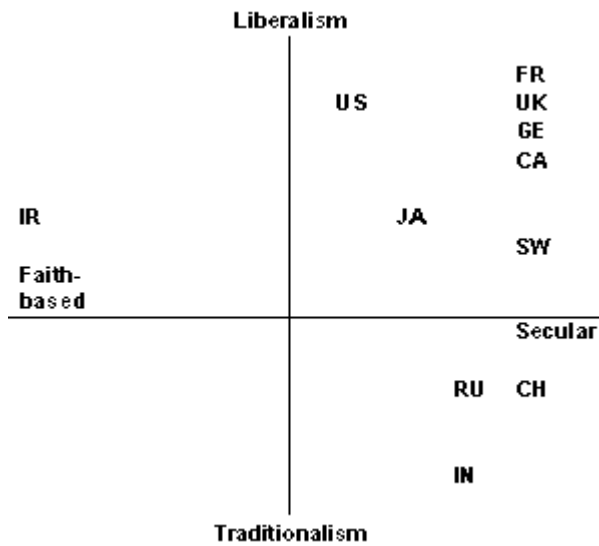


Source: World Values Survey, pooled sample 1995-2001, April 2002.

First is the 'next wave of democratisation', principally in the Middle East. This process has been attracting support in the West at popular and governmental levels, but it also throws up an uncomfortable contradiction, founded largely in a widespread confusion between democratisation and effective popular leverage over government. It is becoming clear that, at least in the initial stages, 'democracy' will mean more, not less, religion in government. Many in the West, for whom this political reform process has become an important priority, are beginning to understand that aggressively secularist approaches are unlikely to succeed; and are seeking out interlocutors from Islamic civil society. Fear of revolutionary Islam is much greater than fear of faith-based government as such, though the distinction is not always clearly made. The societies in which the West seeks to nurture democratisation are themselves often divided between robustly secular élites and sections of the population which see government and law without religious authority as illegitimate.

The second trend, however, is for the testing of boundaries in societies apparently in equilibrium on the issue - from the 'headscarf ban' in France to the pledge of allegiance case before the Supreme Court in the US,⁹ from the Ten Commandments in the Alabama judicial building to the attempts by various countries to incorporate 'clear reference to God and the Christian faith' into the European Constitution. Figure 5, which attempts to summarise (notionally and for illustrative purposes only) where selected countries might fit on two important religious divides, and Figure 6 provide some useful indicators of the differences between various countries in terms of the relationship between political and religious values.

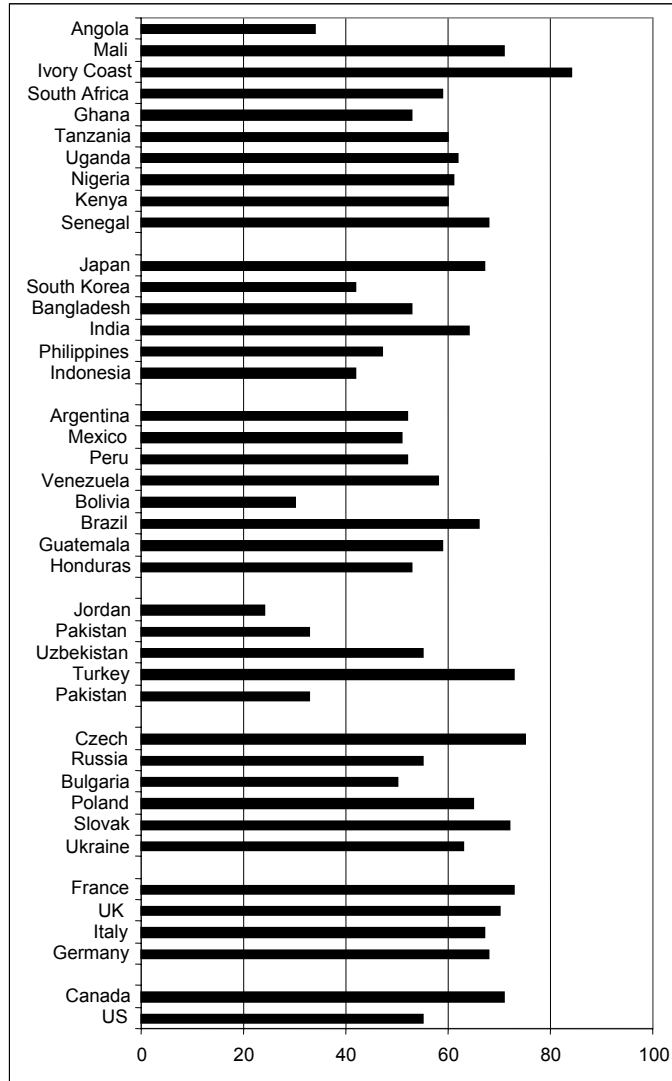
**Figure 5: Map of Selected Countries' Positioning on Two Divides
Traditionalism and Liberalism/Faith-based and Secular**



UK=United Kingdom, US=USA, CA=Canada, CH=China, FR=France, GE=Germany, IN=India, IR=Iran, IS=Israel, JA=Japan, RU=Russia, SW=Sweden

⁹ Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow, case no. 02-1624, the Supreme Court ruled that the Californian father did not have legal authority to speak for his daughter, on whose behalf he was bringing the case, but did not rule on the constitutional issue itself.

Figure 6: Is religion a personal matter that should be kept separate from government?



Source: 'Views of a changing world', Pew Global Attitudes Project' (June 2003)

Economic

The economic sphere seems to comprise divisions that are primarily based on conflicting interests – the developed world and the developing; rich and poor; free trade and protectionism, and so on. Yet these fault-lines have a shape that is now as much defined by political culture as by straightforward interest, and the contours have tended to solidify. They are not likely to shift just because these economic interests change. We identify two broader divisions that seem likely to persist in form – the first concerns attitudes to power; the second attitudes to progress; and we explore briefly two phenomena that are throwing these divisions into sharper relief – the rise of new powers and the so-called third era of globalisation.¹⁰

Powerful vs. Powerless

Differences in level of economic development clearly correspond in some respects to cultural differences - as Ronald Inglehart explains in his analysis of the World Values Survey, 'development is linked with a syndrome of predictable changes away from absolute social norms, toward increasingly rational, tolerant, trusting and post-modern values'.¹¹ But there are other aspects of the 'developed' and 'developing' worldviews that relate to the role that people *feel* their country has in the world and who they *believe* their natural allies to be. Just as the US has retained a collective belief in itself as an anti-imperialist power right through its own 'imperial' moments, the states that are now for the first time (at least in the modern era) assuming greater economic power give every indication that their attitudes will be defined more heavily by their past experience than by their new standing.

Relationships to power take quite different forms. Among the powerful, some cultures (such as the European), take the presence of power for granted, and some cultures (such as the American) are more highly conscious of its presence. Among the powerless, while

¹⁰ Thomas Friedman, *New York Times*, March 4th 2004 'Small and smaller' (see <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/03/04/opinion/04FRIE.html>).

¹¹ 'Culture and Democracy' in *Culture Matters*, p. 80.

some (like China – still psychologically shaped by loss of power in the 19th and 20th centuries, despite its rapid growth in power in the 21st) are acutely conscious of that historic loss of power, while others have a more continuous history of exploitation. The existence of the fissure is far more obvious to those in the latter two, 'powerless', groups but is becoming so to the former as the 'powerless' - both states and individuals - seek to pursue their objectives by asymmetric means, band together to use the power they already have (as in the G-20 versus the G8), or, as they assume greater power, articulate broader ways of redressing the balance (such as, in different spheres, UN Security Council reform and reparations for slavery).

It is in the areas of concerted international action and common political platforms that, on the global stage, the division is becoming most clearly defined. In the past, rising powers like Japan were incorporated into the Western 'clubs'. Today, the new powers are creating their own clubs, and it is not clear that these will necessarily be abandoned as their leverage on the world stage grows, particularly since these countries will still be developing countries for some time after their status as major powers is established.¹² And where previous groupings such as the Group of 77 and the New International Economic Order foundered on shared weakness, these new groupings are defined neither by being simply an alliance of the weak nor by questionable economic policies. The 'powerful vs. powerless' fault-line seems on a number of these counts to be primarily a macro-question about high-level economic facts and political relationships, yet the identity questions it embodies – to seek membership of 'the West' or to retain that of the developing world; to put history to one side or to seek redress for past

¹² The foreign policy line throughout the 1980s and 1990s for India and China, for instance, was that 'to right the historic wrongs inflicted on the non-western, non-white world as a result of western domination, India and China should cooperate to create a new international order in greater comport with the interests and values of developing countries – though national rivalries provided a continuous obstacle. See *The China-India-US Triangle: Strategic Relations in the Post-Cold War Era*, John W. Garver, National Bureau of Asia Research (available at <http://www.nbr.org/publications/analysis/pdf/vol13no5.pdf>).

grievances – filter through and are heavily shaped by the wider society. They exist very plainly on the symbolic level as well.

Within individual societies this powerful/powerless division is also visible, though in a number of countries - particularly developed countries - it now often takes on a directly 'cultural' form, where once its economic nature was to the fore. With the eclipse of 'class struggle' as an accepted dynamic, many groups (and many ex-Marxists) have translated these inequalities into a common group- or culture-bound identity, of a piece with more direct forms of discrimination. Iris Marion Young, for instance, claims that the 'oppressed' groups in the US include 'women, Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and other Spanish speaking Americans, American Indians, Jews, lesbians, gay men, Arabs, Asians, old people, working class people and the physically and mentally disabled', where these groups are defined as 'a collective of persons differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices, or way of life'.¹³ 'Power', and its absence within societies and between states, have both taken on cultural characteristics that exist beyond the power relationships themselves.

Pro-globalisation vs Anti-globalisation

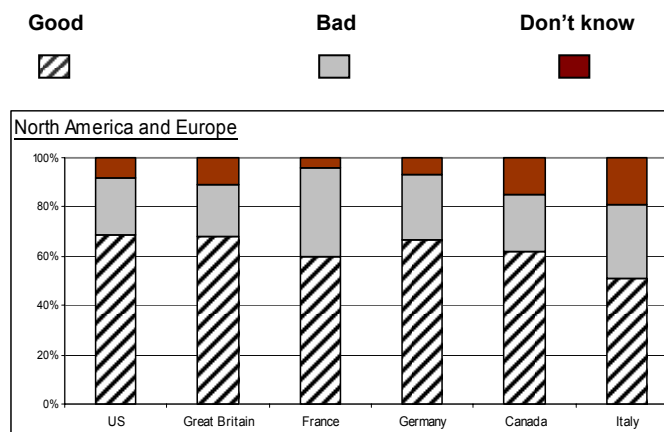
There are also divisions about the path of progress. As the distribution of the benefits of globalisation seems to shift, so do attitudes. Following Pew, we have looked at these attitudes across a range of subsidiary variables rather just 'globalisation', a term understood differently by different people.

The 'third era of globalisation' sees jobs higher up the pay scale shifting to the developing world, and fears of this in the developed world growing out of all proportion to the actual economic outcomes. Meanwhile, countries previously hostile to 'exploitative' foreign companies and concerned with the preservation of economic autonomy, such as China, have been positioning themselves as integral parts of a global supply chain for the sake of significantly higher rates of economic growth. (However, the 2004 Indian

¹³ *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, cited in Barry, p. 306.

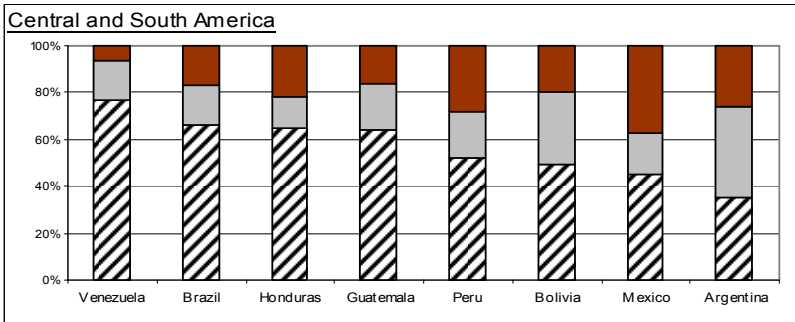
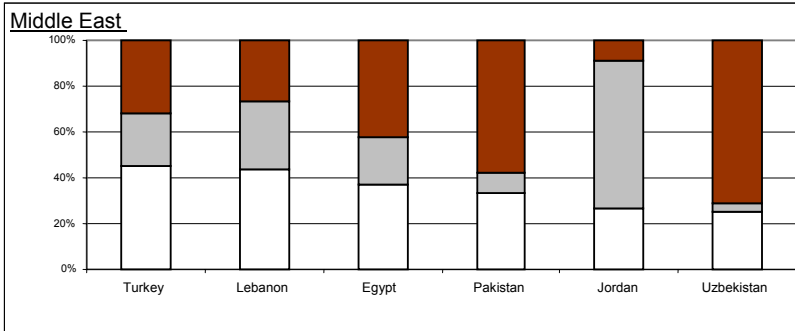
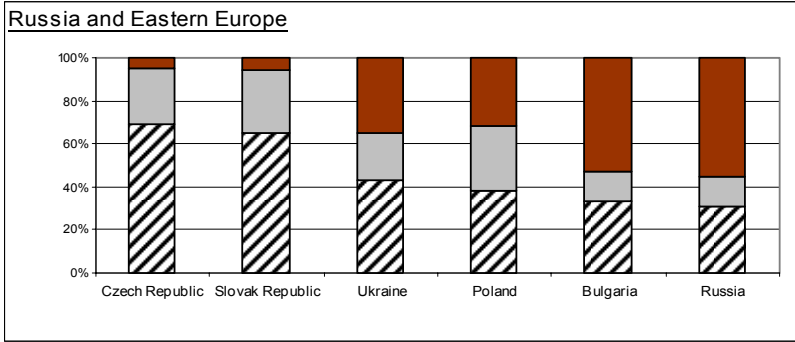
elections illustrate the complexity of the relationship which developing countries still have with globalisation, especially where the benefits are seen to accrue to an internationalised élite, while many others are left behind). The battles being fought for public opinion are taking place, then, in a context where the core constituency of support for globalisation in the West is shrinking, while it grows in these accelerating regions. The responses of anti-globalisers vary. As well as overt protectionism, they can take the form of solidarity with the people in the 'exploited' countries or active resistance to the spread of culture and ideas that ensues from openness.¹⁴ The polling below illustrates an outline of the levels of support for globalisation. However, its opponents are not so much the broad mass of any population as smaller, highly motivated, groups directly affected by change – groups such as trade unions and farmers. Supporters of globalisation are larger in number (as these figures below show) but tend to be weaker in their commitment.

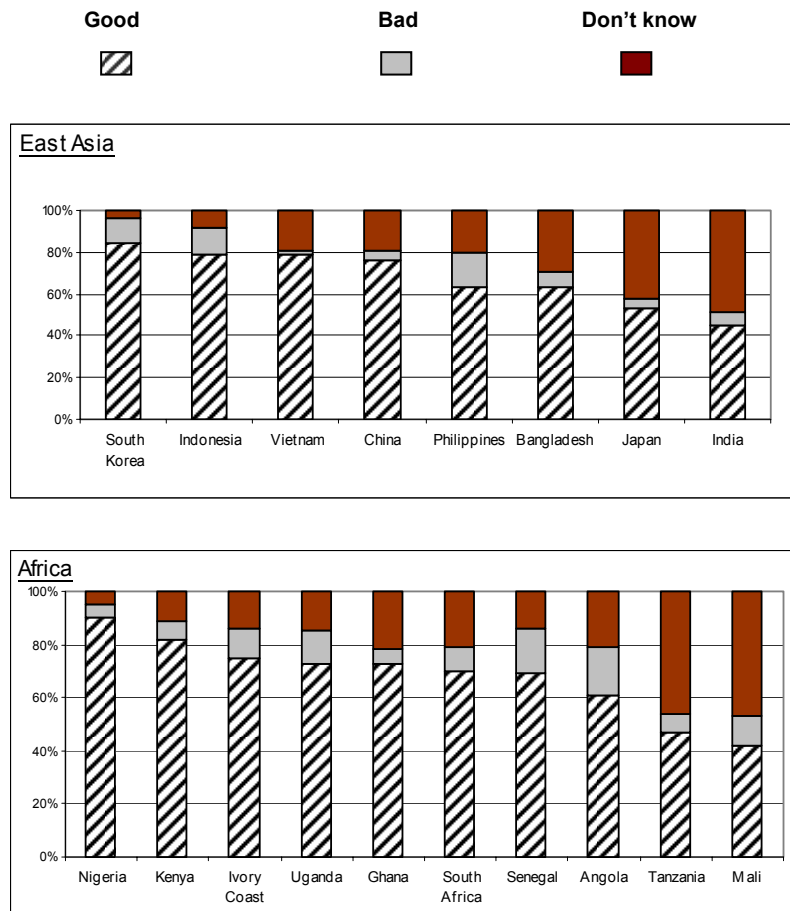
Figure 7: Effect of Globalisation



¹⁴ See, for instance, 'Campaign launched to fight foreign ideologies — A patriotic education campaign for students has been launched to fight the 'infiltration' of foreign ideologies through new media such as the internet' *South China Morning Post* 24th March 2004.

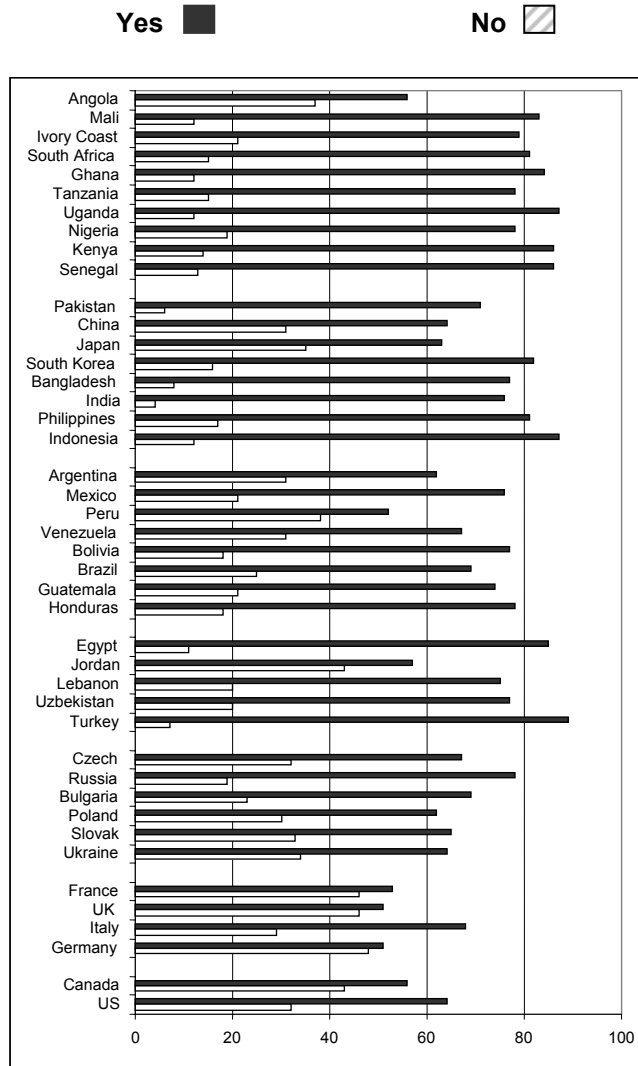
Good **Bad** **Don't know**
  





Source: 'Views of a changing world', Pew Global Attitudes Project' (June 2003)

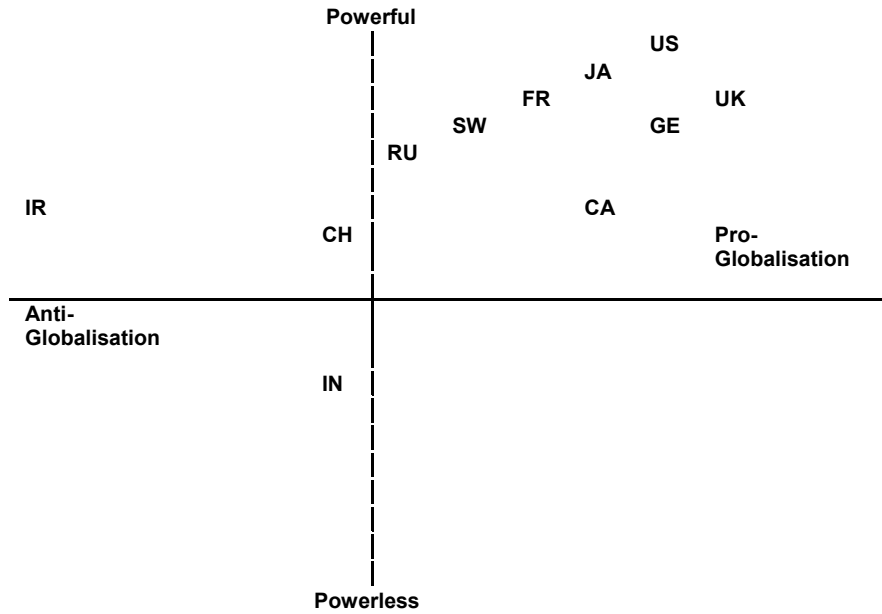
Figure 8: Our Way of Life Needs to be Protected Against Foreign Influence?



Source: 'Views of a changing world', Pew Global Attitudes Project (June 2003)

The following figure attempts to summarise, notionally and for illustrative purposes only, where selected countries might fit on the two important economic divides referred to above.

**Figure 9: Map of Selected Countries' Positioning on Two Divides
Powerful and Powerless/Pro-Globalisation and Anti-Globalisation**



UK=United Kingdom, US=USA, CA=Canada, CH=China, FR=France, GE=Germany, IN=India, IR=Iran, IS=Israel, JA=Japan, RU=Russia, SW=Sweden

The new global schisms

These divisions are diffuse and affect policy with varying levels of immediacy. The vital need to bridge the divisions – for instance - between the West and Middle Eastern publics is clear, and it has been widely accepted that this can only be a long-term process. Trust will not be rebuilt overnight. But more fundamentally, it is not clear that 'rebuilding' is the right description for what must be done: it is arguable that there wasn't much trust in the first place, and that the democratisation/popularism earthquake has simply revealed this absence. All the fault-lines detailed above, however, cut across critical areas of policy - the global power realignment taking place over the years ahead, the state of the pro-globalisation consensus, and the future of the transatlantic alliance. Responses to these and other vital policy issues will be largely determined by the state of these divisions in the first quarter of the new century.

There is a serious danger that they may become divides of a more extreme nature. Yet there is also the possibility that long-term public diplomacy efforts, if successfully and strategically pursued, can play a major role in reducing their impact. But at present, there is little attempt to direct public diplomacy towards these challenges, except for the most obvious policy priorities. The reasons for this are partly due to different Cold War institutional legacies and mindsets, as we go on to examine in the case of the UK, a country caught sharply in the middle of most of these divisions.

A new public diplomacy strategy

The environment in which the UK conducts public diplomacy has changed a good deal since the 1990s. Then, perceptions of the UK lagged behind realities, and outdated images put it at a disadvantage in the global marketplace: the priority was to build a more modern and diverse image for the country. This environment was already changing in the 1990s, and the Iraq war has greatly accelerated that change: the evolution of public diplomacy into a key policy tool continues apace. The shift in UK public diplomacy in the

1990s was necessary but not sufficient for the country's broader political objectives - image-building without trust-building always risks being unravelled by events. Major geopolitical change is taking place, resulting from, and reflected in, the 'war on terror' and the Iraq invasion - both of which impose huge strains on public opinion in the UK, in Europe and further afield. A widening gap between how the UK sees itself and how others see it has its roots in the fissures we have been discussing: this gap creates tensions with key allies and systematically erodes trust. In this chapter, we set out the UK's place on the new and fissured map and explain why it is the bridging of these fundamentally cultural fissures that should dominate our public diplomacy agenda in the years to come. In the next chapter we trace out some of the policy options to address this.

There have been both real and symbolic shifts in the UK's position on the different fissures in the post Cold-War era, from what many saw as inaction and lack of commitment in intervening to stop ethnic cleansing and genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda, to the swift interventions in Kosovo and Sierra Leone. From the apparent use of aid budgets to sweeten arms deals through the UK's support for the Pergau Dam, to the creation of the Department for International Development, with its 'pro-poor' aid policies, the UK's championing of debt relief for developing countries and much lauded new HIV/AIDS strategy. But the UK's new, and in many ways very positive, location on the map of fissures is all too often obscured from the view of foreign and domestic observers, by residual scepticism and persistent misunderstanding, stemming most critically from the war in Iraq.

Political

The UK's position on the realist/military side of the line has gone through the most significant evolution of the last decade, both at the political level and at the level of broader public opinion. The big shift in the UK's foreign policy – rhetorical and real - in the late 1990s began by leading public opinion, until an increasingly engaged public themselves started to require a different set of parameters for appraising government action. An interventionist approach, the principles of which were articulated in Tony Blair's April 1999

Chicago speech (which argued that “we cannot turn our backs on conflicts and the violation of human rights within other countries if we want still to be secure”) replaced the ‘hyper-realist’ approach of the early years of the decade, when the UK was at the forefront of what UN reports would later describe as a policy of ‘amoral equivalency’ in Bosnia. Early in the decade the UK’s transatlantic diplomacy involved threatening to veto US attempts to lift the arms embargo on the Bosnian government, and to launch strikes against Serb positions; by the late 1990s it was characterised by attempts to secure American support for the use of ground troops in Kosovo. One legacy of the policy failures of the early years of the decade, both in the Balkans and in Rwanda, was a determination on the part of many at the top levels of government to ensure that hesitation and lack of nerve on the part of the UK and other Western powers never again led to such catastrophes.

An essential part of this ‘doctrine of international community’, however, was a concern with pursuing diplomatic avenues and establishing a broad base of support wherever possible. This was not a foreign policy defined by unilateral moral authority to act and instinctual militarism. The conviction that the process was an integral part of the outcome - that the world order should be rule-based - was established as a basic plank of the wider debate. The key issue in deciding whether or not the public would support a war with Iraq was not whether people were convinced of the existence of a threat to the UK, but whether or not a further UN resolution to authorise the war could be secured; and subsequent polls, such as the one below, confirm the importance of these principles. Nor was this just a matter of show. The UK’s high diplomatic strategy of ‘multilateralising’ the US was firmly on the side of legal internationalism: this involved attempting in private to steer the US Administration down ‘the UN route’, securing resolutions for military action, and supporting balanced solutions to Israel-Palestine, while continuing in public to give active support on the hard security agenda. Tony Blair listed, in his speech to British ambassadors, as the first principle guiding UK foreign policy that “we should remain the closest ally of the US, and as allies influence them to continue broadening their agenda”. This position, poised between European countries that were often unprepared to take military action even when necessary, and a US

too ready to ignore the importance of international institutions and treaties, seemed to many to represent a good 'effective multilateralist' balance.

Figure 10: Who Can Best Help Iraqis Form a Stable Government?

	U.S. & its Allies %	U.N. %	Neither %	Both %	Don't Know/ Refuse %
U.S.	42	46	2	4	7
Britain	10	82	2	3	3
France	8	82	4	2	4
Germany	8	84	2	2	3
Russia	9	47	14	12	18
Turkey	11	59	10	6	14
Pakistan	4	43	16	3	34
Jordan	5	15	49	21	10
Morocco	17	22	34	9	18

Source: 'A Year After Iraq War', Pew Global Attitudes Project (March 2004)

The difference in means, if not ends, between the UK and other European countries has had far-reaching effects on international and domestic public opinion. Although attempts to pull the US more into the 'legal internationalist' sphere in the Middle East were consistent with efforts to persuade the US towards a more robust 'liberal internationalism' in the Balkans, the fact that they failed has led to a wide gap between perception and reality. Association with what were perceived by many as cynically realist goals ('blood for oil'), and an apparent readiness to circumvent international institutions to go to war in the face of widespread international opposition place the UK, in the eyes of much of the world, on the wrong side of both fissures. The trust, built up in the late 1990s, by the UK's new role in the world has not proved strong enough to withstand the effect of the Iraq war. A major international tracking study has found that the UK's role in the Iraq war is now 'the most frequent reason given for a negative opinion of the country'. Almost half of those polled – most striking amongst our European partners - do not believe that Britain values

the UN, and the result is visible in notably lower approval levels for the UK.¹⁵

Religious

The UK occupies a clearly drawn position on the religious fissures. Constitutional links between church and state mean that, in formal terms, England at least has 'faith-based politics'; but the UK's place on the liberal/rational side of the other major dividing line means that there is little of the religious rhetoric that infuses, for instance, the formally secular politics of the US. The UK outpolls a number of constitutionally secular countries in answers to the question of whether 'religion is a personal matter and should be kept separate from government' (see figure 5). Indeed, the UK ranks consistently as one of the least religious countries in the world. A recent ICM poll shows the UK with among the lowest levels of belief and church attendance internationally. Strikingly, it is the only country in the poll where significant numbers agree with the statement that 'the world would be a more peaceful place if people didn't believe in God', and the only country where there is large-scale disagreement with the view that 'a belief in God makes for a better human being'.

However, the UK's participation in the Iraq war and its broader links with the US international agenda mean that it is thought by many to be engaged in a 'latter-day Crusade' against Islam, whether through alignment with the Christian side of a 'Clash of Civilisations' or through aggressive secularism. Positive opinion in countries like Pakistan has fallen sharply, with over 40 per cent now disinclined to regard the UK as a trusted partner in international affairs, while in countries like Egypt, the UK's modernity is 'seen as a threat, rather than as a positive attribute'. The UK's self-perception - as a moderate, tolerant secular country, distinct from the likes of the US on one side and France on the other, cannot be assumed to be widely shared.

¹⁵ British Council, *Connecting Futures research 2002*.

Economic

On the face of it, the UK appears to be firmly on the side of the powerful. Its imperial history strengthens this impression internally and externally, and such leeway as it possesses has been used to stay very close to the most powerful state of all, the US. In its relations with the 'powerless', however, the lines are not so neatly drawn. Its sizable ethnic minorities, with strong group identities and (in many cases) close links to historic countries of origin, help to create a more complex set of relations than those of less internationally linked and more integrationist 'powerful' states. The UK's economic approach to the powerless has also shifted over the 1990s, as it has taken the lead in international debt relief campaigns and focused significant efforts on untied aid, global poverty reduction and sustainable development. And the UK's commitment to international law places it, unlike the US, on the side of those who believe that power must be mediated by equity. Yet the UK faces a legacy of suspicion, which participation in the exercise of military actions viewed as 'imperialist' serves to magnify. There is a high level of sensitivity about interventions, like that in Iraq, which can plausibly be linked to such economic objectives as energy security, reconstruction contracts or the arms trade. Over half of those polled in India, for instance, see the UK as untrustworthy in international affairs.

The UK's position on the other dividing line provides opportunities to redress the balance to some degree. Across business and politics, it has been one of the most unambiguous pro-globalisers, pursuing consistent free trade and liberalised market policies, sustaining the highest levels of outward investment and second highest levels of inward investment in the world, and hosting more international firms than any other country in Europe. Where the US debate about outsourcing has been fraught and politically charged, the UK's has been notably level-headed and constructive. This approach has relatively deep roots among the broader public too, with the highest net levels of support for globalisation among any country in the G8. A 'new protectionism' is gathering support in some Western countries, bringing with it the risk of entrenching conflict between the West and parts of the developing world that depend heavily, for

growth, on global trade and investment. The UK has the opportunity of conducting relationships with these countries on quite different terms, by taking the side of those trying to catch up economically rather than those trying to preserve existing advantages.

For all sorts of reasons, long and short-term, these important changes in the substance of British positions have not been as clear to the world as they might have been. Nor have the changes in British public self-image that have, on the one hand, powered some of these shifts and, on the other, been nurtured by them. The UK has moved around and across the 'fissure-map' much more than it has been credited with doing. Government may perceive itself as idealist, internationalist, sanguine about the role of religion in politics, and strongly committed to establishing fairer relations with the powerless, but the UK is viewed by many, at home and abroad, as a realist, militarist, participant in a war against Islam, and the handmaiden of untrammelled power. If the UK's image is to reflect these new realities, its public diplomacy, at least, will need to go through a major shift.

Delivering a New Strategy

The UK's public diplomacy today is substantially shaped by the last major collective re-assessment that took place of how it wanted to portray itself as a country. In the 1990s, research showed that the biggest problem for the UK was that it was tarred by out-of-date associations and the aim therefore was to show it as modern, creative and diverse. This had a series of implications for the planning of public diplomacy efforts, and the aspects of the UK that needed to be communicated, from cutting edge design to multiculturalism, from fashion to scientific innovation.

But the evidence above shows that we now face a more complex set of challenges. In broad terms, the UK now confronts two major public diplomacy goals: advocacy – the presentation of the UK and its policies in ways that are genuinely convincing and attractive to international audiences; and trust-building – the creation of a climate of mutual respect, understanding and trust, which permits and anticipates disagreement.

The medium to long-term goal encompasses:

- The need to convince countries such as France, Germany - and the US - that the UK is a principled multilateralist
- The need to convince Muslim countries that it is not motivated by hostility to Islam
- The need to convince developing countries that it is not an unrepentant member of a closed rich man's club

The longer term goal encompasses:

- The need to win countries like America over to the cause of 'rule based order'
- The need to win countries like China over to the cause of 'liberal internationalism'
- The need to win broader groups over to globalization

What this amounts to is a much clearer articulation of public diplomacy and cultural relations objectives. As well as showcasing Britain as a modern and innovative country, such a strategy will demonstrate that Britain is a principled power which believes in international law, global development, and European unity. In other words, public diplomacy in the future must focus as much on politics, and on these cultural schisms, as it has done on economics in the past. With Britain's dual presidency of the G8 and the EU, a major window exists in 2005 to take UK public diplomacy into this next phase.

There is also a notional dividing line that needs to be broken down, rarely explicit but underlying many differences in the conduct of public diplomacy in different arenas, between the supposedly more mature, developed, friendly countries – who are likely to find themselves on the receiving end of trade promotion campaigns and cultural exchanges but considerably less attention on the political side – and the supposedly less mature, developing countries, at whom we are far more comfortable directing campaigns about human rights, multilateralism and political reform.

As we have seen, the principal political, religious and economic fissures are not this neat. Although governments are understandably sensitive about conducting 'political' campaigns among allies, it is here – the US, France, Germany and other European partners – that some very critical work needs to be done. There is legitimate concern about sensitivities to public diplomacy efforts of this sort with Western publics; and clumsily handled they could of course be counterproductive. But a new public diplomacy would look and feel very different, aiming at influence without confrontation. How? Primarily because they must be based on close attention to the 'market' and its demands and needs: public diplomacy gets nowhere by shouting, and everywhere by listening.

The major British public diplomacy efforts in 2004 and 2005 have been focused on science and technology in the United States; design, fashion, business and technology in Eastern Europe; and the Expo in Japan. General public diplomacy activities undertaken by the embassy and British Council in France, to take another prominent example, are largely focused on business, science and the arts. All these activities are of high quality and very valuable in their own right, but they do not, perhaps because of this sensitivity about the type of public diplomacy work undertaken in such countries, necessarily support as fully as they might, the UK's major political objectives in key countries. Nor do they address the key issue of non-specific trust – the background noise against which all international activity takes place, and which as we have seen is revealed by polling evidence to be frequently negative.

New Priorities

This shift in priorities may mean a shift of resources. At present, the British Government's public diplomacy is organised to compete with other Western countries in almost 200 countries, when Britain has unique national interests in just a fraction of that number – our research for a previous report suggests that the UK, for instance, has distinct bilateral interests in just 50. Public diplomacy efforts should be focused on a targeted group of countries which are most

important to a government's interests, rather than those which are perceived as being the easiest to influence.

There are some parts of the world where countries have a clear interest in pursuing bilateral public diplomacy work – the world's largest economies and markets, regional powers and countries of emerging strategic importance. In these countries, although there will be multilateral cooperation too, there is clear reason for countries to compete for access to markets, for political influence, for tourism and for immigration talent. In other parts of the world, although there is a clear interest in carrying out work that promotes stability, economic development, human rights and good government, this interest is shared with other countries, and such objectives would best be pursued through coordinated multilateral programmes rather than through wasteful competition. Where our interests in a country are the same as those of other countries in the developed world, resources should be pooled with them to achieve these common goals. There is also a strong case for having DfID pay for public diplomacy activities that act to promote development objectives of this kind, which will release more resources for high-profile public diplomacy activities in the rest of the world.

These priorities will need to inform public diplomacy thinking and planning across a broad spectrum that runs from news management through strategic communications to structural relationship building. It is tempting to see this as a spectrum that runs from short-term to long-term activities; but this would be wrong. On the one hand consistent news management, handled with integrity, can build longer-term trust, and strategic communications that is systematic in reflecting underlying realities rather than merely tactical positions and immediate exigencies can do the same. On the other, relationships planned, built and delivered for the long-term also – of course – yield short term benefits in terms of partnership, trust, and support. They can also, naturally, have economic benefits.

News Management

News management is communication on day-to-day issues—in other words, aligning traditional diplomacy with the news cycle. At the

short end of the cycle, it is clearly at the heart of governmental public diplomacy, though implicit in this kind of engagement are longer term themes which lend themselves much more obviously to relationship-building. The globalisation of news coverage complicates this task. Diplomats have no control over the way the media present their countries, since those reports are typically filed by foreign correspondents. Some of the stories that have the biggest impact abroad are not traditional foreign policy stories that embassies are equipped to deal with but are domestic stories, such as the treatment of Muslims under the 'Prevention of Terrorism Act'. Diplomats will talk to the press about 'foreign' news stories, but they will refer enquiries about 'domestic' stories to the relevant government departments, which are not equipped to understand the international repercussions of their actions. Moreover, during the throes of a domestic crisis, foreign correspondents will invariably get second-class service since government officials will be primarily concerned about press coverage at home.

We have been arguing that governments are increasingly unlikely to be successful conducting short-term public diplomacy campaigns of the traditional kind, and have set out some of the principles and outline directions that future campaigns should be taking.

We saw in the last section that, for the UK, there are three priority areas in shifting perceptions and three priority areas in winning over those on the other side of the dividing lines – demonstrating that we are idealist/liberal internationalists; demonstrating that we are not engaged in a liberal or Christian crusade; overcoming suspicion in our relationships with the 'powerless'. In this sense it is about promoting liberal internationalism, a rules based order and globalisation by identifying the UK strongly with those positions.

The approach that is likely to be effective will be closer to the model set out in *Public Diplomacy and the Middle East* – 'a campaign that is not a campaign', which was later developed into the government's 'Partnership for Reform' strategy (see Appendix I).

This has a number of characteristics, among which are the following:

- It recognises that an overt PR style 'campaign' is unlikely to be successful and may even be counterproductive.
- Its short-term aims are limited, focusing on correcting mistaken impressions, without any expectation of 'winning hearts and minds'; its more modest goal was to get people 'to hate us for the right reasons'. It recognises that trust can only be built over the long term.
- Its longer-term goals are designed as a partnership with people in the region, with as much focus on their interests, aspirations, fears and sensitivities as on narrow British interests. It takes the *Arab Human Development Report*, written by authors from the region for the UNDP, as a starting point, and is directed towards this shared agenda for economic modernisation and political reform; as well as ways in which Britain (and other countries) can support it - giving a solid, practical backbone to the business of relationship-building.
- It recognises the importance of domestic audiences in reflecting messages out to the region – dealing with anti-Islamic prejudice at home is important, both in its own right and if Britain is going to be seen as a credible interlocutor, facing up to failings and prejudices.

These are not objectives that can be achieved through short-term persuasion. Understanding of the UK's worldview (and British understanding of other worldviews) can only come through sustained contact and knowledge-building. Attempts to win over opinion by 'selling' each individual case are likely to fail and even to be counterproductive. It is in this aspect that an organisation like the British Council, at arm's length from government, is particularly appropriate.

The late 1990s saw the translation of the domestic media management techniques of the day – 'spin, rebuttal, 'lines to take', media monitoring, the planting of good stories on trusted reporters and the denunciation of those who caused trouble' – across to the management of international public opinion during major military campaigns. Starting with the Kosovo campaign and continuing through Afghanistan and Iraq, a sophisticated communications

architecture was established to deal with the media during wars and international crises. But the change in the media environment over the last decade militates ever more strongly against attempts to steer 'mainstream' international opinion with short-term methods. While the first Gulf War was defined by CNN's coverage, the second saw Fox News, *Al Jazeera* and the internet providing the main sources of information in the Middle East and the US. The new media is responsive to its markets, interactive and – crucially – omnipresent, with every owner of a digital camera or blogging software forming part of it. In a context where media coverage is ever more likely to reflect back people's prejudices, the prejudices themselves must become the focus of attention. So, for instance, the attribution of responsibility for 9/11 differs vastly, as the polls illustrate - 61 per cent of those questioned in Gallup's 2002 Poll of the Islamic World did not believe that Arabs were responsible for the September 11th attack, with as few as 4 per cent in Pakistan believing it to be true, while over 50 per cent of Americans (rising above two-thirds in certain polls) have attributed responsibility for the attacks to Iraq, despite the absence of any demonstrable linkage. This kind of divergent interpretation of identical data drives us to give up on the sense that there is any shared framework within which events are being viewed, turning short-term persuasion of any kind into a major challenge.

Strategic Communication

The second dimension of public diplomacy is strategic communication. Governments are adept at conveying their stances on particular issues (whether tariffs on steel or peacemaking in the Middle East), but officials are much less effective at managing overall perceptions of their country. One reason for this failure is that different institutions have been responsible for dealing with politics, trade, tourism, investment, and cultural relations. It is important to set a number of strategic messages and plan a series of activities over a year or so to reinforce them; all public diplomacy organisations must have a stake in the totality of messages and a sense of how they can cooperate on promoting them. But each public diplomacy organisation will have a different stake, crafted

around a clear analysis of the benefits and disadvantages of their visible association with message delivery.

Public diplomacy is ultimately about delivering policies, not delivering messages – to be successful, it is important to 'walk the walk' rather than expecting that public diplomacy can work simply as an add-on. While there is certainly a need for consistent messages that underlie day-to-day communications, in the medium term, successful public diplomacy requires embodying principles in action, which can then be used to substantiate claims about Britain's values.

Examples of campaigns – and here the word is very appropriate - of this sort could include:

- demonstrating commitment to international law and the European Union through high-profile work on putting flesh on the bones of 'effective multilateralism' in the Solana documents with France and Germany
- demonstrating shared interests with the 'powerless' through taking a central role in achieving the eighth Millennium Development Goal in the course of the dual Presidency of the EU and the G8 in 2005
- joint campaigns with developing countries on pro-globalisation issues such as offshoring
- leading a major campaign to get seats on the UN Security Council for countries such as Brazil, India, South Africa and Germany and promising not to use the British veto on non-essential resolutions or even to give up our veto in order to move to a double-majority system if other countries will do so too.

This means that we need to develop a modern day equivalent of the 'European Step-Change' policy where ministers are charged with making appearances and giving interviews in target countries to show that Britain is true to its values. The British Council should be freed to engage in an open and explicitly non-governmental discussion of these difficult issues.

Strategic communication also requires much closer integration of public diplomacy and policy – consistency of action is the most important way of genuinely demonstrating commitment to ideals and ensuring that charges of hypocrisy cannot be levelled. This requires a rigorous assessment of the public diplomacy implications of certain policies at the earliest possible stage, as these are likely to have just as much impact on Britain's interests as the immediate consequences of the policy itself. Intervening in Iraq and then not intervening to stop a possible genocide in Darfur, for instance, makes it very difficult to maintain a position that Britain is significantly motivated by 'liberal internationalism' - and will ensure an even higher degree of scepticism about motives for any future military interventions.

Relationship-Building

Where the objectives of the 1990s were frequently conducive to PR-like campaigns, these new priorities, although they certainly also involve the need to communicate longer term strategic messages, are largely built around long-term relationships – and the building of strong relationships requires dialogue, rather than just transmission. Such dialogue must be, and must be seen to be, genuine. To use a word that has proved useful in discussing the nature of these relationships, public diplomacy in the early 21st century needs to be conceived and delivered on the basis of 'mutuality'.

This kind of public diplomacy, or cultural relations, is self-critical and frank. Intercultural 'shouting' (the internet term is very expressive) - is counterproductive, as much current US public diplomacy in the Middle East illustrates. Success requires relationships in which genuine, two-way communication can take place; and the trust that grows from this sort of relationship. This means moving away from too strong a focus on short-term opinion-management dictated by breaking news and unfolding events, to a strategy of building long-term trust, through long-term, consistently managed relationships, and doing so in advance of, not in response to, short term political needs.

It is often more effective for a state to work through organisations and networks that are separate from, independent of, and even culturally suspicious toward government, such as NGOs, diasporas, political parties and brands.

- NGOs have credibility and a reputation for independence which governments cannot build up themselves, along with great expertise and extensive networks of foreign politicians, experts and activists. No diplomatic mission possesses the capability to coordinate the sort of sustained lobbying and demonstrations that NGOs have mobilised over landmines and debt.
- Links to diasporas can provide much needed language skills, cultural knowledge, political insight and human intelligence, though they can also provide partisan views, dated interpretations and political engagements – all of which need to be taken carefully into account.
- Increasing links between political parties from different countries can make diplomacy easier by giving each side a clear idea of the political positioning and possibilities of the other, providing a channel for policy exchange and developing an international outlook within parties which are out of government.
- Businesses and their brands form an important part of the national image of many countries and if brands' resources can be successfully enlisted, they are a powerful way of changing perceptions of a country.

Visible identification with government does not help with the building and maintaining of this kind of relationship. NGOs are thus, clearly, very well suited to it - but the ambiguous status of organisations like the BBC and the British Council offers a particular advantage. Both are able to be 'inside-outside' - to be non-governmental in their approach to public diplomacy, while understanding and sharing its overarching goals. It is not that governments do not 'do' trust – simply that long-term consistency is not the primary function of politics or government; so that organisations explicitly designed to take a longer view are often better suited to this sort of relationship-

building. Trust has to be earned, and on the whole it has to be earned by those who want to be heard, *before* they can be heard to any effect. Intercultural relations are two-way negotiations which recognise the asymmetries of power and try to offset them; they look for and develop real, substantial mutual benefit and exchange; and they understand that the quality of the relationship itself, not simply short-term shifts in public opinion, is the crowning achievement.

The paradox that we face in public diplomacy is that the sort of trust we need to generate is not culturally neutral: it is a very specific 'modern' form of trust, a trust that allows those who share it to operate with confidence in a world where they never see most of those they trust. As one writer puts it, 'modern' trust can only coexist with ideas of rationally analysable risk – and it is this trust that equips us all to live in a world of risk (which we understand) rather than a world of mere danger (which we do not): the 'modern' world, in other words. So even our offer of trust is culturally loaded, involving ideas of risk, probability and individual agency which are not always welcome in other cultures.¹⁶

The globalisation of communication has thrown global politics open to many millions of people who do not share any such assumptions, and above all do not necessarily calibrate their own actions on the basis of a broad, non-personal reciprocity. Small-scale community-specific systems of trust often do not provide an intercultural currency, and the absence of this intercultural currency contributes to the 'tearing along the dotted lines' we noted in previous chapters.

To promote the growth of a 'global community' that can discuss equably and share common solutions to global problems, we must look differently at these newly apparent fault-lines and devise approaches which are designed to bridge them, rather than to dig in along them. This means consciously and systematically building trust 'across' them. It is a patient, slow business, like planting esparto grass on shifting sand dunes - slow, undramatic and frequently invisible. It would be wrong, though, to think of it as a process which postpones 'payback' into the distant future: well-built,

¹⁶ Adam B Seligman, *The Problem of Trust*, Princeton 1997, p. 173.

solid relationships are made not just from deferred promise, but from a series of developing, linked activities each with their own short term outputs as well as their long term value. In this chapter we explore some of the building blocks. We argue that there are four principles for building trust: the requirement for mutuality and two-way communications; the need for non-governmental forms of contact; the need to be explicit about power relations; and the need to build trust in practical ways, by doing things together in partnership.

The Need for Mutuality

There is a tendency to think that public diplomacy won the Cold War, and that the tools which were used then can be used in the same form now. They cannot. American scholar Marc Lynch describes US public diplomacy since 9/11 as “an approach that combines vigorous military interventions with a dismissal of local opposition to them, offset by occasional patronising attempts to ‘get the American message out ...’ Not surprisingly, the result has been to alienate the very people whose support the US needs in order to succeed.”

There is a fairly narrow limit to what the sort of public diplomacy that Lynch describes in his article¹⁷ – radio and TV broadcasts, ambassadorial interviews, films, music, magazines and relentless messaging – can achieve, no matter how refined it becomes. The assumption that, if only the US can explain itself better, the world will understand and sympathise, is probably self-defeating. Much the same has been true of European attempts to change the way that Americans look at the world after 9/11. Instead of managing to sway each other we have engaged in what has sometimes seemed like a dialogue of the deaf. Lynch outlines a different and more sophisticated approach based on engagement, respect and dialogue. It is no less clear in its objectives – but a good deal more thoughtful in its expression. It rests on engagement rather than transmission, and listening as much as talking. It doesn't ‘shout’. And it echoes a remark made recently by a senior Dutch diplomat, ‘The

¹⁷ Marc Lynch, *Why Arab Opinion Matters*, Foreign Affairs September/October 2003, (82/5).

world is fed up with us talking all the time: what it wants is for us to shut up and *listen*'.

This is a significant advance, recognising that successful public diplomacy is a genuine two-way street. Trust-building requires a commitment to communication that is (more or less) unconditional, and based on the intrinsic value of the relationship. This is pretty simple psychology: how can anyone possibly expect their views to be respected and valued if they do not respect and value the views of their counterparty?

On this basis we can establish a profile of long-term, trust-building relationships and the values that underpin them. They are two-way, mutually respectful and reflective. They are built on active intercultural awareness and understanding – the constant attempt to see why other people think as they do, and to analyse how our own behaviour looks to others. They acknowledge the distorting effects of power and the memory of power, and they consciously rebalance relationships in order to compensate for it. And they do more than pay lip-service to mutual benefit – they understand that mutuality is an indispensable precondition of trust-building.

Independence and Trust

There are different kinds of trust. Short-term trust is transactional: we believe that the bank will honour a cheque and that the bus will go to the destination posted on its front, without any suggestion that we place unconditional trust in the clerk or the bus-driver. Long-term, non-specific trust is the trust we place in friends, family and those whose motivations we think we understand well. We believe they will act from altruistic motives: that their relationship with us is itself imbued with non-specific, non-transactional trust.

These two kinds of trust operate interculturally. Transactional trust governs discrete transactions, large and small; non-specific trust governs relationships. Of course the two shade into one another; and they can sometimes evolve from one into the other. Indeed, discrete transactions, placed, as it were, end to end, can form the basis of a relationship of real, long term, non-specific trust. But the

key is timescale: non-specific trust grows from long-term, consistent interaction, maintained through thick and thin; transactional trust is short-term and restricted to a transaction or series of transactions. Transactional trust facilitates more transactions; non-specific relationship trust is an end in itself. On it is built stability, civil society and the future.

On the whole, governments do transactional trust, albeit on the grand scale. Manifesto commitments are at best binding from election to election; alliances, as Palmerston famously said, are temporary expressions of permanent interests. It is not that governments *cannot* generate trust – they can, and the end-to-end model is perhaps useful here. But trust is a by-product, and changing political and international situations will frequently undermine it. This is the nature of politics, in which a week is a long time.

At the other end of the spectrum, where a decade is not very long at all, long-term relationship trust is most easily built in areas least subject to sudden changes of policy. Government does it best when applying development aid through agencies like DfID which express its will to build long-term infrastructures of trust. But independent organisations, however particular their status, like the British Council, have two very specific advantages.

The first is that they operate in areas that are non-political, and fairly well insulated, by their nature, from political action. There is always the danger that governments will terminate cultural relations as an indication of geopolitical displeasure, as the British government did with Iraq in September 1990. But we do not normally expect to hear threats like 'Withdraw your troops or we shall stop co-productions with your national theatre'. Work in education, science, the arts, language and information is in a political sense peripheral. It is therefore very well adapted to surviving the hard times – a vehicle for consistency and the maintenance of trust when political relationships are in trouble. Egypt in 1956 is a healthy contrast to Iraq in 1990: British staff in Cairo kept the British Council open as long as possible into the Suez crisis; and when they had to be

withdrawn, Egyptian staff continued to keep it running – with the encouragement of Nasser's government.

This highlights the second advantage: an independent cultural agency earns trust precisely *because* it is not the government. Nasser was quite happy to maintain cultural relations with Britain in wartime because cultural relations seemed to stand so clearly outside politics. Today, with the negative views of British government policy that permeate much of the Middle East after the invasion of Iraq, it is very important that the British Council is seen as being British, but not governmental. And this is true in many countries outside the Middle East, too.

As set out in the previous chapter, there is a gulf between how the government understands itself and how it is understood across the world; but this will not necessarily be changed by campaigns of persuasion, attempting to win people over to the government view on issues such as Iraq. Britain's standing can be improved, however, if there is an understanding of the internal debates, the agonising inside and outside government and the disparate range of views and positions that are held on given issues. Recent research in the Middle East suggests clearly, for instance, that the British Council can play a strong role by representing not just government policy (probably best de-emphasised, in an explicit sense, at present) but the other, non-governmental, voices of Britain. 'Why can't the British Council give us the Britain that put a million anti-war marchers on the streets on London in February 2003?' as one Arab respondent asked recently. This is, after all, the democracy we speak of implanting in the Middle East.

Doing Things Together

Trust is the end-product of our work, but it is an abstract. How is it created? The quality – mutuality – which underlies successful relationships is much more about *how* we conduct those relationships than it is about *what* we say and do. The medium is the message. Trust is created by *how* we behave, *how* we speak – and *how* we treat our interlocutors. Paradoxically, although it is the

objective of all our work, it is always the by-product of other activities.

Relationships based on trust and breeding trust can be 'about' almost anything, as long as they are consistent and mutual. They focus on the long-term and on the benefits to both parties; they accord respect and understanding to all involved, recognising the asymmetries of power in all relationships; and they are resolutely, even pedantically, two-way. This sort of relationship can be about anything from nursery schools to fiscal policy to poetry, or from rap to higher education to civil service training.

But some activities are more conducive to trust-building than others. In order to build trust well, collaboration needs to be as far as possible from the controversies of day-to-day politics. You might perhaps in theory build trust through arms supply, but everything about such a relationship smacks of short-term pragmatism, mutable alliance, sensitivity to criticism and the possibility of the whole collaboration's becoming a bargaining counter in other business.

The reason why organisations like the British Council can be particularly successful at this business is because they are purposefully sited in these areas – areas that are chosen to give the greatest scope for long-term, trust-bearing relationships. Work in education, the arts, information, governance, science and language is largely distanced from short-term policy shifts because in most cases it is concerned with fairly uncontroversial long-term processes. This is not because culture is neutral - it is not. But organisations like the British Council systematically eschew the Political while embracing the political.

This is true at a macro level too. It is clear that the goals set out at the start of the chapter are more likely to be achieved through cooperative public diplomacy – promoting legal internationalism to countries that tend away from it or globalisation to key constituencies that oppose it, is not an exclusive and competitive national objective. Not only are the resources that can be deployed greater if these functional goals are addressed with partners, but campaigns of this kind will tend to be more effectively badged multilaterally. If America

seeks to win people over to democratic values, those values risk being tarnished by association with national interests; if such a campaign is shared with democratic states from every continent, this is much less likely to be the case. A pro-globalisation or pro-free-trade campaign waged by Britain in alliance with India would be better both for target audiences and for the value of the partnership in its own right than a solo mission. Relationships of this kind will do as much, if not more, to demonstrate commitment to shared objectives as campaigns directed at convincing people in the country of this fact.

Conclusion

Foreign ministries tend to accept the principle of 'the need for dialogue' while often having difficulty accepting it in practice, establishing structures with a patina of two-way communication where the real aim is simply to get a point across. Successful dialogue means understanding that the objective is to establish, protect and nurture a healthy, frank, equitable process of communication – and not to dictate outcomes. Where we tend to judge success by the outcome of a conversation, we must learn that for our interlocutors the quality of the process is often more important. Any cultural bridging strategy requires this quality of mutuality, rather than the assumption that we understand others - but that they do not understand us. The much greater readiness of interlocutors to engage where they are being listened to, as well as talked at, is one thing. But more urgently, the overcoming of divisions requires a broader understanding in British society of the context of decision-making in the US or China, or India or Turkey, quite as much as it requires a broader reciprocal understanding of the UK – a *mutual* immersion.

This understanding is essential if decisions and actions - and in particular apparently dissonant actions such as the war in Iraq – are to be interpreted by others in a positive light rather than sowing the seeds of division or creating antipathy. But despite all the inherent problems of misunderstanding, real and potential, the UK's position has strong possibilities. It is situated in a delicate position on a

number of the fault-lines – a position that should enable it to take on bridging roles with regard to some of the divisions and leadership roles with regard to some of the others; in the vanguard on aid and globalisation, in balance on the use of military force and 'religion vs. secularism', a powerful yet principled actor in international politics. The consensus on these positions in the UK is far from solid and it will be impossible for the UK to occupy such roles without their gaining solid popular support at home. Furthermore, in an environment in which criticism of UK policy is widespread and informed, the challenge in closing the gap between perception and reality is acute. The new goals and the new public diplomacy environment require strategies and deliveries of a qualitatively different kind to those generally followed by most governments. This will require Britain to take a leadership role again, for which 2005 provides a major opportunity, in establishing a new kind of public diplomacy agenda and international partnerships that can work to mitigate or overcome the political and cultural divisions that are shaping global politics today and in the years ahead.

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