

THE CASE FOR PRIVATE DIPLOMACY

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The public conduct of intrastate relations often obscures the multitude of nongovernmental international contacts. These exchanges serve American national interest by fostering understanding at home and abroad. Alan Rubin suggests that greater coordination of private diplomacy, especially at the state level, will heighten American world performance. The new administration should seize the opportunity to improve private diplomatic efforts.

Americans practice two types of diplomacy: public and private. The trappings of government and the authority of institutions attract the limelight. The remainder of our total relationships with the rest of the world — our unofficial, private international involvement — is conducted in the shadows of national priority. This imbalance must be corrected. While the diversity and richness of American contact is practically unmanageable, we must recognize its magnitude to capture its potential. The future economic health and well-being of the United States are at stake. As the world becomes even more competitive in the future, US national security and the standard of living will depend on an internationally competent citizenry educated in languages and world affairs.

The past few years have witnessed remarkable changes in domestic awareness of the rest of the world. American states, led by governors, public, and business leaders, are on the road around the world promoting export markets, foreign investment, and tourism. The economic benefits of foreign tourism, encouraged by the weaker dollar, represent a major source of revenue and jobs while foreign investment, the kind which creates jobs, is ardently sought. For example, at least four Japanese automobile manufacturing plants in Ohio employ thousands of people and contribute to the strength of the Buckeye economy. While the virtues of increased foreign investment are debatable, countrywide entrepreneurial efforts to capture this investment and channel it into the health of local economies are likely to continue.

More progress in education has been made in the last three years than in the previous twenty. The acknowledged connection between international education and international competency has resulted in creative improvements. Organizations such as Global Perspectives for Education, the Southern Governors' Association, the National Governors Association, and other leading international education organizations are more active across the country than ever before. These development education organizations offer new ways to

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adapt and influence school curricula to educate Americans about the need for understanding and involvement in the Third World.

A solid commitment to foreign language study exists at every level of the school and university system. Centers for the study of Far Eastern languages and cultures, for example, have been established in several areas of the country. The National Geographic Society recently created a national foundation to teach world geography. This generous project will support the worthwhile goal of fostering a geographically literate populace.

Even hiring practices have been modified. Increasingly, overseas experience as exchange student, Peace Corps volunteer, or people-to-people program participant is looked upon as a prerequisite for leadership and inclusion in the foreign policy process. Former Peace Corps volunteers and exchange students are scattered throughout our country in all forms of top leadership positions in the corporate, university, and government sectors.

INDIVIDUAL INTERCHANGE

Notwithstanding recent improvement in global awareness, the core of private diplomacy lies in personal contact between Americans and foreigners. Private sector contacts across national boundaries serve as the channels of communication so essential to international understanding, cooperation, and the elimination of stereotypes. Academic institutions, corporations, philanthropic groups, state and local governments, labor unions, professional associations, libraries, museums, cultural organizations, hospitals, and community organizations together carry on an astonishing amount of activity with other countries. These efforts constitute only a fraction of American public diplomatic efforts.

Examine for a moment the size of the international citizens exchange movement in the United States. Each year, a minimum of one million people participate in America's community-based exchange programs. Citizen exchange organizations maintain some 4,000 offices throughout this country and the world. They involve more than 1.25 million volunteers and spend at least \$500 million annually.

Who pays for this? Remarkably, these exchanges are predominantly privately financed. Tuitions and grants donated by the private sector fund well over 90 percent of these activities. In addition, hundreds of millions of in-kind dollar contributions, including board, room, transportation, and counseling, are provided by private sources.

People from all walks of life, from all income levels, and from all over America act as host families or participants. When average Americans think about educational exchange, they identify AFS International Intercultural Programs, the Experiment for International Living, Youth for Understanding, Friendship Forces, People to People, Rotary, Sister Cities, Partners of the Americas, and the National and Local Councils for International Visitors, to name just a few.

Together, these and other organizations engender a majority of the contacts which build lasting, positive relationships between citizens and leaders, young and old, around the world. Together, they host families, introducing visitors to middle America. These groups dedicate the time and shoulder the responsibility of our relationships with the rest of the world.

When President Reagan and USIA Director Charles Wick decided to create an International Youth Exchange Initiative, or when President Reagan promised more exchanges with the Soviets, who was called upon? The government turned to the leaders of the private non-government exchange programs. It worked like this: an office was set up in USIA to coordinate and give out a few dollars. Organizations get a pat on the back and are expected to drop everything else: raise money, enlist volunteers, find homestays, obtain tuition waivers and scholarships, attract local press coverage, send and host cultural groups, and create new linkages overnight. They do it exceedingly well, because they *are* private sector initiatives.

International exchanges form vast networks based on common interests which cut across national boundaries. More than any other form of communication, face-to-face interactions enable people to truly know and understand one another. Exchanges provide the opportunity for two-way dialogue and give-and-take communication. Nations whose citizens have many contacts across areas of similar interests communicate more readily and work more effectively on conflict issues. These contacts lead not only to global perspectives on issues that might otherwise be seen only in domestic terms, but also to a stronger commitment to the benefits of contacts and work with international institutions and organizations. These are the relationships that foster an environment for peace and stability.

In an increasingly interdependent world, efforts to further international understanding through private diplomacy must be strengthened. Necessary steps include:

- (1) *A greatly increased recognition and public awareness for international involvement.*

Conscious efforts to heighten awareness of the importance of meaningful personal contact would lead to greater international commitment by individuals and organizations. Key roles in developing an informed public exist for opinion-molders and group leaders. Journalists, scholars, professionals, scientists, and state and local government officials as well as leaders of businesses, foundations, labor organizations and voluntary groups all play a part.

- (2) *An increase in financial support for existing exchange programs.*

More funds will expand the scope of effectiveness by strengthening management capabilities. Ironically, despite increasing public awareness of the impact of interdependence, American exchange organizations often find themselves in great fiscal difficulty. Inflation reduced financial powers while the

weakened dollar has increased financial pressures. Many organizations struggle to be more economically viable and vocationally relevant.

(3) The development of new approaches and organizational arrangements at the national, state, and local levels.

Private agencies currently active in exchanges should examine their purposes and their goals. They must find new ways to attract volunteers, to raise funds and to cope with the changes in society that affect performance. An example is the reduction in the number of homestay opportunities available resulting from the rise in the number of families where both spouses work.

Nonetheless, private sector groups involved in international person-to-person activities are very creative. They have an abundance of program ideas that should be studied more closely. Some areas in need of identification and replication include those:

- providing hospitality and programming to foreign students, scholars and other visitors (under both government and private sponsorship);
- strengthening ties with international alumni of American colleges and universities who have returned to their home countries;
- creative programming for visiting business, labor, diplomatic, sports, cultural, and professional groups;
- engaging retired US diplomats in voluntary organizations;
- involving American business persons and their families living abroad in worthwhile cross-cultural activities;
- involving foreign students who are in the United States at our colleges and universities in programs that work directly with the basic needs of America today such as the problems of the homeless, illiteracy, minority education, and services for older Americans.

(4) A greater involvement in the multinational business community.

Business has much to gain by investing more in people-to-people relations. Personal contact between American companies and their counterparts abroad occurs daily as businesses conduct their normal activities and fulfill their international corporate social responsibilities. When multinational enterprises expand operations, responsible corporate behavior is not only in their interest but can be designed to meet host country development and education priorities.

Look to the efforts of the Japanese government and the Japanese private sector to increase their investment in the United States education system, in scholarships, and in exchanges. The Japanese clearly view an expansion of economic involvement with the United States in their interest.

Leadership is needed to strengthen and renew the commitment of America's foundation and business community to support international activities. In-

creased recognition of international involvement would attract private and corporate foundation support for communication on a global scale.

Additionally, more research, both abroad and in the United States, is needed by the scholars in this field to improve documentation. The results bear important conclusions on the question of promoting mutual understanding and the development of leadership skills.

THE NEXT STEPS: A MESSAGE TO THE NEW PRESIDENT

There is a unique opportunity to capture existing international energy and build it into a new national movement. A quick inventory across the country reveals that at least half of the states have on-going, broad-based councils for international activity whose mandates exceed matters of trade and investments. All are led by the governors. Most receive state funding. Many came into being only within the past three to five years.

Indiana provides one of the best examples. In 1987, under the leadership of Governor Robert Orr, the Indiana General Assembly created the Corporation for Indiana's International Future. The name says it all.

The articles of incorporation state:

the exclusive purpose of the corporation is to strengthen Indiana's ability to compete in the global economy and to encourage educational and cultural contacts and exchanges between Indiana's citizens and citizens of other countries, by

(a) coordinating the activities of all parties having a role in Indiana's international economic development by evaluating, overseeing, and appraising those activities on an ongoing basis; and

(b) educating and assisting all parties involved in improving the ability of Indiana's citizens to participate in international programs for educational, cultural, and social understanding.

The board is composed of the governor and lieutenant governor and a broad-based group of private sector leaders drawn from private enterprise, industry, labor organizations, state and local government agencies, agriculture, the arts, sports, and education. They represent the diverse economic and regional interests of the state.

President Bush should challenge each state and every governor to develop an international agenda, mission, and plan. Each state could create a broad-based council of citizens and leaders, similar to the Indiana example, currently involved with the rest of the world. Classic federalism would capture the phenomenal energy, creativity, and resources already in place. Different states would naturally have different agendas and goals.

State international councils would be similar to state arts council and would have the prestige and distinction associated with the success of the state arts councils and the national movements in the arts. They could bring together all of the diverse international interests existing in each state and use this mechanism to expand the total international involvement between that state

and the rest of the world. The sum of all these parts would form a long overdue, but greatly needed and appreciated, National Endowment for International Activity.

In conclusion, international involvement already is a top national priority. But it is a priority in spite of itself. The challenge, therefore, is to organize private diplomacy to capture the momentum and use this energy and creativity to create a better international future for our country and for the world.