

# Integrating Diplomacy and Social Media

*A Report of the First Annual Aspen Institute  
Dialogue on Diplomacy and Technology*

By Clifton Martin and Laura Jagla



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

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# Contents

**FOREWORD**, *Charles M. Firestone* ..... v

## **INTEGRATING DIPLOMACY AND SOCIAL MEDIA,**

*Clifton Martin and Laura Jagla*

Introduction ..... 1

A New World: The International Impact of Social Media..... 2

Technology, Networks and Demographic Shifts ..... 4

New Opportunities in Diplomacy..... 7

New Challenges ..... 12

*Pervasive Surveillance, Cyberwar and Privacy*..... 12

*Information Abundance and Contested Knowledge*..... 13

*Fundamental Shifts in the Nature of Democracy* ..... 15

*New Foreign Policy* ..... 16

Next Steps ..... 17

*Training and Management*..... 17

*Building Trust*..... 20

Conclusion ..... 22

Endnotes ..... 24

## **APPENDIX**

Participants ..... 27

About the Author ..... 29

The Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program..... 31

Select Publications from the Aspen Institute  
    Communications and Society Program..... 33

*This report is written from the perspective of informed observers at the  
Aspen Institute Dialogue on Diplomacy and Technology.  
Unless attributed to a particular person, none of the comments or ideas contained  
in this report should be taken as embodying the views or carrying the endorsement  
of any specific participant at the event.*

# Foreword

The use of technology in diplomacy is not a particularly new topic. But the advances in social media and the wave of citizen involvement in both internal and external state affairs has heightened the need to take a closer look at how communications technologies can advance national interests. The digital disruption has come to many arenas. Diplomacy is just the latest to engage it.

This report is a result of the first annual Aspen Institute Dialogue on Diplomacy and Technology, or what we call ADDTech. The concept for this Dialogue originated with longtime communications executive and Aspen Institute Trustee Marc Nathanson. Since his tenure as Chairman of the U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), Nathanson has been concerned with how American diplomacy could more rapidly embrace the changing world of social media and other technologies. He is also a graduate of the University of Denver where former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's father, Josef Korbel, namesake of the Josef Korbel School of International Relations there, was his professor. Thus, Albright, another Institute Trustee, was a natural partner to create the first Dialogue on Diplomacy and Technology. The cast is ably supplemented with Korbel School Dean and former U.S. Ambassador Christopher Hill and Aspen Institute President Walter Isaacson, who himself was also recently the chair of the BBG.

The Dialogue, then, is designed as a collaboration with the Korbel School, where Nathanson has established two student fellowships. In this first Dialogue, the Nathanson Fellows, Korbel students Clifton Martin and Laura Jagla, helped in identifying background readings and wrote the following report of the Dialogue. We are grateful to each of our founders and collaborators for their help in bringing this Dialogue to fruition. We also thank Kiahna Williams, Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program Senior Project Manager, for organizing and managing the Dialogue and this report itself.

As is the case with almost all of our Communications and Society dialogues and roundtables, the aim is to frame issues, gain insights and make recommendations for important public policy issues at the cutting edge of our society. We do not take votes, however, and the

report is the rapporteurs' take on the topic as amplified by participants' remarks. Therefore, not all of the opinions expressed in the report are subscribed by each of the participants or their employers. Unless someone is specifically quoted, it should not be assumed that he or she adheres to a particular position, but rather such statements are the rapporteurs' sense of the group in general.

The topic for this inaugural dialogue is how the diplomatic realm could better utilize new communications technologies. The group focused particularly on social media, but needed to differentiate among the various diplomacies in play in the current world, *viz.*, formal state diplomacy, public diplomacy, citizen diplomacy and business diplomacy. Each presents its own array of opportunities as well as problems. In this first Dialogue, much of the time necessarily had to be used to define our terms and learn how technologies are currently being used in each case. To help us in that endeavor, we focused on the Middle East. While the resulting recommendations are therefore rather modest, I think they set up the series of dialogues to come in the years ahead.

The technologies will change over time. What is important, I think, is that careful attention be paid in every generation to how they can best be used in the service of the ultimate goal of diplomacy: worldwide peace and stability. The means will change but the ends remain the same.

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March 2013

**INTEGRATING DIPLOMACY  
AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

*Clifton Martin and Laura Jagla*





# **Integrating Diplomacy and Social Media**

## **A Report of the First Annual Aspen Institute Dialogue on Diplomacy and Technology**

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### **Introduction**

In the period leading up to the overthrow of political authorities in the Middle East, young activists used social media to spread dissident discourse, organize protests and transmit live footage of revolutions across the world. Simultaneously, stubborn autocrats clung to political survival tactics by blocking their citizens' access to social media sites like Twitter and Facebook in order to disrupt the gathering momentum of a networked people determined to change their governments.

As many scholars and practitioners will argue, social media was not the deciding force of these revolutionary movements—but they were a key factor. During the 2010 Egyptian uprising in Tahrir Square, masses of people—primarily youth and young adults—organized through Facebook and other social media platforms to protest their government's action or inaction on issues that mattered to them, starting the most powerful Arab political movement of this century. Well before the Tahrir Square protests, similar movements employing social media to protest political leadership had taken place in the Philippines, Iran, Belarus and Thailand.<sup>1</sup> These cases reflect the social composition and choice media options of today's generation. Sociological shifts in demographics and power, which have coincided with increased use of social media, have resulted in movement-making with dramatic political implications. With that background, this report will explore the implication of new technology, particularly social media, on the conduct of American public diplomacy.

## **A New World: The International Impact of Social Media**

The Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program convened its first annual Aspen Institute Dialogue on Diplomacy and Technology (ADDTech) to create an open dialogue on the evolution of traditional diplomacy in the twenty-first century. Has traditional diplomacy become obsolete in the wake of the current communications advancement? How can a new generation of diplomats across sectors—citizens, corporations and states—use new communications tools to advance their nation’s interests? What institutions should be responsible for managing 21st Century Statecraft? A variant of this discussion is taking place in every government on this planet. It is new to everyone no matter the age.

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### **Has traditional diplomacy become obsolete in the wake of the current communications advancement?**

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The purpose of diplomacy is to promote the interests of the state within the international system. The U.S. government’s top national security priority, according to many veteran diplomats, is to advance the interests of the United States within a world made more stable by effective and democratic governance. In the new era, policymakers will need to recognize that progress toward this goal will be affected not only by what other governments do, but also by the interconnected social networks of global citizens. To get their messages across, American leaders will need to speak directly to all people.

According to the White House’s 2012 “Update to Congress on National Framework for Strategic Communication,” executive leadership has laid out the framework for interdepartmental cooperation in communication strategy. Alec Ross, Senior Advisor for Innovation in the Office of the Secretary at the U.S. Department of State, emphasized at the Dialogue that the U.S. State Department has become a frontrunner for employing technology in diplomatic engagement. Two years prior, the “Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review” (QDDR) set forth initiatives in influencing public opinion, open-

ing economic possibilities and engaging women in the public sector through the tools of technology. With people worldwide sharing information easily and rapidly through communication technology, Ross emphasized, the State Department needs to stay ahead of the game and “know about the revolution before everyone else knows about it.”

While the U.S. Department of State leads significant government innovation in the domain of technology and diplomacy, policy and strategy on engagement and communications with other countries is not limited to this department. Various other government entities and agencies contribute to developments in this field including the Department of Defense (DOD), the Intelligence Community (IC) and the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG).<sup>2</sup> Interagency planning and coordination has been particularly useful in U.S. government efforts to achieve its strategic goals.

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**The purpose of diplomacy is to promote the interests of the state within the international system.**

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Despite this interagency cooperation, ADDTech participants questioned the U.S. government’s commitment to technological transformation. While Ross stressed the State Department’s strides to incorporate technology into the diplomatic realm, others addressed the oft-adversarial balance between traditional diplomacy and the technological domain. Several insisted that the “communication revolution” calls for leadership in Washington to reconsider traditional diplomacy to incorporate the new technologies, while others argued that tools cannot replace the formalized human diplomatic engagement.

Several participants suggested that while sitting face-to-face takes time and effort, it is historically successful. The State Department may need to incorporate the tools of technology effectively, but it should not forego the rules, strategy and successes of traditional diplomacy. As ADDTech participant Ambassador Christopher Hill, Dean of the University of Denver’s Josef Korbel School of International Studies, attested, “The Internet is not always a good space for compromise.”

While the tools of technology cannot replace certain aspects of diplomatic engagement, Tamara Cofman-Wittes, Director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, voiced her concern that the government may need more of an investment to make a transition to this new world of pervasive technology. Although the U.S. government has prioritized technology across key agencies in supporting global communication and policy, additional investment would help greatly to advance its commitment to and use of communications technology. Indeed, new technological tools lead to disruptions in government structures. The U.S. government and governments across the world will need to adapt to these new challenges.

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**The tools of technology cannot replace certain aspects of diplomatic engagement.**

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### **Technology, Networks and Demographic Shifts**

Keeping in mind the new challenges in diplomacy, Alec Ross, Senior Advisor for Innovation in the Office of the Secretary at the U.S. Department of State, outlined the significant power shifts and ubiquitous disruptions to political systems caused by changes in technology, networks and demographic shifts. Access to technology and social media has expanded the means by which citizens make a national and global impact.

Ross pointed to the uploaded videos on Facebook of Tunisian dissident Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation prior to the overthrow of Ben Ali in 2010. Tunisians' membership to Facebook had increased from 28,000 to 1.4 million users between 2008 and 2010. Due to the increasing access to social media—18 percent of the total population— young Tunisians were able to organize and bring national and international attention to their resulting political upheaval, catalyzing citizens in other Arab countries to do the same.

The Arab revolutions highlighted significant social trends and took place for reasons other than social media catalysts. Yet in hindsight, social media vastly accelerated movement-making. Ross explained that

in 2008, revolutions in the Gafsa Mining Basin in Tunisia started off far larger than the protests started by Bouazizi. Ross asked, why did Bouazizi's protests take over the country when the Gafsa Mining Basin protests went nowhere? Two years later, the Ben Ali regime could no longer control Tunisia's information environment. As a networking tool, social media enabled a rapid spread of information across Tunisia, the greater Middle Eastern region and the globe. In the case of the Tunisian revolution, social media helped citizens to accelerate the transformation of an authoritarian state into that of a government more responsive to the interests of the people.

Technology may help citizens bring attention to national and global issues and catalyze social movements, but new tools also create a dilemma for governments struggling to manage the citizens' relationship with the State. Ross went on to describe the movement of power from hierarchy to citizens in China, where the state hires 50,000 people and spends several billion dollars to control the information environment. China is one country where the new demographic reality alone makes it difficult to maintain government control of networks, Ross explained, as there are more than 500 million Internet users in the country, and over a quarter of these users are under the age of 25.

Ross mentioned the 2011 Wenzhou train collision in China, when Chinese authorities struggled with their response to the crash, which resulted in several dozen deaths and almost a couple hundred injuries. Per precedent, authorities briefed the media with the official response that foreign technology was to blame for the crash. At the same time, the government attempted to cover-up the crash by burying the derailed cars at the site. Unlike past cover-ups, Ross asserted, witnesses of the crash had the ability to put 20 million posts on the micro-blog Sina Weibo. Chinese authorities were then forced to recall their initial response, dig up the buried trains and further investigate the case.

Disruptions in information management happen in the United States as they do in China and the Arab world. Ross pointed to the example Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA), a piece of online piracy legislation that was proposed in Congress in 2011. Seemingly out of nowhere, a citizen-based movement took root, and nine million citizens organized themselves indirectly and contacted members of Congress. This movement involved millions of young citizens and reflects a demographic

shift in citizen-based participation in the world of policy. Thus, governments need to consider not only the shift from hierarchy to networks of citizens, but also the movement-making of younger citizens who are socially involved via the Internet and social media.

Traditionally, the SOPA legislation would have been primarily a government issue. With the involvement of a vast demographic of an overwhelmingly young, politically concerned network of citizens, the legislation did not pass Congress. As in the China train case, the involvement of millions turned the outcome of events.

The instances of technology, network and demographic shifts in Tunisia, China and the United States exemplify a basic need for governments to adapt to the changes and challenges of the twenty-first century. Similarly, Ross applied Darwin's theory of evolution to the nature of technology and diplomacy: "It's not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but those that are most adaptable to change."

Whether or not governments are ready for these changes, ADDTech participants identified a definite need for governments to adjust. Over the past decade, the United States has adjusted its diplomacy approaches to account for the technology, frameworks and demographics of the twenty-first century. This new phase in transformational diplomacy is referred to as "21st Century Statecraft." According to Alec Ross, the U.S. Department of State defines 21st Century Statecraft as a means of complementing traditional foreign policy tools with newly innovated and adapted instruments of statecraft that fully leverage the networks, technologies and demographics of our interconnected world.

The ADDTech Dialogue delved into a discussion about the evolution of traditional diplomacy into a new 21st Century Statecraft. The aim of the conference was to propose recommendations for the current and future generation of diplomats to embrace, utilize and understand the rapidly changing world of technology. The following sections address the opportunities and challenges of integrating tools of technology into the diplomatic realm.

## **New Opportunities in Diplomacy**

With the advent of social media in the early twenty-first century, diplomats and foreign policymakers are now faced with new approaches to engaging with publics abroad. The world's increased access to online media tools holds implications that extend beyond a period of global access to advanced, personalized communications tools. A side effect is that the "street"—or, public opinion—has become virtually empowered. That is, a foreign public's collective voice can be emailed, posted, tweeted—instantly transmitted—to a global audience that can respond in kind. Diplomats will need to embrace and rethink how new technology can accelerate political, social and economic change throughout the world. For example, communications technology could be streamlined to maintain face-to-face contact and file-sharing across distances. Dean and Walter Annenberg Chair in Communications at the USC Annenberg School for Communications and Journalism, Ernest Wilson, urged diplomats to consider the Internet as a suitcase of new "tech tools" with global implications.

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**Consider the Internet as a suitcase of new "tech tools" with global implications. – Ernest Wilson**

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As participants grappled with the merger of diplomacy and twenty-first century technology, they considered the panoply of new diplomacies that have emerged since the days of secretive diplomatic discussions taking place outside of the public's knowledge or domain. The new generation of diplomats includes individuals and groups of citizens, corporations and states. It is useful, then, to distinguish among the various diplomacies in the modern world.

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**The new generation of diplomats includes individuals and groups of citizens, corporations and states.**

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## Diplomacies of the Modern World

**Traditional Diplomacy** is the management of international relations by negotiation.

**Public Diplomacy** comprises the efforts of the state to influence, inform and engage with foreign publics.

**Citizen Diplomacy** comprises engagement and activity between two countries' populations, irrespective of the state.

**Business Diplomacy** is the inclusion of corporate activities in the international domain as an element in a country's overall diplomatic effort.

**Traditional diplomacy** itself can be viewed as “the first resort in the nation’s policy tool kit. It can be defined as the management of international relations by negotiation; the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys; the business or art of the diplomatists.”<sup>3</sup> Author Raymond Cohen, and negotiation specialist at the U.S. Institute of Peace, defines diplomatic negotiation as “a process of communication between states seeking to arrive at a mutually acceptable outcome on some issue or issues of shared concern. On the spectrum of diplomatic activity it is to be distinguished, on the one hand, from the simple exchange of views and, on the other hand, from the practice of coercive diplomacy by which one party attempts to impose its wishes unilaterally.”<sup>4</sup>

**Public diplomacy** comprises the efforts of the state to influence, inform and engage with foreign publics. It is the state’s intended audience that distinguishes public diplomacy from traditional state-to-state diplomacy. Public diplomacy’s origins as a foreign policy tool consisted of efforts to counter German propaganda during World War II. As a long-term strategy, public diplomacy leads to decisions about which foreign publics are being influenced and informed, i.e. what foreign policy the state is going to present to them, and how the state plans to reach them.



The influence function is often tied to an embassy's information management. This has driven many definitions of public diplomacy, e.g., "The use of information resources to collect, control and disseminate information that influences the perceptions and behaviors of international audiences" or, "The way in which both government and private individuals and groups influence directly or indirectly those public attitudes and opinions which bear directly on another government's foreign policy decisions."<sup>5</sup>

In sum, public diplomacy consists of the state's efforts to inform or influence the population of a foreign state through direct (public meetings, media broadcasts) or indirect communication (professional and educational exchanges, cultural exhibitions). This public access to information, and the shifting role of governments as gatekeepers of information, was a recurring theme at ADDTech.

The inability of government to keep up with this changing landscape was frequently criticized at the Dialogue by media expert Marc Nathanson. He pointed out that nongovernmental organizations such as the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (of which he is Vice Chair) were much more current and abreast of student movements and social media in Egypt than were members of the local U.S. embassy.

**Citizen diplomacy** comprises engagement and activity between two countries' populations, irrespective of the state. According to the U.S. Center for Citizen Diplomacy's website, "[C]itizen diplomats can be students, teachers, athletes, artists, business people, humanitarians, adventurers or tourists. They are motivated by a responsibility to engage with the rest of the world in a meaningful, mutually beneficial dialogue."<sup>6</sup> Increased social media presence, such as Facebook or Twitter, has created new communities of scale, dramatically enhancing a global network of opinion and information transmission.

**Business diplomacy** is yet another form of diplomacy. ADDTech participant Craig Mundie, Chief Research and Strategy Officer at Microsoft Corporation, has served as his company's principal technology-policy liaison to the United States and other foreign governments. Mundie supports the inclusion of corporate activities in the international domain as an element in a country's overall diplomatic effort—a concept increasingly referred to as business diplomacy. He empha-

sized the importance of public-private partnerships in 21st Century Statecraft. These partnerships bring to the table new stakeholders capable of introducing new ideas on trade and other international political economy decisions.

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**The roles of the business and public sectors are not necessarily mutually exclusive.**

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Through their direct engagement with public authorities, private partners and consumers abroad, businesses are effectively conducting their own brand of diplomacy—one that can affect the economic, social and political interests of the state. Drawing on the concept of business diplomacy, Mundie suggests that businesses have the capabilities to listen to private actors abroad better than governments can. Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright added that the leadership of multinational corporations should be included in meetings on diplomacy and statecraft in order to represent the variety of existing stakeholders in the system. Therefore, the roles of the business and public sectors are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

This notion emphasizes the opportunity for public-private collaborations that focus on managing the use of technology in the diplomatic realm. Former Secretary Albright suggested that expanding public-private partnerships would mark a new beginning for diplomacy, especially for partnerships in the Middle East. As seen during the Arab Spring—or as Alec Ross coined it, the “Great Wave”—technologies of the private sector such as Facebook and Twitter increase the scale of access to information. Indeed, Facebook Vice President Elliot Schrage suggested that using social media from the private sector would greatly enhance a number of diplomatic functions, particularly in listening to the local populations.

In fact, the State Department’s Innovation Team has encouraged its embassies abroad to utilize regional social media technology instead of relying solely on Facebook or Twitter to stay connected with the local public. For example, a diplomat might open a RenRen account in China, a Mixi profile in Japan, or a VK page in Russia, each in order to

stay connected to the region's online community—essentially, tapping into public opinion. Mexican Ambassador to the United States Arturo Sarukhan, who pioneered the use of Twitter by diplomats and was the first Ambassador credited in Washington to use that platform, affirmed that multilateral buy-in is needed to facilitate the use of technology in diplomacy.

Innovations from the private sector have the potential to expand options and access for citizen diplomacy. Several dialogue participants suggested that the private sector could lead innovation in online gaming wherein people come together through virtual avatars to accomplish certain goals and solve complex problems. In games, such as “World of Warcraft,” players create something that John Seely Brown, Independent Co-chairman of the Deloitte Center for the Edge, called networks of imagination that form a new sense of “spread identity” through joint action. He also referenced the game “Peacemaker” which puts players in the hot seat of the Israel-Palestine crisis.

Margarita Quihuis, Director of the Peace Innovation Lab at Stanford University (the generator of “Peacemaker”), referred to this concept as “gamification.” This technique uses mechanisms in games to move people through complex steps while engaging them in the social sphere. According to John Seely Brown, joint action, networks of intimacy and imagination in constructing personal identity are all elements of “streetcraft.” Through games such as “Peacemaker” and “World of Warcraft,” players focus on global and cultural problems. Because the lessons learned in these games apply to the world of diplomacy where collaboration and problem-solving are highly-prized, streetcraft evolves into a type of “worldcraft.” Gaming innovation is one way private organizations can contribute to the world of citizen diplomacy in worldcraft.

Modern technology has tightened the nexus connecting these diverse levels of diplomacy. Citizens, business practitioners and politicians now have the ability to engage and influence one another through various social media and online platforms. Certainly, the tension between the policies of world powers and foreign public opinion has been a constant throughout the history of foreign affairs. But today, the agendas of citizens, corporations and the state exist at omnipresent, virtual loggerheads. This has created a new set of demands for state and gov-

erning officials traditionally perceived to be the most powerful decision makers throughout the world.

How can and how should the world's governments respond to a fast-paced network of informed global citizenry? How do the world's governments handle an unprecedented power shift toward the public sphere?

### **New Challenges**

Of course, the potential benefits of today's communications technologies are tempered by a new set of challenges. On the one hand, the rapid pace of technological evolution has prompted an information abundance that has made information dissemination and correction a growing challenge to diplomats. On the other hand, diplomacy is a delicate and time-consuming process that may take years to accomplish broad goals. As former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright quips, "The advent of technology is almost the opposite of diplomacy."

#### *Pervasive Surveillance, Cyberwar and Privacy*

ADDTech participants discussed three broad but potentially negative consequences from increased use of social media technologies: pervasive surveillance, cyberwar and loss of privacy. Alec Ross highlighted the characteristics and challenges in these areas.

In terms of pervasive surveillance, governments around the world have sophisticated technology to create what some people refer to as a total information awareness environment. In the United States, Ross explained, we need to safeguard our own freedoms with a clear rule of law on how we treat our own capabilities. While the United States needs to be vigilant in safeguarding its freedoms, it also needs to be concerned about what is taking place in the 194 countries that are not the United States. As networks of technology give capabilities to citizens, they also give capabilities to government officials who could use these technologies to suppress their people.

Ross next outlined the challenges in cyberwar. He explained that cyberwar is an increasing concern as states legally conduct offensive and defensive operations in the cyber domain; interstate conflicts and cyber-attacks are both state-based and non-state based in nature. As

commercial and non-commercial espionage threats are increasing, the cyber domain appears to be more conflict-based than competitive. Ross estimated that the annual loss of intellectual property in the United States from commercial espionage is \$150 billion per year.

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**The challenge for policymakers is balancing the new norms in information sharing while taking caution in protecting sensitive government information in the interest of U.S. security.**

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Lastly, Ross emphasized that the new technology age has a different set of cultural norms around privacy and the way people treat information. The generation of people ages 35 and younger are considered “digital natives.” This generation is accustomed to sharing what people once considered private information via the Internet. The challenge for policymakers is balancing the new norms in information sharing while taking caution in protecting sensitive government information in the interest of U.S. security.

*Information Abundance and Contested Knowledge*

The mass quantity of information resulting from more advanced communication tools creates diverse problems for diplomats. With varying and conflicting viewpoints from citizens worldwide, how does the government diffuse correct information and allow for greater citizen engagement? John Seely Brown, Independent Co-chairman of the Deloitte Center for the Edge, acknowledged the challenges of knowledge acquisition and dissemination: “Epistemologically, we no longer have stopping conditions: there is too much to know.”

Information abundance and contested knowledge create confusion in communication on multiple levels: state-to-state, state-to-citizen and citizen-to-citizen interactions. How do states and citizens process and diffuse information in this new world where, according to Brown, “Contested knowledge is the norm, but we are not educated on how to live in that world”? In terms of the global issues of diplomacy, he

questioned, “How do we bring visualizations to the field so that just plain folks can engage in these issues as well?”

Information abundance has also led to challenges in accountability. Former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq and Dean of the University of Denver’s Josef Korbel School of International Studies Christopher R. Hill, for example, expressed concern about the problems associated with the lack of accountability for the outcome of a rapid spread of information among populations using online networks. Lack of accountability leads to a host of problems that can impact the stability of nations.

John Rendon, CEO of the Rendon Group, explained that in many countries—including the United States—power is being pulled down to the “street” and away from elites, as a function of the “Great Wave” (otherwise referred to as the Arab Spring). As the street pulls this power down, it is *not* accompanied by accountability and responsibility, two of the fundamental ingredients of governance. Accordingly, this wave is having an unsettling influence and effect on all who are experiencing it. These dynamics are coupled with four future disruptive forces (according to Rendon): food, water, electricity and climate change. And, he suggests, we can envision the next two decades as a period in which uncertainty is the new normal. Presently, the Rendon Group is tracking 39 countries experiencing this wave, not all of which are Arabic-speaking.

To that end, Rendon places all countries in four bins: *Ridden the wave* intact; *Trounced* in the wave, but on the beach in body parts; *In the wave now*, unclear if swimming, riding or drowning; and *Waiting for the wave* and water. Craig Mundie categorized governments into three types: those that get it; those that never get it and those that can learn.

This approach produces twelve boxes in a matrix, against which we should answer the following question, suggests Rendon: What are the roles and responsibilities of the U.S. government (and like-minded partners) to help countries in each of these twelve boxes design their way forward? Unless society can find answers, it runs the risk of being confronted by the violent dislocations of an “Egypt” every three months for the next decade or two.

Rendon also referenced the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA)—the proposed legislation contested by millions of U.S. citizens though

without one definitive person accountable for leading it. Thus, these movements are led by the collective strength of the networked citizenry. The outcome of SOPA reflects the impact of networked public opinion on government decision-making. Public opinion matters a great deal to politicians in republics such as the United States, and the world has already witnessed the outcome of mass public dissidence toward authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. The new paradox is that as information abundance persists, governments become increasingly subject to public opinion. How the world's diplomats deal with their home and host governments' respective understandings and responses to international networks of informed citizens provides additional impetus for the integration of technology into diplomacy.

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**As information abundance persists, governments become increasingly subject to public opinion.**

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But how can technology be integrated into the highly institutionalized diplomatic realm? While technology could facilitate more transparent communication between the diplomatic community and private sector, the world's foreign ministries may not always have the cultural, procedural or institutional disposition—or the abundance of information derived from these tools—to effectively integrate them into policy. Technology may enlighten diplomats about public opinion, but diplomatic institutions still lack protocol in absorbing this information.

*Fundamental Shifts in the Nature of Democracy*

Institutions must be aware of the fundamental shifts in the nature of democracy over time. This shift has significant policy implications for incorporating the tools of technology into policy. Alec Ross and Ernest Wilson suggested that the technology revolution denotes a shift from representational democracy to direct democracy as politicians respond immediately to publicity. The tendency towards direct democracy generates difficulties in compromise and reconciliation, thus possibly hindering long-term decision-making.

Alec Ross recounted how, in April 2012, he discussed the implications of the shift in the nature of democracy with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. During that conversation, Netanyahu and Ross discussed how representational democracy allows people of different views to come together. Direct democracy, on the other hand, makes the ability to achieve compromise exceedingly difficult.

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**Direct democracy... makes the ability to achieve compromise exceedingly difficult.**

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Diplomats should consider the implications for promoting democracy alongside this fundamental shift in global communications. As Trygve Myhren, Chairman of the Board of Trustees at the University of Denver explains, “Isolated independence threatens cohesive community.” How should officials in the diplomatic realm advocate how democracies work? From his conversation with Netanyahu, Ross assessed that government officials should deconstruct the impact of the Internet on the government and focus on the broader work of helping other countries adopt tools of 21st Century Statecraft, i.e. advancing access to communications technology while creating a new protocol to apply it effectively.

*New Foreign Policy*

Mexican Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan affirmed that as a result of social media, considerations for new ways to conduct foreign policy—or even to create new foreign policy—are essential.

Technology has accelerated change, tightening the reaction time of diplomats to relevant events and activities. Furthermore, diplomats must reach the generation of young technology users. These youth are increasing in numbers in both developed and developing countries and, despite their differences, are able to connect with one another through online communities.

Nevertheless, Sarukhan emphasized a resistance to change from the top-down in every single democracy. For instance, Twitter could



potentially help ambassadors reach more citizens abroad, yet currently, few ambassadors effectively use social media.

Sarukhan pointed to misconceptions and the need for foresight in the use of social media in foreign policy and diplomacy. He asserted the opinion of several other dialogue participants, such as former U. S. Ambassador to Belgium Tom Korologos, that while technology as a tool has a supporting function in diplomacy, its advantage is not equivalent to traditional face-to-face diplomacy. Nevertheless, he believes that foreign ministries should reform policy to allow embassies more independent communication, specifically in regards to social media.

For instance, if foreign ministries have to clear every post on Facebook or Twitter, a lag in reaction time could reflect poorly on the embassy's information management. This would defeat the advantages of embassies' up-to-date usage of social media. Sarukhan suggested that foreign ministries and other such vertical organizations "accept some level of atomization" in order to allow a certain level of discretion. Foreign ministries could also partner with private organizations. There is a certain degree of risk associated with giving more independence to embassies and partnering with private organizations, but the new diplomatic realities within the communications revolution may warrant such action.

## **Next Steps**

While participants spent the majority of their time together framing and understanding the issues, the ultimate purpose of the ADDTech series is to identify and recommend best practices for the incorporation of technology in diplomacy. Dialogue participants identified two specific areas for action: training and management, and building trust.

### *Training and Management*

In keeping with Secretary Albright's observation that government is historically slow to adapt to social change, there are considerable challenges ahead for the world's diplomatic corps as they engage with an expanding "network" of foreign publics. While the current State Department continues to pursue contemporary strategies through its Innovation team, the bureaucracy of the department itself must be

willing to break hierarchy in order to adapt to the disruptive pattern of technological change. Craig Mundie, Chief Research and Strategy Officer at Microsoft, suggests that “to create effective institutional change you have to ‘work around the middle’ because they are almost universally an impediment to change. In fact you have to have support at the top and at the bottom, and if you can align these then you can get the middle to go along.” Mundie believes that trying to prompt change by working from the top down, or the bottom up, is virtually always stymied by the middle, which is an imperfect communication medium with other priorities and vested interests.

Those in favor of increased use of social media and technology in diplomacy praise its function and scope. The U.S. State Department’s Innovation team currently provides social media training to all newly appointed ambassadors. This training helps narrow the void of social media and tech use at U.S. embassies abroad. According to Ambassador Sarukhan, an avid user of social media, an ambassador who does not use these technologies is “out of the game.”

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**“We need to understand the limits of technology:  
no software has been able to capture the taste,  
sight and smell of a negotiator’s environment  
8,000 miles away from Washington, D.C.”**  
*—Christopher Hill*

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Sarukhan and other tech savvy diplomats might agree that technology is no substitute for the “last three feet”—the distance of transmitting information through a face-to-face conversation that Edward Murrow, former Director of the U.S. Information Agency, advocated. However, there are some who do not share the same enthusiasm for the use of social media and technology in diplomatic operations. Taking a more skeptical stance is another career diplomat, Ambassador Christopher Hill. Recalling his experiences as U.S. Ambassador to Iraq (2009-2010), Hill remains skeptical over embassies’ overexposure in the information

age and his colleague's assumptions that technology can strengthen personal ties between diplomats and publics abroad. When pursuing the incorporation and use of technology in policymaking, Hill warns, "We need to understand the limits of technology: no software has been able to capture the taste, sight and smell of a negotiator's environment 8,000 miles away from Washington, D.C." Following this, embassies must be able to perform their representative and reporting functions irrespective of Washington, albeit guided to an appropriate degree. Secretary Albright supports this view, explaining that despite the revolutionary capabilities that social media has had in the recent Arab Spring, ambassadors are appointed to represent the state and its interests, not to become revolutionaries themselves.

ADDTech participants emphasized the need for smart communication in government in order for more countries to achieve the third wave of technology. To do so, government officials need to understand the social dynamics beyond traditional engagements. For example, in the Foreign Service, how can political officers use the tools of technology to meet their specific diplomatic needs on the ground? Or to increase the information flow? Solutions could include creating traditional and online forums, where the governments are facilitators.

For example, when the publication of a cartoon depicting the Prophet Mohammad in a Dutch newspaper caused widespread Muslim protest in Europe, U.S. Ambassador Thomas Korologos created a local forum in Belgium for people of all faiths to discuss the issues. That kind of forum can now be expanded with online enhancements, e.g., blogs, online debates and tweets. There are diverse possibilities in which governments can promote technology and leverage its power in consort with more traditional face-to-face activities.

The more pressing question that arises, however, is identifying the cap for state-citizen relations through social media and other tech tools. No doubt, a government wishes to remain in command over the information regarded as sensitive to its missions abroad. But where is the balance that permits a state to conduct its foreign policy effectively while maintaining leverage with a more informed network of global citizens? This is an issue of trust that deserves closer attention in the years to come.

**Recommendation: Start Small.** Throughout ADDTech, participants consistently agreed that diplomats must be prepared to respond quickly to the behaviors of states and societies with which they have dealt all along. Such preparation may come naturally to the State Department’s evolving administrative capacities. Adapting an earlier statement from Secretary Albright, technology protocol “emerges from an evolving sense of etiquette built on the solid foundation of tradition.”<sup>7</sup> The next generation of diplomats will introduce a new culture of inherent use and comfort with technology tools. Preparation must include updated etiquette and protocol with headquarters, use of technology across bureaus and departments, and social media training introduced at the Foreign Service Institute early and often throughout a diplomat’s career.

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**Technology protocol “emerges from an evolving sense of etiquette built on the solid foundation of tradition.” –Madeleine Albright**

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### *Building Trust*

Participants emphasized consistently throughout the dialogue that building trust between governments and between governments and publics abroad is an essential diplomatic exercise. When we consider contemporary efforts at trust building, Middle Eastern public opinion of the U.S. government is perhaps the most striking and timely example of how technology and social media can damage or repair trust. No doubt, social media played a unique role in accelerating movement-making and enriching the information environment for the “Arab Street” during the political upheavals of the Arab Spring.

In her assessment, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs and now Director of the Saban Center for Middle East

Policy Tamara Cofman-Wittes points out that the Arab Spring resulted, in part, from a generational shift in the Middle East—the rise of a massive cohort of young adults and the cognitive shift among the more well-educated in that cohort from passivity about their government and their country’s future to a determination to be “active citizens.” This cognitive shift is continuing.

According to Secretary Albright’s definition of U.S. foreign policy, if the major interest of the United States in formulating Middle East policy is consistent stability, then the United States may pursue using technology to help these societies resolve their internal challenges so that these challenges do not become overwhelming factors that lead to instability.

While these issues are technological in nature—increased access to information, accelerated social mobility en masse, the dangers of the government’s pervasive surveillance—they hold political implications for U.S.-Middle East relations. Simply, Middle Eastern youth want to know why the United States supports settlement building in Israel, Saudi Arabia’s crackdown on the unfinished Bahraini revolution, and drones in Yemen. These matters are all the more present in Middle Easterners’ daily discussions within an enriched information environment. Simultaneously, the governments of the world have the opportunity to access Middle Eastern public opinion like never before. The degree to which foreign public opinion is considered, if at all, by the United States when it has the capabilities to do so, appears to be of greater urgency in this context. Given these factors—a populace with a virtual omnipresence in their governments’ domestic and international relations—the United States will be forced to deal with a newly empowered element in its foreign policymaking equation. Building trust, therefore, will require not only the U.S. government’s attentive ear, but also voice and action that respond in kind.

**Recommendation:** Expand the role of the private sector. Listening to voices abroad (incorporating public opinion) is a priority and can be leveraged to build trust between governments and publics abroad. Echoing the sentiments of businessman Craig Mundie, Al-Jazeera journalist Asim Haneef and Secretary Albright, the world’s businesses and NGOs can be platforms for achieving America’s foreign policy aims—chiefly, international stability.

CEO John Rendon supports this view and acknowledges that the state is not always the best messenger of information. An unofficial or indirect approach may actually be more attractive to foreign publics. Part of an NGO's strength is that such organizations are typically not linked directly to government. Therefore, they often have more ability to gain the trust of publics abroad. There is often considerable overlap in their respective efforts to promote stability and human development and the U.S. State Department may sometimes work with these entities to solve issues. This does not assume that State would exploit an NGO or business. Rather, where there is consonance, it will sometimes behoove State to let the NGO, for example, get in front of an issue.

## **Conclusion**

Concluding on the broad range of topics addressed at ADDTech, it appears that technology has indeed disrupted the institution of international diplomacy. Christopher Hill equated this twenty-first century predicament to an eighteenth century context: "We're in a similar age to Adams' wherein Washington is out of touch with the speed of events encountered by embassies across the world."

But, as Margarita Quihuis, Director of Stanford University Peace Innovation Lab, points out, technology has a habit of disrupting institutions. Wikileaks is one example. As Craig Mundie explains, "Blogging is a dialogue. Tweeting is like advertising. Website is one-way communication. Social media online tools have already empowered other people and formed communities of scale. These tools are in the hands of the masses."

Information tools have traditionally rested in the hands of the world's most powerful decision makers in international affairs. But they are now shifting to a network of private citizens and organizations around the world. Ambassadors Tuttle and Korologos urged the State Department and other foreign ministries throughout the world to incorporate social media and other technologies as a means to strengthen public diplomacy. On the other hand, diplomats must accept the considerable leverage of a global citizen network. As Marc Nathanson points out, diplomacy is no longer a game just for the elites. There will be no stopping these technologies and more and more members of society will have access to them.

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**Diplomacy is no longer a game just for the elites.**

*– Marc Nathanson*

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While the participants at ADDTech can agree that the utility of these tools in diplomacy remains at the discretion of governments in every nation on earth, they also caution that these tools do not create wise people, sound policies, or open and tolerant societies. It ultimately comes down to people—leaders and citizens with access to these technologies—to decide how to use these tools to make positive impact in this world.

## Endnotes

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# APPENDIX

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# A Report of the First Annual Aspen Institute Dialogue on Diplomacy and Technology

## *Integrating Diplomacy and Social Media*

Aspen, Colorado · July 8-10, 2012

### Participants

**Madeleine Albright**

Chair  
Albright Stonebridge Group  
and  
Former U.S. Secretary of State

**John Seely Brown**

Independent Co-Chairman  
Deloitte Center for the Edge  
and  
Visiting Scholar and Advisor to  
the Provost  
University of Southern California

**Charles M. Firestone**

Executive Director  
Communications and Society  
Program  
The Aspen Institute

**Jerrold Green**

President and Chief Executive  
Officer  
Pacific Council on International  
Policy  
and  
Former Head  
Rand Middle East Policy Group

**Asim Haneef**

Multimedia Journalist  
Al-Jazeera London

**Christopher Hill**

Dean  
Josef Korbel School of  
International Studies  
University of Denver  
and  
Former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq,  
Korea and Macedonia

**Tom Korologos**

Strategic Advisor  
DLA Piper  
and  
Former U.S. Ambassador to  
Belgium

**Susan McCue**

President  
Message Global

**Craig Mundie**

Chief Research and Strategy  
Officer  
Microsoft

Note: Titles and affiliations are as of the date of the conference.

**Trygve Myhren**

Chairman of the Board of  
Trustees  
University of Denver

**Marc Nathanson**

Chairman  
Mapleton Investments and  
Former Chairman  
Broadcasting Board of Governors  
(BBG)

**Margarita Quihuis**

Director  
Peace Innovation Lab  
Stanford University

**John Rendon**

President  
The Rendon Group

**Alec Ross**

Senior Advisor for Innovation  
Office of Secretary of State  
Hillary Clinton  
U.S Department of State

**Arturo Sarukhan**

Ambassador of Mexico to the  
United States

**Elliot Schrage**

Vice President of Communica-  
tions and Public Policy  
Facebook

**Robert Tuttle**

Co-Managing Partner  
Tuttle-Click Automotive Group  
and  
Former U.S. Ambassador to the  
United Kingdom

**Ernie Wilson**

Dean and Walter Annenberg  
Chair in Communications  
USC Annenberg School  
for Communications and  
Journalism

**Tamara Cofman-Wittes**

Director  
Saban Center for  
Middle East Policy  
Brookings Institution  
and  
Former Deputy Assistant  
Secretary of State,  
Near Eastern Affairs

*Rapporteurs:*

**Clifton Martin**

Nathanson Fellow  
Josef Korbel School of  
International Studies  
University of Denver

**Laura Jagla**

Nathanson Fellow  
Josef Korbel School of  
International Studies  
University of Denver

*Staff:*

**Kiahna Williams**

Senior Project Manager  
Communications and Society  
Program  
The Aspen Institute

## About the Authors

Rapporteurs Clifton Martin and Laura Jagla were Marc Nathanson Fellows of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver. In addition to acting as the 2012 Aspen Institute Dialogue on Diplomacy and Technology (ADDTech) rapporteur, as part of the fellowship, Cliff designed the schedules and coordinated many aspects of the Josef Korbel School's Public Diplomacy Speakers Series (PDSS) in 2011 and 2012. Speakers included General George Casey, former Secretaries of State Madeleine Albright and Condoleezza Rice, correspondent Mike Chinoy, and former Foreign Service Officer Andrew Koss. Laura has taken over the coordination of the PDSS for 2012 and 2013 with speakers Ambassador Carl Munter, Deputy Secretary of State William Burns, Ambassador Glyn Davies and additional officials to be announced.

**Clifton Martin** recently earned his master's degree from the Josef Korbel School of International Studies with a concentration in Diplomacy and Communications. His master's thesis put forth a model of public diplomacy and a history of U.S. public diplomacy operations in the Middle East since the 19th century. He received his B.A. in Middle Eastern Studies from the College of William & Mary in 2008. Cliff is deeply interested in U.S. public diplomacy and global perceptions of the United States. He and his wife recently moved to Ann Arbor, where he currently manages public events and speaker series at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy. Cliff aspires to have a career with the Foreign Service as public diplomacy officer.

**Laura Jagla** is an M.A. Candidate in Global Finance, Trade and Economic Integration with concentrations in Diplomacy and Development at the Josef Korbel School. A native of South Bend, Indiana, she received her B.A. *Summa Cum Laude* from Indiana University in 2010. Following the ADDTech Conference, she worked in the Economic Section of U.S. Embassy Kigali in Rwanda, where she also presented on media and technology to groups of Rwandan youth through the Public Diplomacy Section. A prior Aspen Institute intern in 2007, Laura hopes to continue research with a policy studies organization, and eventually pursue a career in foreign policy with the U.S. Department of State.



# **The Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program**

*[www.aspeninstitute.org/c&S](http://www.aspeninstitute.org/c&S)*

The Communications and Society Program is an active venue for framing policies and developing recommendations in the information and communications fields. We provide a multi-disciplinary space where veteran and emerging decision-makers can develop new approaches and suggestions for communications policy. The Program enables global leaders and experts to explore new concepts, exchange insights, develop meaningful networks, and find personal growth, all for the betterment of society.

The Program's projects range across many areas of information, communications and media policy. Our activities focus on issues of open and innovative governance, public diplomacy, institutional innovation, broadband and spectrum management, as well as the future of content, issues of race and diversity, and the free flow of digital goods, services and ideas across borders.

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The Program's Executive Director is Charles M. Firestone. He has served in this capacity since 1989 and also as Executive Vice President of the Aspen Institute. Prior to joining the Aspen Institute, Mr. Firestone was a communications attorney and law professor who has argued cases before the United States Supreme Court. He is a former director of the UCLA Communications Law Program, first president of the Los Angeles Board of Telecommunications Commissioners, and an appellate attorney for the U.S. Federal Communications Commission.





## Select Publications from the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program

*Networks and Citizenship: Using Technology for Civic Innovation (2011)*

Jeffrey Abramson, rapporteur.

*Networks and Citizenship* addresses two questions: (1) What does citizenship look like in an era of digital networks? and, (2) What are the emerging roles of individual citizens and institutions in this changing environment? Written by Rapporteur Jeffrey Abramson, *Networks and Citizenship* details the use of information and communication technologies to enhance the public sphere, provide access to information (open-source and open-data networks), connect citizens and government, create global networks, globalize and localize citizenship and use crowd sourcing as a self-governing process. 48 pages, ISBN: 0-89853-566-8, \$12.00 per copy, free download at [www.aspeninstitute.org](http://www.aspeninstitute.org).

*The Promise and Peril of Big Data (2009)*

David Bollier, rapporteur.

Ever-rising floods of data are being generated by mobile networking, cloud computing and other new technologies. At the same time, continued innovations use advanced correlation techniques to analyze them, and the process and payoff can be both encouraging and alarming. The Eighteenth Annual Roundtable on Information Technology sought to understand the implications of the emergence of “Big Data” and new techniques of inferential analysis. Roundtable participants explored ways these inferential technologies can positively affect medicine, business and government, and they examined the social perils they pose. The report of the 2009 Roundtable, written by David Bollier, summarizes the insights of the Roundtable, and concludes with its analysis of the financial sector from the perspective of Big Data, particularly how massive transparency, common reporting languages, and open source analytics might greatly relieve the problems of systemic risk. 2010, 56 pages, ISBN Paper 0-89843-516-1, \$12 per copy, free download at [www.aspeninstitute.org](http://www.aspeninstitute.org).

*Media and Democracy (2008)*

Richard P. Adler, rapporteur.

Media and Democracy explores the role of media in enhancing social capital, civic engagement and democratic involvement. In addition to examining the state of newspapers and journalism against the backdrop of the 2008 presidential election, the report discusses proposed projects for harnessing media to spur civic and global engagement. Among the ideas being implemented are the Online Peace Corps, Groundswell and the American Dialogue Initiative, as well as ongoing work by the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, which stemmed from the 2007 FOCAS. 58 pages, ISBN: 0-89843-503-X, \$12 per copy, free download at [www.aspeninstitute.org](http://www.aspeninstitute.org).

*Soft Power, Hard Issues (2005)*

Shanthi Kalathil, rapporteur.

In these two reports, the author explores the growing importance of soft power by looking at two crucial areas of international tension: the U.S. role in the Middle East and Sino-American relations. The role of information and communications technologies in U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East and U.S. relations with China is a central theme. 70 pages, ISBN: 0-89843-447-5, \$12 per copy, free download at [www.aspeninstitute.org](http://www.aspeninstitute.org).

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