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The Historical Roots of Public Diplomacy and Their Significance for Australia and India¹

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At a time of ambitious, almost frightening plans for public diplomacy initiatives—consider, for example, the Chinese target for 1,000 overseas Confucius Institutes by the year 2020—it is easy to get caught up in a feeling of change without precedent in the pursuit of national interests overseas. In the spirit of debate and panel discussion, it is timely to look back as well as anticipate the future, not merely an academic exercise to explore the historical roots of public diplomacy; but in a way that makes for better decision-making in where to go next. This is the case for a possible “superpower,” India, whose emergence in international relations is accompanied by significant ventures in what is referred to as “new” public diplomacy. The “new” refers both to the broadening of agents at work—public diplomacy now embracing relationships between civil society actors overseas, and encouraging constant contact between non-government actors—and it sometimes

¹ This chapter is a modified version of a chapter appearing in India: Reluctant Superpower?, ed. Amitabh Mattoo, Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 2012.
also refers to the greater use of social media and instant communications in messages sent and received.

While thinking about the new, there are good reasons for recalling the old. There are three main strands of historical lineage informing the idea of public diplomacy (referred to as PD hereafter). Furthermore, they are not merely remote origins from which the phenomenon has grown but they remain close to the surface of current policy formulation and implementation in relation to PD, and therefore warrant remembering. These three strands are: 19th century adventures between state and non-state actors, the rise of 20th century state-promoted propaganda, and the emergence of internationalism, as one of the most enduring bedrocks upon which new forms of diplomacy can be launched. And in addition to these three strands of lineage, there are two further historical dimensions to the phenomenon that are only half-appreciated. The first of the half-appreciated is the role of history as a guide for decision-makers choosing between what works and what does not; and the other is the need for I would call a historical sensibility to accompany modern thinking about the slippery concept of national reputation.

In putting this case, I take a generous view of PD as addressing a broad audience as a means of persuading others to want the same outcomes as you want. American commentator Bruce Gregory's elaboration seems about right. He reminds us of the action and agency in public diplomacy—the key verbs at work for state actors, he argues, are understanding cultures, attitudes and behaviour; building and managing relationships; and influencing opinions and actions to advance interests and values. I would add two

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further qualities. The first is that the means of persuasion needs to be either originating from government or at least acknowledged, and somehow endorsed, by government; and the second is that PD logically involves listening, in order to understand others, and respond accordingly. My perspective is that of an international historian, and my argument below is international as much as Indian or Australian in focus.

The first strand of historical lineage logically informing PD prevailed for most of the 19th century, and featured shifting and loose relationships between nation states and non-state agencies shepherding national interests in cultural transmissions overseas. It has been suggested that the 21st century multi-dimensional mix of state and non-state forces involved in PD is something of a return to earlier times, after an unusually state-centralised phase generated by the Second World War and then the Cold War. European examples of engagement with the United States are especially instructive. In France, the Alliance Française, founded in 1883, promoted French language and culture, and prize-winning French artists found themselves on sponsored tours to the United States at a time when popular opinion there was mostly hostile to the French. Similarly, German composers were at the forefront of the Germans’ successful efforts around the turn of the century to educate overseas and especially US audiences in classical music. It was notable that, as was the case with Alliance Française, the state—the Reich government in Germany’s case—stayed at arms length from these cultural missions. The same was the case with stirring academic exchange programs (the Rhodes scholarships, for example) and European business groups setting up cooperative societies with like-minded groups in trading nations. Colourful individuals could transcend colonial circumstances, as was the case with Bengali seer Swami Vivekananda, who turned
up uninvited to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, and became de facto the Indian representative. An inspiring speaker, he brought Hinduism into popular consciousness, at the same time sketching its international reach in a way that captured diasporas and smoothed over divisions, and also harnessing it to the cause of Indian nationalists. As a conference gate-crasher, he did much to awaken the West to a Hindu spirituality that also harboured a morally superior form of nationalism.3

Whether or not the state liked these developments—and they were sometimes regarded with suspicion or disdain by foreign offices and embassies—does not detract from their significance and success. In all cases mentioned, the State eventually caught up with these private initiatives, conferring acknowledgement or endorsement. In short, those who see the end of the Cold War as unlocking features of the international environment that were kept in tight check for longer than anticipated might be able to draw on the recent resurgence of a less state-dominated idea of PD in evidence of their ideas. Stretching the argument, we might say that private agents and public private partnerships in nation branding or PD have their historical antecedents as much in the nineteenth as in the late twentieth or early 21st century.4

The second strand of lineage is the story of propaganda and the bureaucracy supporting it during the first 60-odd years of the 20th century—a period in which war-inspired ideals and modern


bureaucracies added a new sense of propaganda grown by and harnessed to a burgeoning national security state. While the term "propaganda" carries some negative connotations, it also has a close relationship with PD, especially when we recall firstly that Edmund Gullion, dean of the Fletcher School at Tufts, widely regarded father of public diplomacy, said that he would have been comfortable with term propaganda as something that covered his interest, but, due to propaganda's pejorative implications, was forced to search for a more neutral umbrella term. Others took a little longer to make the shift and it was only in the 1970s that the US government's information activities made the terminological shift to PD, and left behind the previously well-used umbrella term of propaganda. The pejorative feel of other terms such as information warfare, psychological operations, information campaigns—terms that have become common since the Second World War—can obscure a basic aim shared with PD. They are dimensions of a nation's attempt to cultivate public opinion to achieve that nation's aims, or put in a way that the advocates of 'soft power' would like, they are one form of persuasion orchestrated in national interests.

There are, in fact, some strong roots to the state-centred propaganda generation that predate the Second World War. Towards the end of the First World War a mix of revulsion at the horrors of war and excitement about communications advances in radio, telegraph, the press fed also into US President Woodrow

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Wilson’s liberal ideas about the rule of international law and self-determination for a better, more morally-based world order. From the non-state world, new and very active educational and philanthropic foundations (such as the Rockefeller and the Guggenheim) forced the Americans to adapt and to try to manage the new overseas initiatives that stemmed from sources other than Washington. From such developments come the first exercises in what commentators call “cultural diplomacy” and from this era comes the stirrings of liberal internationalism, which is a theme warranting separate attention. But Woodrow Wilson’s new Committee on Public Information, 1917-19, was also an extraordinarily successful propaganda campaign towards public support for US participation in the war, involving close to 150,000 workers in various message making and disseminating activities.7

Just as international affairs during the first half of the 20th century were dominated by two world wars, it was war-generated bureaucracy that enabled the growth of very big propaganda machines, especially during the Second World War. In simple terms, the war called for concerted efforts in the production of politically strong messages closely linked to the aims of key combatants, and these settings changed only slowly in the postwar years, partly because a new war, the Cold War, quickly replaced the last one, and partly because it would take time for new modalities and greater subtlety to grow.8 In 1959, for example, William Benton, former US assistant secretary of state, reflected on the

recent reciprocating art exhibitions held in Moscow and New York under a US-USSR cultural exchange agreement. The US State Department, he wrote, was in the propaganda business. ... The State Department will always be in the propaganda business and will never be in the art business. “Art” judged from the standpoint of the US Government and its Congressional appropriations, applied to overseas activities, must always be judged from its impact as propaganda—and never from its impact as art. 9

Such comments do little to divest propaganda of its pejorative connotations. Benton was, of course, a Cold War Warrior. His view exemplifies the state’s heavy-handed and manipulative information campaigns of the Cold War.

Before the Cold War, the appallingly successful work of Joseph Goebbels in Nazi Germany is particularly well-remembered. But, when stripped of its pejorative connotation, the links between state-directed propaganda and recent state efforts in PD are significant. Information generated by the state for consumption by those whose interests the state wishes to help shape can be imaginative and nuanced but it is seldom innocent. According to our definitions, the main difference lies in the two-way nature of PD, the listening aspect implicit in Bruce Gregory’s definition. If we were always certain that PD initiatives carried with them an unwavering commitment to listen, to be very responsive to feedback, then perhaps they could escape the vestiges of propaganda; but as it is very hard to claim this for all actions that go under the heading of PD, and as assessing the effectiveness of PD according to responses is patchy and work in progress, the connection with propaganda is hard to shake completely—even if there is a general aversion to the use of the term.

The third historical strand to current-day PD strand is the growth of internationalism, both at State and non-State levels, during the last century and early years of this one. At the supranational level, the growth of the United Nations membership and UN auxiliary bodies from the late 1940s through 1960s presented big, well-structured, opportunities for PD. The timing of this blossoming coincided with India’s emergence as an independent state. Early ventures in post-independence Indian PD, were less bilateral than in the supranational context of the UN. Through the principles and ideals they championed, nations of the Non-Aligned Movement stirring in the mid-1950s, with Nehru as one of the founding fathers, reinforced the Charter’s aims and promoted the further development of an international community. As is well-known, Indian hopes for the UN were closely entwined with hopes for post-colonial India itself, and for humanity more generally. Gandhi’s Quit India Declaration in Bombay in 1942 stressed that India’s nationalism spelt internationalism, foreseeing the need for independent India to join a world federation of free nations that would ensure disarmament, general peace and security, address the problems of injustice and inequalities, and prevent aggression and exploitation of others. Jawaharlal Nehru’s subsequent declarations and writings extended these ideas, especially during the first decade of the UN, to 1956. Other Indians helped, including the impossible-to-forget Krishna Menon, and Nehru’s sister Vijaya Laxmi Pandit, who headed the Indian delegation to the United Nations, and who was the first woman to be elected President of the General Assembly in 1953. There was also India’s Representative to the UN Commission on Human Rights, Hansa Mehta, who was at the time a member of India’s Constituent Assembly. This is not the place to re-examine the detail of Nehruvian hopes for “one worldism,” for world government collectivism to eventually replace nation-states, and for the UN to become the “conscience of the world.” My main
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purpose is to recall that this was very public, broad-based diplomacy aimed at mobilising public opinion in a number of nations. One recent reappraisal of this period suggests that we see it as one of the "co-mingling or intermingling" of ideas about post-colonial India and about the post-colonial world order, terminology that is less loaded with morality and identity, and which is useful for building bridges with current debates.¹⁰

The Assembly debates quickly took on a public affairs dimension, especially as the Non-Aligned movement grew more organised and bold from the mid-1950s through the 1960s. The famous Resolution 1514 in 1960, requiring the granting of immediate independence to colonial countries and peoples was notable for more than its sweeping aside previous Assemblies' acquiescence in colonial powers waiting for social, economic and educational preparedness before conferring independence. It was also a moment of huge Non-Alignment and (then) Third World solidarity. The issue of decolonisation stayed to the fore of the General Assembly debates, and the resolution was revisited throughout the 1960s. Significantly, too there was, in the wake of Resolution 1514 a successful mobilisation of the UN's information bureaucracy—the UN Department of Public Information. This department became a focal point for Non-Aligned and Group of 77 seized of the nexus between information and power, and keen to direct messages of incomplete development and social and economic injustices at the "North."¹¹ Similarly, the growth in


UNESCO activity provided for publicly-known reform agendas that mapped easily on to Nehru's humanism and optimism. 12

Even without Nehru and without supranationalism, when we read the history of international relations by measures other than military power, strategy, alliances and mobilising for war, it enables the cultural, educational, social and other networks informing relationships to come to the fore. This is what is sometimes referred to as "cultural internationalism," and it offers a means of understanding international relations that we have sometimes overlooked. 13 As another example, in which India also has a strong presence, it is worth recalling the post-war Colombo Plan for aid to South and Southeast Asia, a Commonwealth and then broader-based exercise in aid and education exchange. The Colombo Plan was a very worthy umbrella scheme under which a series of bilateral aid arrangements operated. As with many other aid initiatives, its impact was sometimes countered by fluctuations in commodity prices and by trade protection, but it generated a lot of human-interest stories.

The Colombo Plan became dependent on the generation of information for its success, and it is instructive to tease out a little of the PD detail that emerged. In practice, information generation was in the hands of a small but highly industrious group of officials. They included Indians who served as Information Officers, R. K. Chatterjee and B. L. Sharma, and India's Government Registrar of Newspapers, M. L. Bhardwaj, who took every opportunity to spread messages of aid, endeavour, growth and identity. A small Colombo

Plan Information Unit was created in 1953-54, and by 1958 it had merged with the Bureau for Technical Co-operation, that side of the plan focusing on education, training and technical expertise. In gathering stories and photos for use in journals and pamphlets, the Bureau more than made up for the lack of a permanent secretariat. In 1957, the regular meeting of members of the Colombo Plan’s Consultative Committee confirmed something of a new era in information activity. The meeting featured strong consensus that members should do more to disseminate information about the plan through established information media—the press, radio and, where possible, television. Delegates at the conference agreed that new economic development and training efforts should be accompanied by bold new measures to carry the good word about the plan’s projects further, both at home and overseas. Information was reified by members; and it became crucial to a broader-based acceptance among peoples of both donor and recipient nations, of the transformation of the Colombo Plan from post-war experiment to longer-term partnerships between the so-called “old Commonwealth” nations, Japan and the United States, on the one hand, and developing nations of South and Southeast Asia (noting that some countries were both donors and beneficiaries of aid).

14 Press Communiqué, Secretariat of Consultative Committee, New Delhi, 17 October 1953, and undated Indian paper, “A Scheme for Setting up an Information Organisation of the Colombo Plan to be Considered at the Next Meeting of the Consultative Committee,” EA1 W2619 item 118/8/11, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

One immediate outcome was the mobilisation of a new multinational group of cultural ambassadors, the National Information Officers of participating countries. Like India, Australia was prominent in occupying offices central to the information drive. Australia's successful involvement in the Colombo Plan in an era before the end of "White Australia" involved its inscription in the memories of most Australians as a "worthy cause", even if sometimes coloured by patronizing views of change in Asia. The strongest feature of Australian aid under the Colombo Plan consisted of scholarships and traineeships for Asian students to study in Australia (and live in Australian homes and new international houses at universities) before returning home. Australian involvement also owed much to the growth of an information bureaucracy born in the Second World War, and transformed in the 1950s and 1960s into one partly preoccupied with the Cold War but also one tasked with generating positive images about immigration as a vital stage of Australia's postwar development, and images designed to build bridges of cautious engagement with the elites of postcolonial Asia. Again, it was not an innocent medium for messages about Asia—the work of Australia's post-war Australian News and Information Bureau still bore traces of propaganda efforts inspired by wars hot and cold—but it was an important one.16

Thus, the phenomenon of wielding a new information bureaucracy was most important to those newly independent nations, including India, looking to project messages. Newly

independent nations might not have inherited a war-bred propaganda bureaucracy but they quickly realised the importance of generating messages for broad audiences. Building arguments around the growth of bureaucracies may not always be exciting as new public diplomacy ad the age of twitter; but as most forms of diplomacy are fundamentally about the management of change, so do our arguments about what is new and distinctive about PD need to embrace the growth and changes in bureaucracies supporting diplomacy.

There are two further uses of history in whatever happens today, one instrumental and the other more rhetorical, and both useful in anchoring PD, a concept that can be over-used and over-burdened with expectations. We are today experiencing a rise in diplomatic activity that coincides with a strong sense of transition in the global system (or systems) wrought by financial crises of unpredictable timing and duration, acts and recurring threats of terrorism, significant power shifts, especially in Asia and the Pacific, and implied levels of policy co-ordination on unprecedented scale across and within nations in tackling the challenges of climate change. Not surprisingly, in this context, public diplomacy, as a concept, is bound to be over-used and carry too many hopes at times.

Thus, the first, more pragmatic use of history, is as a provider of lessons. Others have begun this task. Historian-public diplomacy expert Nick Cull has started to compile historical case studies in public diplomacy, lessons of what worked and what did not, and he calls for more, so that we end up with a “Public Diplomacy Playbook” as a next-phase capacity builder.17 For an example of

one exercise that did not work, the US Shared Values campaign of 2001/2, in the wake of 9/11 addressed the wrong problem. Millions of dollars were spent on showing to the Arab world that Arab-Americans lived well in a land that was tolerant and strong on family values. The trouble was, the Arab world saw the US more according to actions in the Middle East than according to domestic conditions, and therefore did not change their views. This was after initial market testing yielded understandably positive feedback for the message in the campaign.18 Cull's casebook contains success stories, too, and invites additions.

At a more rhetorical level, it is especially easy for political leaders to convey messages, based on a sense of history, that can enhance or detract from their nation's standing among others. History has a tendency to appear in politicians' speech in crisis-like moments. There is now considerable literature on the power of historical metaphors to influence policy-makers under stress; or lessons that we supposedly learn from previous episodes. Wars tend to be remembered, at least in their early stages, according to memories of the last wars that people were involved in.

You do not have to be particularly beholden to psychological explanations in order to assume that people who either lived through the times or who were growing up “learning the lessons” and being exposed to this form of popular history were likely to be affected. The Second World War has a particularly strong hold on the American imagination, as was shown by the repeated references to Pearl Harbor after the 9/11 attack in 2001. Later, in August 2007, in a less crisis-like moment, President Bush even attempted to draw a historical line between US involvement in the post-war reconstruction of Japan after 1945, and the on-going war

18 Nicholas J. Cull, op. cit., p. 43.
in Iraq. Bush likened Al-Qaeda's attacks on the US and its allies to those of Japan in the Second World War and then reminded listeners of opposition to US-led rebuilding of the Japanese economy (successfully) after the war, inviting them to view the US occupation of Iraq in the same terms. Bush omitted the Cold War context in which Japan was restored as bulwark against the Soviet Union and China. His selective and mangled efforts were rightly criticised by historians of post-war Japan such as John Dower.¹⁹

And the other reason for historical perspective is the value of history as compelling narrative with the longer view, and power to evoke. Effective story-telling that is linked to felt and demonstrated truths is, after all, one of the most powerful means of persuasion or reinforcing a message. Well-known stories or histories tend to shape national reputation, and the best-known stories leave lasting impressions. The motto of one of the biggest and best-known information services, the US Information Agency, was “Telling America’s Story to the World.” As Dutch commentator Jan Melissen suggests, public diplomacy, when practised effectively, runs at different speeds from the more traditional forms of diplomacy and often has the medium to longer term view in sight. Interestingly, Melissen is an authority on “New Public Diplomacy.”²⁰ He suggests that public diplomacy should ideally be in tune with a country’s medium-term foreign policy objectives and long-term aims. It builds on trust and credibility and often works best with the long-term


horizon. In the nearer term, he suggests, it is “realistic to aspire
to influencing the milieu factors that constitute the psychological
and political environment in which attitudes and policies towards
other countries are debated.” 21

In broad terms, political leaders have shown a preparedness
to engage with audiences through a dialogue informed by history.
The nature of political speech is itself profoundly influenced,
explicitly and otherwise, by the competing meanings to be drawn
from history. In the appeal to “thresholds,” “turning points” and
“unique opportunities” a sense of history is inevitably invoked.

Underpinning all such debates is a sense that history can
frame and provide authority to politicians’ efforts to mobilise
public support. This has been recognized in Australia. Five years
ago, the participants in the August 2006 Australian History Summit
investigating the teaching of history in secondary schools agreed
that knowledge of Australian history was vital for young Australians,
and concluded: “Nearly all of the crucial public debates embody and
appeal to history.” 22 Here is acknowledgement that history has had
persuasive, mobilizing appeal in Australian politics.

This, in turn, begs important questions: Is this what people
vote for? Do they respond to certain persuasive ideals, ideas and
feelings in ways that go well beyond carefully calculating self-
interest? Are they interested in a nation’s standing in international
affairs? Are they concerned with more than who will give them a
better deal according to taxation and opportunity, and security at
home and abroad?

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21 Jan Melissen, op. cit., p. 12.
22 The Hon. Julie Bishop MP, Media Release, The Australian History Summit,
Media/Bishop/2006/08/b002170806.asp>.
American linguist George Lakoff, in his wonderfully titled little book, Don’t Think of an Elephant, answers with cautious “yes” to these questions. In the US an academic cottage industry has grown up around the tendency for voters to behave outside the norms of rational, self-interested behaviour. An example that Lakoff uses is the 2003 race for Governor of California. Focus groups monitoring the campaigns kept finding that voters would respond to a series of questions by identifying that Democrat Gray Davis’s policies were most closely aligned to what they described as their interests—but then added that they would vote for Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger. They were, concludes Lakoff, voting for identity and values more than self-interest. And this trend was observed at the national level in the United States. It prompted a new wave of writing about how to frame the debate—how conservatives had largely won the struggle for language in many ways. According to Lakoff, prior to Obama’s victory, conservatives had effectively wielded the old “nation as family” metaphorical toolkit (the world is a dangerous place and families need protection. In a difficult world, children need help to help them to tell right from wrong). The family metaphor came with all the expectations that stern, paternal discipline should guide children; that father’s authority should not be challenged (i.e. strong support must be given to presidents in relation to foreign policy etc); and that welfare is dangerously akin to maternal indulgence that leads to wayward behaviour etc. Underpinning these suggestions is the idea that sound, strict morality is what leads to prosperity and security.

While history was not always at the forefront of this type of analysis, the authority from this kind of language is buttressed by the effective wielding of historical examples. In the US context,

such work follows other commentators who have highlighted the effective wielding of rhetoric by former US President Ronald Reagan, the "great communicator." Richard Reeves' 2006 study of President Reagan argues that his charisma resulted from his disregard of the 'nitty-gritty, his strong sense of the world historical in his actions, and in his belief that "the speech" was the real work. 24 There is strong logic, therefore, to set aside Prime Ministers or Presidents or party leaders as a category for special attention in any analysis of their impact in PD.

Margaret Thatcher, on the rise in 1979, made a speech to her Conservative Party in which she invoked Britain's proud history as the world leader, in order to re-ignite conservative pride. A couple of snippets serve here as examples:

The world has never offered us an easy living. There is no reason why it should. We have always had to go out and earn our living—the hard way. In the past we did not hesitate. We had great technical skill, quality, reliability. We built well, sold well. We delivered on time. The world bought British and British was best. Not German. Not Japanese. British. It was more than that. We knew that to keep ahead we had to change. People looked to us as the front runner for the future. 25

"Our success," she said, "was not based on Government hand-outs, on protecting yesterday's jobs." And she used this description of British work ethic as a basis for sweeping industrial reform after she came to power. Ten years later she spoke of Britain's special contributions to Europe at war and, without any imperial


misgivings, about Europeans' "civilisation" of much of the world as "an extraordinary tale of talent, skill and courage."26 Today, the legacy of the Second World War, especially in Europe, is formidable for its capacity to remind people that there is plenty of unfinished business; and we can find many other examples of European leaders having to tread carefully and deliberately around some of the many residual wounds and grievances that continue to resonate strongly.

Politicians have been adept in using history in very public ways that have a more reconciliatory purpose, which again, carries a more international message easily digested. For example, in Germany in 2005, Chancellor Schröder knew how important it was to reject a particularly victim-laden interpretation of Germany's recent past. On the 60th anniversary of the horrific Allied fire-bombing of Dresden, he engaged in a very public repudiation of neo-Nazi historical revision. This was part of Schröder's ongoing rejection of the calls made by an increasingly popular neo-Nazi political party for historical revisionism, in which Germans were to be recast as the victims of the Second World War. The NPD (National Democratic Party of Germany) had announced plans to stage a "funeral march" (Trauermarsch) through the middle of Dresden on 13 February 2005 to hijack the sixtieth anniversary of the bombing. NPD members of the Saxony state parliament called the Dresden raid a "bombing holocaust" (Bombenholocaust) and accused the Western Allied "imperialist air-gangsters" who conducted the raid war criminals. The key phrase from Schröder's statement widely quoted in the (inter)national media was his vow "not to allow cause and effect to be reversed," a reference to the NPD's version of history in which Germans were cast in the role

of victims. Chancellor Schröder was an advocate of the idea that German nationalism always must be viewed through the prism of Auschwitz. In arguing this way, Schroder successfully restored a sense of what was cause and what was effect in German history, and thereby framed a sense of nation in a modern context.\footnote{27 “Berlin Commemorates Auschwitz Liberation,” Deutsche Welle, 2 August 2011 <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,1468497,00.html>.

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As another powerful example of a leader’s attempt at reconciliation that drew on a sense of history, we could also consider US President Barack Obama’s speech to the Muslim world in Cairo in June 2009. This was a prime example of inviting listeners to feel that a new beginning towards better times was dawning. He achieved this through a combination of confession for sins past (for example, the previous US tendency to categorise Muslim-majority states as defined according to the Communist or Democratic camps during the Cold War); recognition of the interconnectedness of American prosperity and Muslim contributions; declarations about the universality of fundamental human rights, wants, needs; and intellectual and emotional generosity in drawing inspiration, at the end of his speech, equally from the Koran, the Talmud and the Holy Bible.\footnote{28 Barack Obama, Speech, Cairo, New York Times, 4 June 2009, 4 December 2009 <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html?pagewanted=all>.

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In Australia too, James Curran (in his book, \textit{The Power of Speech}) has written on Prime Ministers and the ways in which they have derived authority through compelling articulations of Australian nationalism. Curran argues that since the 1970s it has been very important for Australian Prime Ministers to speak to Australian values and national ideals, not only to win the electorate’s support, but in order to maintain their positions of authority within their
respective parties, who have come to expect this of them. It did not have to be heavily fact-laden history; but it did need to be sentient history, felt history about who we imagined we were. Those who did it best, argues Curran, were those who were able to establish continuity with the present, so that listeners felt that they were living out the legacy of what had come before.\textsuperscript{29} This conclusion, I suggest, applies generally rather than purely to Australian circumstances.

In exploring the significance of history for leaders projecting messages that have PD-type qualities, new social media will play an important role in reaching broad audiences quickly and provide a means for popular levels of engagement with a nation's projections and standing in the world. There is something special about the way in which Indian authorities blend India's trajectory in world affairs with India's embrace of communications technology. As others have said, including Shashi Tharoor, it is most fitting that India, an IT powerhouse, makes maximum use of social media to inform the Indian public of India's interests and activities in the world. The official sites for Indian public diplomacy also emphasize India's booming technology sector and the country's largest English-speaking population in the world as jumping points for venturing into this mode of diplomacy and as scene-setting for India's rising international standing.\textsuperscript{30} More traditional publications such as the annual collection of documents, India's Foreign Relations, build further the feeling of international take-off by detailing India's spectacular economic growth, its technological and communications successes and its ongoing efforts to address


problems of global dimensions, including the developmental needs of other nations, attempts to mitigate climate change and policy around the use of energy resources.\textsuperscript{31}

Amidst what is an admirable air of excitement there is a slightly elusive quality about the scope of the Ministry's involvement in it. In saying that "public diplomacy activities often present many differing views as represented by private individuals and organizations in addition to official Government views and positions"\textsuperscript{32} there is a suggestion of ministerial facilitation of things that then run independently, or even ministerial noting other goings on if and when the department learns of them. There is not much history in the Indian Ministry of External Affairs' PD messages, which are arguably directed internally, at Indians, as much as externally, and are set to expand with a new, and very logical, focus on Indian diasporas overseas. Amidst the social media, the PD Division of MEA has a robust set of publications, seminars and conferences, distinguished lecture series and visitors program. For historical content, there remains something of a gap between the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, the programs and activities of which are fascinating, and the new wave of PD.

In significant ways the diplomatic game has changed; but in making the case for continued engagement with history I am envisaging those publicly-aimed messages that will survive when specific foreign policies strike trouble. India's early forays in PD in the 1940s and 1950s involved an "intermingling" of Indian challenges and visions with those of the international order, and


however unreachable some of the one worldism, some core ideals survived immediate gains and losses in foreign policy stakes. So too with Australia’s early forays in international education. If we do not ask too much of PD today, if we are content with an “intermingling” of state and non-state agencies, or the “milieu factors” making up the environment that Melissen speaks of, then there are some compelling reasons for persisting with it, and with a historical sensibility attached.

References


