

## THE USA AND SMART POWER POLICY

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*In the circumstances in which the image and the influence of the USA deteriorated all over the world at the beginning of the 2000s, The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) of the USA founded a Bipartisan Commission for Smart-Power, with the purpose of drawing a vision which will develop a set of rules on the basis of which the next president of the USA, regardless of his political view, can implement smart-power policy.*

*Among the arguments that served as a basis for establishing such commission were the opinion polls that indicated the deterioration of the USA image all over the world. President George W. Bush was perceived as a threat for the world through comparison with the President of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and the one of North Korea Kim Jong Il.*

*In that context, the Commission reckoned that the American leaders had to promote a positive political vision, more powerful than the war against terrorism.*

*Keywords: war; influence; positive vision; smart power; public diplomacy;*

## INTRODUCTION. HARD POWER/SOFT POWER/SMART POWER

The concept of *smart power* was introduced at the end of the 80s by Joseph Nye Jr., former Deputy Secretary of Defense during the Clinton administration, in antithesis to *hard power*, which consists of the use of force and procurement in order to meet the goals. Moreover, the concept is deemed as “*the second face of power*” (Bachrach, Baratz, 1962, pp. 947-952), which allows the indirect achievement of the desired political objectives and not only, by means of: culture – appreciated and accepted beyond frontiers –, political values, implicitly positive and superior, practiced inside and outside the state, and foreign policy, when it is perceived as legitimate and moral.

*Soft power* derives from values, culture, institutions, and behaviour that emanate both from society and from the government. The United States of America accumulated soft power during the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to the fact that they acted according to their founding democratic ideals; they displayed their values through programmes such as the Marshall Plan; they propagated an attractive culture and lifestyle, both by means of governmental programmes and the media, such as *The Voice of America* and *Radio Liberty*. The US soft power was strategically the most powerful in Japan and Europe, although the phenomenon was global.

Starting in 1953 until its unification with the Department of State, the US Information Agency – USIA coordinated most part of the US public diplomacy and developed the *soft power*. Although it was not perfect, the Agency achieved a credible performance by telling the world the story of America through its cultural, educational and informational programmes. The Agency, having more stations in the world than any other governmental agency, unfolded the greatest operation of public policies compared to any other nation, being also the greatest editor and a formidable broadcaster of radio shows. However, a recent analysis made by Nicholas Cull (2006) highlights the contrast between the performance during the Gulf War (1991) and the failures at the beginning of the 2000s (Ibid., vol. 15). The decline started during the first years of the 1990s, when the North American executive and legislative branches decided that the financing level of the public policies was (no longer) necessary, and consequently the USIA went through major cuts and even a kind of marginalisation. The function of broadcasting was integrated into a system of non-military broadcasters of the American government, and the function of public policies did not do very well within the framework of the traditionalist State Department for Culture.

## THE DECLINE OF US IMAGE OVERSEAS

A great number of studies carried out in the first years of the 2000s revealed that the public policies for integration manifested planning and strategic coordination deficiencies at the government level, within the Department of State and between the States and the embassies. The most serious problem remained the inadequacy of the personnel and the resource programme intended to sustain a minimum mobilisation in the world. The Congress used to allocate approximately 630 million dollars to the Department of State for public policies, and approximately 645 million dollars for civil broadcasting, a total of 4% of the expenditure budget for international problem and 0.6% of the Pentagon budget (An American Budget, 2018). All this in the context in which the USA spent for public policies as much as Great Britain and France, despite the fact that the USA is five times larger than these two states, and had much more serious credibility problems. If the USA had spent with the Muslim world as much as it did with Germany and Japan during the post-war period, the budget should have had to amount to 7 billion dollars (Smith, 2007).

For the USA, *smart power* is a combination between *hard power*, which entails the development of an integrated strategy, resources, and a set of tools to achieve the objectives. It is an approach that highlights the necessity for strong armed forces as well as massive investments in alliances, partnerships and institutions at all levels, so as to extend the US influence and to legitimise the American actions. The delivery of betterment in the entire world is the main goal of this effort, because that helped the USA to reconcile their overwhelming power with the interests and values of the rest of the world.

However, there were three major obstacles. The foreign policy of the USA tended to overbid hard power, as it was more direct and because smart power entails the development of an integrated strategy. The Pentagon is the best prepared structure and has the largest resources within the framework of the federal government. As a result, it tends to occupy any gaps that the public institutions should have filled. The USA must maintain its military superiority but in the current climate there are limitations to what hard power can obtain on its own.

The foreign policy of the USA wants to develop *soft power* instruments. More often than not diplomatic instruments and foreign assistance are directed toward states that compete for power within their borders with non-state actors. Diplomacy and foreign assistance are underfunded and underused many times. These tools are neglected, partly because of the difficulty of demonstrating their short-term impact in the case of critical challenges.

The foreign policies of the USA are fractured and chambered. Coordination, where applicable, occurs at the relatively inferior level, or others of them are at a

very high level of administration, both making impossible the long-term planning during crises (CSIS, 2017).

The situation of the USA foreign policy changed during the time Karen Hughes occupied the position of Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs but then the position was vacant for almost half of the first term of the President George W. Bush administration. After one year in office, Hughes developed more specific changes, with a view to applying the smart power policy. Between 2002 and 2006, the funding of the programmes of educational and cultural changes increased by 25% in the Middle East, and by 39% in Southern Asia, whereas the financing of the public policy increased by 21%, despite the fact that the number of the officers remained unchanged. 21 rapid response units were established in Brussels and Dubai, the latter having a public diplomacy officer that could fluently spoke Arabic and who appeared regularly on Al-Jazeera and other channels of the Middle East Television. Then, the ambassadors were able to publicly advocate the USA policies directly in the press, contrary to the previous press-wary rules. The US government invited American Muslims, business persons and cultural personalities to take active part in the spreading the US message worldwide. Hughes established a coordination mechanism of the public diplomacy within the government, especially between the Department of State and the Department of Defense. Many officers were trained in public diplomacy skills, the relevant heads of the public diplomacy being able to become part of the structures of political decision-making.

Although Hughes were assailed for her lack of skill in the international issues, her campaign style approach, her focus on projects instead of strategies, and the implementation of those changes reinvigorated the public diplomacy. Due to Karen Hughes' activity, the US message to the world improved.

Much of the world, nowadays, has a negative opinion of the USA, regarding it as dangerous and unpredictable. Recent worldwide surveys have confirmed the continuous deterioration of the US image in the global public opinion, this trend being deepened after the US presidential elections in 2000, and it suddenly accelerated in 2003, after the invasion of Iraq by the Americans and their allies.

## **SMART POWER AND THE RESTORATION OF THE US IMAGE OVERSEAS**

The current attempts to edify a support for the US policy and the American values, from the global public diplomacy of the Department of State to the public affairs of the Department of Defense in war areas, have failed, as well as the attempts to reverse the negative anti-American attitudes that were so severe that antagonised the US ability to achieve their foreign policy goals. The anti-American forces

have obtained an advantage attributed to the downfall of the USA popularity around the world, turning the anti-Americanism into a threat to their security.

The US government should have taken the necessary measures immediately and quickly in order to regain their credibility in the entire world. President Bush administration should have revised a part of its policies and should have moderated the style of the international discourse, so as to regain the favour obtained by the USA previously.

It was crucial to put much more emphasis on public diplomacy. In addition, the Congress and the executive branch should have used the next two years to restructure the soft power instruments of the administrative apparatus, making them more effective and powerful (Smith, *Ibid.*).

America obtained low scoring in polls. Pew Research Center demonstrated in 2006 what the polls of the previous years had shown: the global public opinion had firmly turned against the USA. The favourable attitude to them had deteriorated in almost all the polled countries in Europe, Asia, and especially the Middle Est. The USA had never been so unpopular in the Western Europe. Even in the UK, 41% of those questioned were of the opinion that the USA were a greater menace to the world peace than Iraq was (The Guardian, 2006).

In 2008, Andrew Kohut and Richard Wilke, the manager and the associate manager of the Institute of Pew Global Attitudes Project, summarised the findings of the Institute on the decline of the USA image between 2002-2007, following a comprehensive research – All the world is a stage. Their conclusions, simply put, were as follows: the USA image in most part of the Islamic world remained abysmal. Pew applied questionnaires in 47 countries. In 9 countries, less than 30% of population had a positive opinion of the USA. Turkey had the lowest opinion with 9%, then the Palestinian Territories with 13%, Pakistan and Morocco with 15%, Argentina with 16%, Jordan with 20%, Egypt with 21%, Malaysia with 27% and Indonesia with 27%.

At the same time, the study revealed that the support of terrorism had dropped dramatically in many Islamic states, and that fewer Muslims considered the bomb suicide justifiable, and the trust in Osama bin Laden had decreased as well (IPDGC). Moreover, the majority of the questioned countries regarded China more favourably than the USA. In Turkey, a country that is a NATO ally, only 12% of those questioned had a favourable opinion of the USA, in comparison to 52% in 2000. In Indonesia, the favourable attitude decreased from 75% in 2000 to 15% in 2003, subsequently increasing again in 2006 to 30% (*Ibid.*).

A survey ordered by the newspapers in Canada, Great Britain and Mexico in 2006 revealed the fact that President George W. Bush was perceived as a threat to the world, in comparison with the President of Iraq, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the President of North Korea, Kim Jong Il, and the Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah.

The favourability with the Americans in 2005 dropped in nine of the surveyed countries. According to a momentous statement of the journalist Roger Cohen from the New York Times, the world “*has stopped buying the American story*”.

A list of supplementary complaints completes the image. The public opinion accused the George W. Bush administration of unilateralism and preemption, due to the firm support for the state of Israel and the disdain shown to the international organisations. The decision of the Bush administration to leave the Kyoto Protocol and to deny the threat of global warming were met with consternation by the most important Asian states and the European allies, giving birth to an additional irritation.

The goodwill reserves accumulated during the previous decades vanished, as well as the global popularity felt for the USA immediately after 11 September 2001. Many Americans agree that the anti-American feelings historically occur in cycles and they are a part of the burden carried by any great power. Sometimes the antipathy toward the USA contradicts their optimism, and it is very unlikely to decrease without taking energetic correction measures.

The final report of the Princeton Project on the National Security, made by G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, (*Forging a World of Liberty Under Law: US National Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 2006), offers a strategy cut out for a world which lacks the principles of a unique organisation, as the anti-fascism and anti-communism. The findings are guided by six criteria: the implementation of different instruments in different situations, according to the current findings, the combination of hard power with soft power, frameworks of cooperation based rather on interest and hope than fear, the consolidation of capacity, integrity and internal accountability of other governments, and the adjustment to a world “*in which information travel instantaneously, the actors also answer it instantaneously, and small specialised units reunite for purposes defined for a limited period*” (Ikenberry, 2006).

In the winter/spring issue of *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, the former US ambassador in the Republic of Moldova, Pamela Hyde Smith, stated that the approaches at that time regarding the support of the US policy and the American values abroad did not succeed in reversing the negative attitudes toward the North-American State, this assertion being confirmed by the opinion surveys, whose results were published by Globe Scan and the Program of the University of Maryland on the international political attitudes on 23 January 2007, which proved the ambassador’s observations.

The image of America abroad – with very few exceptions – continues its evolution in downward spiral. And, as ambassador Smith signals, “*the anti-American*

*forces take advantage of the drop in the US popularity worldwide, turning the anti-Americanism into a threat to the national security”* (Smith, Ibid.). The five-page Manifest of the organisation Revolutionary Fight (E.A.) – a Greek terrorist group, which took responsibility for a missile attack over the American Embassy in Athens on 12 January 2007 -, is the most recent confirmation of its sombre evaluation.

The foreign policy of a state exerts the most power influence; few foreign societies will approve the US policy, in case they believe they put in jeopardy their own interests. For instance, in the Islamic world, the US war against terrorism is perceived as being directed against the Islam, thus exacerbating the anti-western accents of the Islamic fundamentalism (Ibid.).

Ikenberry and Slaughter supplied a prospective analysis on the threats and opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, governing, soft power, public diplomacy, information technologies and the implications of information affluence (Ibid., 2006). The two above highlighted the necessity of an infrastructure that allows the officials of national security to play chess at the same table and at the same time with two state and non-state actors, in a time that runs fast and with rapid changes of rules. Instead of creating a new bureaucracy, they state that the USA must (inter) connect the existent ones. Instead of creating command structures vertically, they must construct horizontal networks and direct them from the centre, rather than direct them from top to bottom, or the other way round. Instead of building all the new governing capacities, the USA must learn to exploit the capacities of the internal and external private actors (IPDGC, Ibid.).

Considering that the US image and influence deteriorated all over the world at the beginning of the 2000s, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIC) of the USA established in 2006 a Bipartisan Commission for Smart Power, with a view to developing a vision that should direct the US global commitments as well as a set of rules based on which the next president of USA, regardless his/her political orientation, can implement the smart power policy.

Among the premises underlying the activity of this Commission, there were opinion surveys that pointed to the worldwide deterioration of the US image and the American people: Pew Global Attitudes Project in 2006, Zogby survey, World Public Opinion survey in 2007, the survey of BBC World Service in January 2007 etc.

The Commission appreciated that in the elections of 2008 an important subject was to be the issue of ensuring a higher degree of security for the American citizens, under the circumstances of the danger presented by the global menace of terrorism and violent extremism. The US commitment in the fight against this peril, in the Commission opinion, must have been made based on four principles: the US leaders should have been on the offense against international terrorism, but they should have avoided answering to provocations in an exaggerated manner;

they should have also needed to eliminate the symbols of an intolerant, abusive, and unjust America; the use of diplomacy for positive finalities; the American leaders should have promoted a positive vision, stronger than the war against terrorism. The Americans needed an important goal to strive for, not only a simple tactic.

This problem of *smart power* policy was in the centre of attention of the Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communication from “George Washington” University. Within Landon Lecture (2007), there was raised the issue of strengthening the US capacity of using soft power and a better integration of it into hard power. The recommendations included the increase in the national capacity of economic growth, edification of institutions, law enforcement, good governance and strategic communication; a better use of expertise in the American universities; a dramatic increase in the expenditure for civil instruments of national security – diplomacy, strategic communication, external assistance, civil action and reconstruction and economic development. The path of institutionalising these capabilities is, most probably, not the recreation or the popularisation of the institutions of the past, such as USIA. The USA needs to ponder on the methods of integrating the government capabilities into those in the private sector, from universities, NGOs, with their allies and friends (IPDGC, Ibid.).

The American strategy for strategic communication and public diplomacy also established the categories of the target audience. They are represented by opinion makers from different countries – clergy, teachers, journalists, leaders, scientists, military and political personalities –, so-called vulnerable segments of population – including here youth, women and minorities –, and mass audience. The priorities of public diplomacy, to make the achievement of the objectives entrusted to it possible, are given by the extension of educational programmes and cultural exchanges, modernisation of communication means, promotion of fact diplomacy. As a conclusion of the document, it is stated that public diplomacy is a promoter of peace that pursuits the fulfilment of the conditions that ensure that all people in the world can have a better life, and that extremism cannot spread (Şerban, 2011, p. 81).

In October 2007, Tom Miller published *America’s Role in the World: A Business Perspective on Public Diplomacy*, a report in which the public diplomacy definitions were analysed, debating the problems of the American economy led by the decline of the US public image, and recommending methods that could be used by the community of businessmen to help with the restructuring and promotion of a strategy of effective public diplomacy. The Business for Diplomatic Action (BDA) recommendations were: creation of a corporation of independent public diplomacy and an agency, the National Council for Communication, which reports (only) to the President, development of a public diplomacy and a communication strategy

that employ aptitudes, techniques and processes of global businesses, an increase of the resources allocated to them, from 1.5 billion dollars to 3 billion dollars, the establishment of a Body of Reserve Officers of the Foreign Service and Goodwill Ambassador (IPDGC, Ibid.).

Richard L. Armitage, former deputy of the Secretary of State, Joseph S. Nye, Jr., co-presidents of the Commission for smart power, CSIS (2007), and a bipartisan commission of scientists and practitioners, request the US president to implement a smart power strategy complementary to the economic and military power, with great investments in soft power. They recommended the focus on six areas: reinvigorated alliances, partnerships and institutions, high global development, reinforced public diplomacy, economic integration, technology and innovation, creative approach of the arrangement of the organised, coordinated, and budgetary governance. The recommendations regarding the public diplomacy included the raise of exchanges (of students, scientists etc.), focused on youth, educational funds of USA - China and USA - India, linguistic competences for extended Middle East, and the creation of a non-profit centre for international knowledge and communication (Ibid.).

David Boren, the president of Columbia University, former democrat senator and chairman of the Committee for the Senate Information, in his book *A Letter to America* (2008), takes a balance look at the US political system that is increasing in cynicism, as well as the reforms necessary to the internal and external policies. The following are among Boren's priorities: a better understanding by the Americans of others' culture and history, the increase of the students and scientists flow to and from the USA, from the countries important for their future, relaxation of the conditions of awarding the visa for students, an International Peace Corps shaped after the model of the similar American Institution, and the creation of a "reserve government of independent thinking" in order to allow the scientists, the business leaders and the journalists with global experience to share their expertise and way of thinking, without compromising their independence (Ibid.).

James Glassman, in the *Public Diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (2008), during his first speech given as the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, former chairman of the Board of Radiobroadcasting Governors, commented on the instruments and plans of the traditional public diplomacy, his approach on public diplomacy defined as a "a war of ideas" that is concentrated on "winning the war against terror". He appreciated that the US radiobroadcasting was extremely efficient, and the Department of State being a "jewel of the public diplomacy crown". He understood that his role as the Under Secretary of State was "to perform his part of public diplomacy ... which goes to the USA" and "to make a comprehensive governmental effort within the war of ideas". He considered that the US public diplomacy had "to tell the world about a good and merciful nation and to engage

*in the most important ideological competition of the present – a competition that we (the USA) will win”* (Glassman, 2008). What was his opinion of reaching this goal? By using the tools of the ideological commitment – words, facts, images –, in order to create a hostile environment for violent extremism.

The ambassador Michael C. Polt, with a career in the US Foreign Service achieved during the application of Marshall Plan in Germany, offered in 2008, six recommendations for the next president: restructuring of the embassies all around the world, treating of the US diplomacy as a serious profession, reassertion of the role of the diplomatic corps as the main agent to meet the objectives of the President foreign policy agenda, creation of a single, substantial and consistent budget of foreign policy for all the US efforts abroad, creation of regional councils of ambassadors and putting the trust in professional diplomats (Toolbox, 2008).

In the report of the Consultative Commission for Public Diplomacy, entitled *Getting the People Part Right: A Report on the Human Resources Dimension of U.S. Public Diplomacy* (2008), the above-mentioned Bipartisan Presidential Commission appreciated critically and in detail the personnel recruitment, training, evaluation, structures and the integration of the public diplomacy officers into the Department of State nine years after its unification with the US Agency of Intelligence. Among his main conclusions: the states do not make any special efforts to recruit public diplomacy officers with relevant experience or skills; within the analysis of the Foreign Service, tests are not performed to identify predilections or skills for public diplomacy; the training of public diplomacy is sound, but there are many blind spots; the State’s Foreign Service Institute must develop courses at a level comparable with the license university courses, and must establish serious nine-month courses from medium to superior level; State’s evaluation process overwhelmingly rewards public diplomacy management rather than outreach; the state must undertake a comprehensive revision of the public diplomacy structures from the geographic offices and missions all around the world; the persistence of under-representation of the public diplomacy officers of superior rank was emblematic in furthering the lack of progress of the public integration into the basic work of the Department of State (IPDGC, Ibid.).

## CONCLUSIONS

In a world that has rapidly become multipolar, with new emergent states, with power skills that are at least regional, the time has come to adopt a new perspective vision of the American power. More than ever, in such circumstances, the USA must rethink its strategies, and the *smart power* is inevitably necessary to become an essential component of these strategies.

According to Joseph Nye, the USA must not give way to panic, under the circumstances of its decline and the increase of China's power. The US decline is appreciated as relative and it is likely that the USA will remain more powerful than any other states during the coming decades.

The yesterday promoter of soft power, Nye pleads for the new strategic concept of smart power. Established on the ability to influence and form alliances, the new stand is tailored according to an America that is mourning for hegemony, but by no means renouncing to leading the world.

Joseph Nye considers that the USA must not surrender to the fear of decline or the temptation of withdrawal but rather it must define its role in a more interdependent and complex world than ever. The problem of the American power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not that of decline but the rise of a new question: what must be done when it becomes obvious that not even the most powerful state can reach its goals without the support of the other states? The answer takes shape under the form of a strategy called *smart power* that is based on a new vision of power, in which power makes room for collaboration. A growing number of challenges will force the USA to exercise its power rather together with other states than use it upon them.

More specifically, this fact entails not focusing only on the hard power especially belonging to the military forces, but also resisting the temptation of unilateralism or maintenance of hegemony that characterised the time of President George W. Bush, preferring to form alliances and networks, from the perspective of what the companies are already doing. Smart power does not consist of power maximisation or hegemony maintenance, but it entails the combination of the means available within the strategies adjusted to the new context of power diffusion and the emergence of new powers. In other words, it is about mourning hegemony in order to play better the leading game, with intelligence and subtlety (Smart Power, 2010).

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