People / Networks / Power

Communications Technologies and the New International Politics

A Report of the Twelfth Annual Aspen Institute
Roundtable on Information Technology

David Bollier
Rapporteur

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Charles M. Firestone
Executive Director
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Foreword

The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Information Technology began over a decade ago with a determination to surface and explore new insights into the impact of new information and communications technologies (ICT) on society, the organization, and the individual. Composed of leading thinkers, executives, government officials, financiers, and writers, the Roundtable has from its origins tried to consider cutting edge issues in an uncommon fashion. The very first session, in 1992, applied complexity theory to ICT issues, and as early as 1995 it explored the likely emergence of electronic commerce. Other topics have included the emergence of global entrepreneurialism; ecologies for innovation, that is, the ingredients conducive to fostering innovation in organizational settings; and the blurring of borders in both physical and virtual senses.

For the past two years, however, the Roundtable has moved into a different realm, that of the impact of ICT on world affairs, politics and diplomacy. In 2002, the Roundtable coined the rubric "netpolitik," to suggest the significance of the network form as an organizing principle in the conduct of world affairs.

In the ensuing year, the concept gained currency both within the group and beyond, calling for further exploration and nuance. Given the emergence and rising importance of trans-national networks (electronic, social, cultural, academic, and of course, terrorist, among others), how should countries, organizations and even individuals shape their communications policies? How does one shape and disseminate a coherent message in this milieu? What are the new realities in the world's increasingly complex nervous systems? What controls do individuals, organizations and governments have within those systems?

The Roundtable

To expand and edify this dialogue, begun the previous year, the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program convened the 2003 Roundtable on Information Technology. In the context of a world made tense with the exercise of hard power, how can and should

governments exercise their "soft power" effectively? How should organizations, including both the global corporate player and the burgeoning non-governmental (non-profit) organizations, "NGOs", construct communications strategies within this fast changing ecology? What are the pitfalls that await us all in the new world of netpolitik?

We have been most fortunate to have not only extraordinary thinkers share their learning and views with us, but also some of the world's most significant leaders join us as well. In 2003, as the list of participants in the back of the volume indicates, these included Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa, Queen Noor of Jordan, former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, U.S. Export-Import Bank President Philip Merrill, former U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry, Romanian Foreign Minister Mircea Geoana, Egyptian Ambassador to the United States Nabil Fahmy, and the list goes on.

It was an extraordinary three days of dialogue. The purpose of this volume, however, is not to report faithfully the minutes of those discussions, but rather to place in context and in a coherent fashion the concepts discussed, weaving in the facts, concepts and insights offered by our participants.

As in most of the previous sessions, we are privileged to have author David Bollier as our rapporteur. He combines a journalist's nose for the new and relevant with the accomplished writer's ability to turn a phrase, and more importantly for our purposes, to explain some very complex concepts in understandable terms. In order to accomplish this in a way that provides accessibility to the outside reader, we charge Mr. Bollier with great discretion in reporting on the sessions, giving his overall view of the dialogue. Accordingly, other than the direct quotes, the statements in this volume are the author's, and are not necessarily the views of any particular participant or his or her employer.

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Charles M. Firestone
Executive Director
Communications and Society Program
The Aspen Institute
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David Bollier

Communications Technologies and the New International Politics

Kurdish people living in Turkey can now receive satellite television broadcasts emanating from London. Iranians can view Farsi-language television programs that originate in Los Angeles. Even though they are dispersed throughout the world, emigrants from mainland China remain a vital diasporic community, thanks to websites and e-mail discussion lists. Insurgent movements from the Zapatistas to the East Timorese to Indonesian students have used the Internet to organize themselves and communicate a political vision to the world.

Yet despite the winds of change stimulated by fresh and unfettered flows of information, the new communications technologies do not necessarily usher in new, more enlightened political orders. Authoritarian governments from China to Saudi Arabia have imposed new systems of control over the Internet. It is unclear, over the long term, just how powerful Internet-based communications will be in reshaping the exercise of power.

What is clear is that the emerging communications infrastructure—the Internet, satellite television, cellular telephony, and more—is the exoskeleton of a new sort of global politics and culture. Growing evidence suggests that by changing how people communicate, think, and interact, the new electronic technologies are forging new cultural values, identities, and loyalties. In their influence on politics, economics, and culture, the new media channels represent something of a slow-motion, geopolitical tsunami.

The new communications systems are not simply conduits of information; they constitute a wholly new sort of global nervous system. They enable new sorts of virtual social communities to arise and flourish and facilitate unmediated flows of transnational communication. They are changing art and culture, affecting the moral credibility of societal institutions, and reconfiguring political power, including those of national governments, the military, and other hierarchical organizations.

To explore these issues, the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program convened twenty-six leaders from the worlds of inter-

national diplomacy, public policy, finance, high technology, academia, and technology. (See Appendix for a list of roundtable participants.) The three-day conference, held in Aspen, Colorado, from July 30 to August 2, 2003, sought to build on the insights learned from the preceding year's roundtable, "The Rise of Netpolitik: How the Internet is Changing International Politics and Diplomacy."

The 2003 roundtable examined a variety of interrelated issues: the special challenges facing governments in projecting their messages in international affairs; the political dynamics of television coverage of the Iraqi War and its aftermath; the growing power of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) on the international stage; and the new symbiosis of organizational hierarchies and virtual networks.

Charles M. Firestone, executive director of the Aspen Institute's Communications and Society Program, moderated the discussions. David Bollier, an independent author and consultant, served as rapporteur. This report represents his interpretive synthesis of the most salient themes of the roundtable, supplemented by excerpts from some readings selected for the roundtable.

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One reason the new media are so disruptive is their transnational reach. Historically, states jealously controlled the mass media to bolster their political legitimacy and their citizenry's sense of national identity. "Communal symbols reinforce cohesion, affect the duration and nature of any particular hegemony, and, therefore, have a central place in the idea of the state," writes Monroe Price, director of the Howard M. Squadron Program in Media, Law, and Society at the Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University. "The structure and capacity of communications and the fate of governments," he writes, "are inextricably intertwined."

When some fundamental aspects of the communications environment change, therefore, the shock waves reverberate throughout a society's leading institutions. This dynamic is essentially what is happening today. The proliferation of new media technologies is making the once-stable international "market for loyalties" more contestable and volatile. This volatility, in turn, is disrupting many established practices of the international political order.

"Historically, there has been a kind of agreement among the major 'producers' of loyalty about how the market will be divided," explained Price, author of *Television, the Public Sphere and National Identity* (Oxford University Press, 1995) and *Media and Sovereignty: The Global Information Revolution and Its Challenge to State Power* (MIT Press, 2002). A "cartel" of political players—governments, multinational corporations, ruling families—has assiduously worked to exclude "competitors" who might "steal" the loyalties of the people it governs. The members of the cartel also work hard to fortify their "brand share" by touting the virtues of their governance via the mass media.

In this light, much of the tumult in international politics and commerce can be understood as communications-driven instability in the market for loyalties. A market for loyalties that was once tightly controlled by nation-states is coming undone—or at least becoming more fluid and complicated—as newcomers to international politics gain access to powerful communications tools and public platforms. Ethnic communities-in-exile, human rights activists, charismatic dissidents, social movements and hundreds of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are now able to bring their own moral visions and political agendas to the global stage.

To be sure, nation-states still retain ample supplies of coercive "hard power," which remains important and often decisive in international politics. Increasingly, however, the deployment of military might and economic leverage is being complicated by the "soft power" of reputation, credibility, and values. This shift is epitomized by the U.S. government's postwar struggle to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people and by its ongoing fight against the Al-Qaeda terrorist network.

Weaponry alone is insufficient, particularly in fighting an adversary that has no fixed geographic home but resides in an amorphous transnational *network* held together by its members' shared values, myths, and experiences. Indeed, this arrangement is precisely the strength of so many contemporary religious, secular, and guerilla movements. Their identities, cultural values, and shared narratives—all of which are increasingly sustained by the new communications media— are powerful weapons in their own right.

It is no exaggeration to assert that the future of statecraft may well depend on understanding how social communities can reconfigure themselves and assert their moral and political claims in the new globally networked culture.

What's a Government to Do? Communications Strategies for a Globally Networked Environment

In the age of mass media, the communications strategies of national governments were fairly straightforward. There were only a limited number of mainstream news outlets, and their top editors and producers tended to share the general foreign policy paradigm of the Cold War. Internationally, the U.S. government looked to the Voice of America and such vehicles as Radio Free Europe to get its message before foreign audiences, especially those living in communist nations behind the Iron Curtain.

In 2003 the media environment is far more varied, fast-paced, and uncontrollable. Not only do news and culture skip across national borders with relative ease, the "news cycle" for generating the day's news reports has virtually disappeared; news reporting is a 24-hour machine. No longer do a handful of prestigious newspapers and television broadcasts set the political agenda; now foreign publications and even local outlets in foreign lands can introduce news stories into the global arena within hours, and sometimes minutes. Domestically, a raft of "bottom-up" news sources—Internet newsgroups, specialized Internet e-mail discussion lists, personal web logs ("blogs"), and many others—compete with mainstream news outlets for public attention and credibility.

In this confusing, rambunctious media environment, what's a government to do? New sorts of strategic and operational plans are required if governments are to project their messages effectively in the teeming public square. Roundtable participants spent considerable time exploring the options.

"Foreign policy, as I always tell my students," said Madeleine Albright, former U.S. Secretary of State and now principal of The Albright Group, "is trying to get some other country to do what you want. And so the question is, How do you get your message across? How does a democracy, in fact, tell its story?"

One approach that Albright pioneered was the melding of public diplomacy and communications strategy, by bringing the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) within the State Department. "We believed that public diplomacy is one of the tools that we have to tell our story now, and if it is completely disassociated from the State Department, within a department or agency that was independent, it lost a lot of its value. A lot of people were critical of that [the placement of USIA within the State Department]. But…we began to see the value of getting the message and foreign policy together."

There is legitimate concern about public diplomacy becoming propaganda, Albright conceded. But the two can be differentiated, she said, by facilitating open dialogue rather than simply projecting a government message. For example, the State Department runs a network, WorldNet, that allows local journalists from around the world to ask high-level government officials about U.S. policy. The U.S. government also operates "America Houses" in various places around the world, which function as publicly accessible "libraries" about American life and policies.

A frequently cited case of misreading the audience was the series of public service announcements (PSAs) produced by Charlotte L. Beers, a former advertising executive who served as the State Department's undersecretary for public diplomacy until 2002. The PSAs depicted an allegedly representative Muslim family who speak glowingly about their lives in the United States. The ads were intended to showcase American pluralism and tolerance and thereby neutralize Arab hostility toward the United States, but they were widely criticized for serving up unrealistic portrayals of Arab Americans.

For Nabil Fahmy, ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United States, the ads failed to achieve their purpose because they did not truly address the concerns of the audience itself—Arabs in foreign lands. "We don't accuse you of mistreating Moslems in America," Fahmy said. "Our major concern is the mistreatment of Arabs in their own countries." In defense of the ads, the State Department touted extensive audience research. This research was flawed, however, in one critical respect, said Fahmy: It did not query Arabs abroad.

Media Fragmentation and High-Velocity News

The bigger challenge in getting a message out may be the media environment itself. The public stage has become extremely fragmented and compartmentalized, causing enormous complications in crafting consistent, effective messages. John W. Rendon, president of the Rendon Group (a global strategic communications consulting firm that works with the Department of Defense), has identified 167 distinct message delivery systems that the U.S. government can use to reach highly specific audiences. These systems range from network television and syndicated radio shows to international satellite networks and websites.

One of the most significant changes in the communications environment is the rise of self-organized communities of interest. Using the Internet, individuals can bypass traditional news sources to reach niche audiences; they can even become global publishers themselves.

"What's really interesting, going forward," said Bill Coleman, founder, chairman and chief customer advocate for BEA Systems, a major software maker, "is a new messaging phenomenon called web logs, or blogs, which allow anybody to publish themselves on web pages that other people can find and then participate in the conversation. Things are going to get much more personalized. Anything you want to know about, you can find a set of blogs where everybody is connected together. You can search out people and find only the opinions you want. You're going to be able to get so targeted in your message, it will be micro-micro-messaging."

The Iraqi war spawned dozens of blogs among Baghdad residents, some of whom offered real-time accounts and photos of events that had not yet been reported (and might never be reported) by mainstream news outlets. There are now dozens of blogs emanating from Iran as well, some of which are able to post real-time photos of demonstrations as they are happening. "The blogger is anybody," said Coleman. "Anyone in this room or any five-year-old kid can be a blogger."

The fragmentation of media may be liberating in many respects, by introducing new voices to public dialogue. Some commentators, however, such as University of Chicago law professor Cass Sunstein, warn that the egocentric customization of Internet information—the "Daily Me"—poses a grave threat to democratic governance. In his book *Republic.com*

(Princeton University Press, 2001), Sunstein argues that "democracy depends on shared experiences and requires citizens to be exposed to topics and ideas that they would not have chosen in advance."[1]

Another salient challenge for governments is the ever-accelerating velocity of news and information. "We're now living in a real-time environment," said Rendon, the global communications specialist. "It's real-time, all the time. Governments can't go to sleep. If they want to actively engage in the information environment, they have to always be awake and active."

A news story that appeared in Arabic, in a local newspaper in Saudi Arabia, "went global" in 15 minutes, said Rendon. This dynamic—of local news unpredictably leaping onto the global stage—is not unusual, he said. That is why his firm monitors "all open source material" relating to the Iraqi situation and terrorist activity globally, 24 hours a day. Reacting rapidly to the latest news nonetheless remains a difficult challenge.

The velocity of information makes it especially hard for governments to develop and maintain a consistent message. Albright recalled that, when she was serving as the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, her day began at 10 a.m.—two hours before the daily news briefing at the State Department at noon. Sometimes Albright would inadvertently beat out the Secretary of State's presentation to the press, causing irritation and sometimes-inconsistent administration messages.

On other occasions at the U.N., the foreign minister of another country might literally race to the doors to speak to the waiting press first, before other nations' representatives got the opportunity. "It didn't matter what we said to each other in a small room," said Albright. "The question was how the message would get out to the public."

Still other complications arise because there are diverse voices within a single administration that need to be coordinated. Albright believes, therefore, that the idea of a "message of the day" is a valuable practice. She also reported that different Clinton administration officials often participated in telephone conference calls on Saturdays to coordinate the administration's message for the Sunday public affairs talk shows.

When Domestic Political Messages Reach International Audiences

However well coordinated a U.S. administration's message, complications often ensue because the audiences receiving the message are so diverse. Government messages are often aimed at other governments, but of course the messages also reach the general public, who may respond to them in a different fashion. It can be even worse when government pronouncements intended for domestic audiences reach international audiences, who may react quite differently than Americans.

In the age of the Internet, domestic news routinely migrates into the foreign press and directly to citizens of other nations. A message that resonates well with an American audience may turn out to be deeply offensive to Middle Eastern audiences. Robert Hormats, vice chairman of Goldman Sachs (International), noted how the Bush administration's use of metaphors about a Texas gunslinger and "a crusade" in the context of war and terrorism may rouse domestic audiences. "But once you translate those metaphors internationally, they can work in entirely counterproductive ways," said Hormats.

An example: German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, as a candidate for reelection, made many antiwar statements that surely proved helpful in getting him reelected. The impact of those statements on German-American relations, however, may have been "quite substantial," Hormats believes.

In a sense, every nation's domestic communications have become internationalized. Egyptian Ambassador Fahmy said that his government recognizes this fact as an operational principle. Accordingly, his government has decided "to increase our engagement with media outlets but decrease our control of what actually gets published." The point is that the media environment cannot really be controlled. The best that can be done, the Egyptian government has apparently decided, is to put out its message "early and effectively, and correctly and precisely."

It can be difficult for governments to send effective messages to both domestic and international audiences when the editorial presentation of commercial television news is heavily influenced by ratings and patriotic pressures. "What is happening to CNN today reflects the system of [audience] ratings," said Albright. "You have to fly that flag everywhere. And if you don't, you are accused of being the liberal media."

One consequence of the blurring of domestic and international media flows is that inconsistent government messages are more readily identified—and denounced. "It's not just that messages and technology are accelerating, and also democratizing, if you will, the way information is received," said Queen Noor of Jordan. "From the Middle East perspective, it's terribly important that there not be a contradiction between your values and your policies. Your statements should match the concrete actions on the ground."

"The United States is now increasingly being perceived as a threat," Queen Noor continued. "American values are no longer seen as sacrosanct, and the distinction between its values and its policies has blurred. This is very, very dangerous because extremist movements in our region are playing to that, making successful cases to the people in the region with a negative view of American culture. And so we have a bigger problem now than we did prior to September 11th."

Amre Moussa, secretary-general of the Arab League, speculated that audiences have become "more mature" and perhaps more "cynical" in how they interpret the messages coming from established news sources and governments. "Cooked information won't sell today," Moussa said, because inconsistencies between public statements and on-the-ground realities are noticed. "All of us have messages to send because of our positions. But we are also part of the audience. The moment I feel that there is something wrong, some gap between official statements and audience sensibilities, I turn it off."

The real source of resentment, said James Manyika, partner with McKinsey & Company, is "the inconsistency that is seen outside the United States between American values and American foreign policy." A recent study by the Pew Center's Global Attitudes Project confirmed this perception, said Albright, who chairs the project, a survey research effort sponsored by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. "People absolutely admire American values, including democracy and individual Americans," said Albright. "They specifically do not like American policies."

One of the Pew Center's reports, "What the World Thinks in 2002," found that "public opinion about the United States in the Middle East/Conflict Area is overwhelmingly negative, even in countries whose

governments have close ties with the United States."[2]   The report was based on a survey of 38,000 people in 44 nations. A subsequent Pew Center report, "Views of a Changing World," published in June 2003, found that "large majorities in most countries [of 21 national populations surveyed] say they dislike the growing influence of America in their country."[3]

If the United States and other national governments have trouble communicating consistent messages to their own citizens as well as to diverse international audiences, the challenge facing the United Nations is even greater. It deals with dozens of issues on a daily basis, and its primary constituency—the world's nations themselves—have multiple views about many urgent issues. Forging and communicating a unified message is extremely difficult.

Shashi Tharoor, U.N. under-secretary-general for communications and public information, explained the special problems facing the U.N. as a communicator on the global stage. "Every single day we're getting on fifteen different fronts at the same time. When Secretary-General Kofi Annan held a press conference earlier this year, he had to go from Iraq to the Congo to Liberia to the international security architecture to trade issues, ministerial meetings, intellectual property and drugs, Africa—all of this in his opening remarks of three minutes." Somehow, the U.N. also must try to interest the news media in rich nations to cover the plight of people in poor and strife-torn countries, said Tharoor.

Not only are the U.N.'s media resources quite limited relative to those of corporations and governments, but the U.N. must also play two sometimes-conflicting roles: as stage and as actor. As a convenor stage, the U.N. must be neutral and provide a forum for member governments to resolve their differences and convergences. As an actor, it executes its mandates impartially, but is often blamed for the failures of governments. Yet the distinction between the two roles is often blurry.

Inevitably, perhaps, the complicated international politics that swirl around the United Nations mean that its image sometimes suffers despite its best intentions. According to the recent Pew poll, the U.N.'s reputation suffered a drop in public esteem in the U.S. because it failed to support the war in Iraq, and in nineteen other countries because it ultimately failed to prevent the war.

Such paradoxes may be an inevitable fact of life for government communications in today's media environment. Albright concluded with a sigh, "As a government official, when you are criticized in the press for a policy or somebody takes the other view, you think, 'Gee, we really failed!' And yet, in truth you haven't failed because a democracy requires a variety of different opinions. That particular contradiction is very hard to deal with."

Television and the U.S.–Iraq War

Despite the growth of new media delivery systems, particularly the Internet, broadcast television remains the dominant medium affecting political and cultural life. In a media environment splintered among many sources of information, no medium except television has such a large absolute audience sharing the same images and narratives in real time. This factor makes television uniquely powerful.

An estimated 65 percent of U.S. audiences receive their news primarily from television, according to Tharoor. Because CNN is the dominant international TV news source, its effects on international politics and diplomacy are unparalleled. "I've always considered CNN the sixteenth member of the U.N. Security Council," said Albright. "The role of the Security Council is to bring issues of war and peace to its other members. When CNN went into Somalia, it was a story; CNN didn't go into Sudan, and there was no story. Yet more people died in Sudan than anywhere else."

"The role of the media in policymaking is very, very strong," said Albright. "The 24/7 news cycle and the necessity to react to something very quickly are important. You realize very much that a story is out there, and even if it isn't true, it begins to create a need for a response that you have to be able to deal with."

The Many Television Versions of the U.S.–Iraq War

Yet television is not a monolithic voice, notwithstanding CNN's dominance of international news coverage. The U.S. war against Iraq demonstrated this fact. In a classic manifestation of the "blind men and the elephant" parable, different television networks around the world—CNN, the

BBC, Al-Jazeera, German television, French television—offered radically different depictions of the war. Fox News played up patriotic news angles and images, to the extent of inserting an animated American flag in the corner of the television screen. Other American networks followed suit in accenting American successes and downplaying military setbacks and international criticism.

The Arab-managed Al-Jazeera network, by contrast, was far more likely than the U.S. news media to depict the pain and suffering of the Iraqi people and combatants. Some international journalists even criticized the U.S. media for never showing the dead and injured bodies of American soldiers—a deviation from the news ethic often ascribed to American broadcast news: "If it bleeds, it leads."

"There were really five wars in Iraq," said John Rendon. "There was the reality of combat operations, from the air, sea, and ground. You had the war that the United States saw. Then you had the war that the West saw, the war that the Arab citizen saw, and the war that the rest of world saw. Those five wars were never in alignment. It got to be a very interesting situation to watch them each shift around a little bit."

CNN itself exemplified the fractionalized portrayals of the war. "One fascinating fact is how CNN International was presenting a different image of the war than CNN domestically was," said Geoff Cowan of the University of Southern California Annenberg School. "[News coverage] in the international version was much more challenging and critical," Cowan said, citing different news coverage emanating from CNN's London and Atlanta offices.

The U.N.'s Tharoor agreed: "In New York City, you can get both CNN domestic and CNN International on cable systems, and it's amazing watching the two. By watching CNN International, you can watch what the rest of the world is allowed to see. The most obvious difference is the amount of international content," he said. Tharoor estimated that CNN domestic has about six to eight percent international content except in times of war, whereas CNN International has 70 to 80 percent.

Walter Isaacson, president of the Aspen Institute and former president of CNN, explained that "there are actually 27 CNNs, each with their own editor: CNN Asia, CNN Hong Kong, CNN, etc. Obviously, they speak in different voices and different languages. As with all organizations, CNN has a mix of decentralization and empowerment, although some central standards apply."

Domestically, Isaacson admits, the competitive pressures from MSNBC and Fox may have affected CNN's news coverage. "MSNBC and Fox were shooting above us in the ratings at that time because Fox was putting the flag on the screen" and its news anchors were using "us/them" accounts of the war's progress. "It would be a lie for me to say that that did not affect me when I would watch Fox overtaking us [in the ratings] in a time of crisis."

Because CNN tried to adhere to a more objective perspective in news coverage, it was regarded by many Americans as anti-American, Isaacson said. "Some in the Bush administration thought we were antipatriotic, and most of the world thought we were lapdogs for the administration."

Such disparities of news coverage should not necessarily be troubling, Isaacson said. "We are moving into a world, I hope, where the electronic media is becoming more like the magazine world. There's a 'rack' of different magazines, and you can pick. You lose something of the 'That's the way it is' phenomenon that we used to have in America [when CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite concluded each evening's news broadcast with that phrase].

"Eventually, you may have 15 to 20 media outlets," Isaacson continued. "People who prefer seeing the news from Al-Jazeera will have that opportunity. This is what a free media is all about. It was a cacophony that helped build America in the first place. In a Philadelphia of 12,000 people during Ben Franklin's time, there were five newspapers, each constantly at war with the other and presenting a different political view. That, to me, is a healthier form of journalism than to have one CNN with one voice doing one thing, and trying to decree, 'That's the way it is.'

"I think one of the great dangers of our time is the conglomeration of the media, and the fact that the U.S. government is allowing that to happen more and more," said Isaacson. "Diversity of media is the best safeguard we have for people who don't like what CNN is doing. You have that clicker in your hand, and you can watch Al-Jazeera, Fox, MSNBC, or whatever."

Television and the Aftermath of the U.S.–Iraq War

Once the United States had concluded its major military action in Iraq in May 2003, television assumed a different but equally important role: winning the peace in Iraq. With the Iraqi civil infrastructure and governance in disarray, the United States had a keen interest in restoring basic services to the Iraqi population and in consolidating support and goodwill. A consensus of informed observers is that the opportunity to use television effectively was botched.

"The most charitable way I can think of to describe it is a huge missed opportunity," said William Perry, secretary of defense under President Clinton and now co-director of the Preventive Defense Project at the Center for International Security at Stanford University. "This is not rocket science. We know how to set up television stations and get them operating quickly. But it just seemed to have passed the attention of [the Bush administration] that this would be an important thing to do. As a consequence, all of the Iraqis' information is coming either from Iranian television or from the rumor mill, and the rumor mill says that every bad thing that happens is because of the Americans. It has created a condition that makes it very difficult to govern."

Just before joining the meeting, Secretary Perry, as part of the Aspen Strategy Group, had received a briefing about the Iraqi situation from a special task force that had just returned to the United States after an 11-day mission. Perry reported that the assessment team found the Baghdad public "teetering on the brink," ready to cooperate or resist the occupying forces. "But the team says there still is an opportunity to sort of get them on our side. There is enough residual goodwill that with a little bit of attention to detail and, in particular, substantial attention to communications, they might very well get the Iraqis on our side."

As co-editor (with Matthew Burton) of the Iraq Media Developments Newsletter—"an informal collection of material designed for individuals involved in media assistance and especially in Iraq"—Monroe Price of the Cardozo School of Law is one of the most knowledgeable observers about the Iraqi media today.[4] Price pointed out that the Defense Department had actually paid a Washington, D.C. area consulting firm about $45 million to set up a communications system in Iraq, but "it didn't work." In the meantime, as U.S. forces try to

erect a television presence, the British have been more successful at getting some television broadcasting underway. The U.S./British forces also are trying to reclaim television transmitting equipment that was looted during the war.

Jamie F. Metzl, a senior fellow and coordinator for homeland security programs at the Council on Foreign Relations, agreed that the failure to establish a television presence in Iraq has been a "huge missed opportunity." Moreover, he said, it could have been avoided. "In the Clinton White House, we passed a Presidential Directive [Presidential Decision Directive PDD-68] on exactly this—using information tools in conflict and postconflict environments. It's just such a tragedy that, for whatever reasons, ideological or otherwise, all of the structures that were developed were jettisoned. For whatever reasons, we went into Iraq not armed by our own experiences. It's really very unfortunate."

In the 1990s, Geoff Cowan of USC's Annenberg School served as director of the Voice of America (VOA). Cowan reported that following U.S. combat actions in Haiti and the former Yugoslavia, the Voice of America stepped in with 24-hour-a-day broadcasting to the citizens of those nations. Yet by the beginning of the U.S. war against Iraq, the Voice of America had eliminated its Arabic language service, shifting resources to a youth-oriented program service called Radio Sawa. Philip Merrill, president and chairman of the Export-Import Bank of the United States, decried the absence of a VOA Arab-language service as "simply a disgrace to the U.S. government."

The best way to improve the situation in Iraq is to empower the Iraqis to run their own news media, suggested Mircea Geoana, minister of foreign affairs for Romania. "Give them their own communications show! In Romania, in 1989, the most-watched TV network program was the constitutional assembly debates. Today, you will be either laughing or crying at this fact, because it was ludicrous. But that was the collective concern. The way to communicate to the Iraqis that they are finally taking their own destinies in their own hands is to give them their own show—not only this provisional government they have. Move aggressively toward a constitutional assembly and broadcast it live. Every crazy thing that is said is better than any Voice of America, Defense Department, or Romanian or Polish or Italian or British special forces."

Robert Hormats of Goldman Sachs International agreed with Geoana: "Having TV demonstrate that the Iraqis are beginning to take control of their own destiny, even if it's rancorous and cacphonic, makes sense…. To move from the point where Iraqis say that all their affairs are really being run by the Americans, to the point where they say there's a process underway for running their affairs—even if not right away, so long as they see it moving in the right direction—is a critical psychological variable, from their point of view. They don't believe it yet."

The United Nations has learned this basic lesson in its encounters with Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor, among other nations, said Tharoor, the U.N. Under-Secretary, but "some coalition administrators appeared not to be interested in listening." Tharoor said that it is more important to "develop the media" than to control the media. The West's credibility suffers, he said, when "the liberators, the advocates of freedom, are principally associated with shutting down publications."

Tharoor urged the United States to set up a media center to recruit and train Arabic language journalists. "It's better to train Iraqis to be good journalists than to close down their bad journalism. It's more important to give them an opportunity to have radio, television, and newspapers operating than to pass regulations of censorship." Tharoor considers it "mind-boggling" that so much energy has been spent censoring Iraqi media rather than developing more responsible Iraqi media institutions. But this challenge, he said, "goes to the larger question of the internationalization of Iraq, and the U.S. is not ready to come to grips with the level of internationalization required."

The InfoWar Against Terrorism

If television and radio remain important tools in nation-building—certainly the case in Iraq—the fight against terrorism requires a much more complicated communications strategy. Terrorism is but one of many transnational, sociopolitical networks that have gained new powers and prominence through the Internet. New networking platforms such as websites, e-mail discussion lists, web logs, and e-mail have given transnational virtual communities new tools to recruit members, carry on dialogues, coordinate initiatives, raise funds, and publicly articulate their visions and messages.

To be sure, not all nations allow the free and open use of Internet capabilities. As Shanthi Kalathil and Taylor C. Boas show in their book *Open Networks, Closed Regimes: The Impact of the Internet on Authoritarian Rule* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), some governments in Asia and the Middle East, as well as Cuba, have been fairly successful in limiting the types of information and culture that are available to their populations. "Certain types of Internet use do indeed pose political challenges to authoritarian governments," write Kalathil and Boas, "…[but] other uses of the Internet reinforce authoritarian rule, and many authoritarian regimes are proactively promoting the development of an Internet that serves state-defined interests rather than challenging them."[5]

Yet it is undeniable that communications and culture can no longer be reliably bottled up within national borders; there are simply too many technological points of entry, licit and illicit. Even though many governments have established content-filtering systems and severe sanctions for viewing illicit content, unregulated transnational communications are more feasible than ever.

This new environment of ubiquitous, interactive, and diverse media creates significant new challenges and opportunities for public diplomacy. How can nation-states reach target populations and cultivate their loyalties when the very crucibles of national identity are changing? National identity and communications are becoming less connected to geography, comingling in unpredictable ways with an emerging global culture. (Some U.S. companies have trained Indians to speak with the same accents and jargon as native-born Americans so they can provide cheaper telemarketing and order-taking services.)

In Monroe Price's terms, a stable international market for loyalties is being challenged and transformed. Homogeneous national "mass audiences" are fragmenting into dozens of distinct subaudiences, each relying on their own media conduits and each with their own connections to influences from around the world.

Television and the War Against Terrorism

The rise of new media is not the only force complicating government's strategic communications. Television production and distribution themselves have become more disaggregated and decentralized. John Rendon explained that the television business is much more open and competitive today than before: "The traditional TV networks were vertically integrated, from the network, which made decisions, all the way down to the crew collecting the story. This is no longer the exclusive architecture of television news," said Rendon. Nowadays, television has fragmented into three distinct realms: video collection, video distribution, and broadcasting.

Video "collection" consists of a cottage industry of disparate supply sources. The major collectors include News Force, Reuters TV, and AP TV. "They collect raw video and pass it on to distributors," said Rendon. "Some, like News Force, are in every conflict zone in the world." There are also "unilaterals": people who use MacIntosh computers, G4s and now G5s, and hand-held cameras. Freelancers decide to cover a story and then sell video footage to their agents, who then resell the footage to distributors. There also are "ubiquitous cameras"—camcorders that ordinary people use to shoot video footage of unexpected news events, such as the Concorde air crash in Paris. A motorist with a video camera just happened to be on the scene when that disaster occurred; he later sold his footage to a video collector.

The second level of television, Rendon said, consists of aggregator/distributors. Twelve major aggregator/distributors assemble the raw footage that is produced and packaged by the collectors and sell it globally and locally to different television networks and stations. Essentially, the aggregators/distributors now perform the role formerly played by traditional news networks. Unlike the network system, however, no one in this new "value chain" of news production exerts editorial control. As a result, said Rendon, "you can get a 'contaminated story' into the system very easily. Then it takes a while to readjust it."

The third level of television is the retail level—the local, regional, and national networks that air news and programs directly to viewers. Here, too, there are a proliferation of sources: broadcast, cable, and satellite.

In trying to communicate to traditional enemies located within national borders, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, television remains the U.S. government's primary channel of communications. The wide-open architecture of television news means, however, that it is much more difficult for the U.S. government to reach the proper audiences with effective messages. It also is more difficult for the U.S. government to set the news agenda and respond rapidly to adversaries. Rendon cited a case from the start of the war in which Afghanistani Ambassador Zayeed held a morning news conference that television news crews covered, to which the U.S. government did not respond until eight hours later.

One-way, top-down communication—the hallmark of television as a medium—is not especially effective in fighting terrorism, Rendon conceded. He cited the limitations of the State Department's "Muslim-American family" public service announcements as a case in point. Such broadcasts are simply not enough to persuade skeptical viewers and build credibility for a new message. In any case, communications can do only so much to alter perceptions that are based on actual policies and local realities.

"Our credibility [in the Middle East] has gotten so bad that it's no longer what we say that matters," said Rendon. "It's what we do that matters. We really need to focus on strategic messaging, not just on rhetoric. That means that we can't say, 'We're going to increase investment in information technology in Country X.' It means that the Department of Commerce or one of the three trade-oriented institutions needs to give people access to that technology and make the rhetoric become reality. That's how far we've moved down the spectrum in terms of credibility."

The best way to win the hearts and minds of Arab countries may be through people-to-people contact. Personal relationships tend to build the most positive images of America. After conducting 80 focus groups in several countries, many in the Middle East, the U.S. government found that there are "at least three Americas," reported Rendon: a country whose images are based on personal relationships and experiences; multinational corporations; and U.S. foreign policy.

If people have relatives or friends who had traveled to or studied in the United States, they relate to the United States in personal terms—usually

positively. Other foreigners associate the United States (often negatively) with American corporations operating in the global marketplace (e.g., McDonalds and Coca-Cola). Still other foreign citizens view America through the prism of U.S. policy. "This was a decidedly negative image," said Rendon.

Later focus groups leading up to the liberation of Iraq elicited a fourth image of the United States—that projected by President George W. Bush personally. This image is more negative than the images associated with U.S. policy, said Rendon. Similarly, the United Kingdom often is associated with the image projected by Prime Minister Tony Blair—again, negatively. Following the liberation, these numbers returned to previous levels.

The most promising ways to earn the respect of people in the Middle East is to show them respect, said Rendon. One of the recurrent criticisms of the United States made by people in that region is that they are treated with disrespect or as invisible. Rendon argued that programs that operate outside of government and that foster intercultural communications may help build new bridges of understanding. He cited the "Empower Peace" initiative that opens up conversations between school children in the United States and countries such as Bahrain.

Terrorist Communications Strategies

Of course, fighting terrorism in the Middle East requires much more than skillful public relations and reputation-building initiatives. It also entails direct communications responses to terrorists. Al-Qaeda has shown itself to be a flexible adversary that resourcefully exploits many asymmetric advantages over governments. As a dispersed network of individuals, Al-Qaeda can strike quickly and unexpectedly in countless locations around the world. Its use of the Internet and satellite cellular communications cannot be easily intercepted, and its surprise terrorist attacks are themselves a macabre form of public communications. Osama bin Laden behaves as if he has a deliberate and sophisticated communications strategy, said Rendon; indeed, Al-Qaeda is thought to have access to television production facilities somewhere in the Persian Gulf region.

"I think that the senior leadership of Al-Qaeda understands the media," said Rendon, "I do think their communications have been disrupted, or at least I think it's harder for them to do it." Bin Laden is but one instance of "super-empowered individuals" that the Internet has made possible. (Other examples include Matt Drudge, Michael Moore, and numerous "bloggers.") Remarkably, bin Laden is able to communicate at will to a global audience from secret, isolated locations.

How can the U.S. government and other governments deal with terrorist communications strategies? Part of the answer is better strategic communications; part of the answer is more effective tactical responses.

The framing of a government response matters a great deal, said Rendon. "In Indonesia [following the Bali terrorist attack], focus groups told us that the actions taken by Al-Qaeda do not represent 'our Islam'" and that the United States would be justified retaliating. When the U.S. response was cast as a way to protect innocent men, women, and children—rather than as vengeance or violence for violence's sake—it was more readily accepted as justified.

"Every time we take a military action and someone dies, we are potentially producing ten or fifteen other people who take up arms later," explained Rendon. "You can't get into the cycle of violence in a way that reconstitutes an enemy force." He said that such a dynamic can be avoided by "bounding your actions" with justifications that resonate with the public.

Nabil Fahmy, the Egyptian ambassador to the United States, cautioned, however, "You're not going to win a campaign against terrorists if you get engaged in a debate with them over the arguments they raise, which are actually your arguments, not theirs. Terrorists always choose legitimate arguments. Baader-Meinhof, the Red Brigade, the Red Army, and others raised national causes, big government, big business—all of which are legitimate issues being debated among civilized society." Fahmy said that it is not productive to get into debating issues with terrorists, as the West often does, because—unlike the nonterrorist who abides by the norms of a civic polity—the terrorist who disagrees or loses the argument simply resorts to violence. The point is to win the public, not the argument.

One way to win the public more effectively, counseled Fahmy, is to recast the perceived battle. "This is not a war of the United States versus terrorism," he said, "but a war of the civilized world against terrorism. You must be truly able to make the case that it's not the U.S. alone against terrorism but the entire civilized community." That means that groups of nations must act collectively to fight terrorism so that terrorism is not perceived simply as a war against the United States, he said.

In terms of tactical responses to terrorists, participants pointed out that governments often are not prepared to act quickly. For example, within 15 minutes after the Tupac Amaru terrorist group took over the Japanese embassy in Lima, Peru, the group posted a planning video of the operation on a website based in Canada—a web address that was soon listed on the websites of CNN, the BBC, and other news organizations. With this timely website, Tupac Amaru proceeded to build a community of interest around their cause. It took the Peruvian and Japanese governments four months to put up their own web response. The point, said John Rendon, is that "there needs to be time-sensitive targeting of information because the adversary is a lot more nimble and clearly more rapid than the United States government and a number of our coalition partners."

Rapid response in communications is especially important because there is likely to be a technological "arms race" in communications in the near future. A new generation of satellite telephones that are not susceptible to interception is expected to reach the market soon. It could be six months or more before this window of vulnerability is closed.

The Importance of Credibility in the "Long War" Against Terrorism

How governments respond to terrorism depends a great deal on how they perceive the problem: Is it a strategic messaging challenge ("getting our message out")? A skillfully crafted set of government policies? Or a long-term struggle for moral credibility in international affairs?

Although the former approaches are certainly important, a consensus of roundtable participants was that the most important factor in fighting terrorism is credibility. If foreign populations are going to become more sympathetic and cooperative with the United States, they will have to be convinced that American initiatives will indeed serve

their best interests. The fight against terrorism therefore is likely to be a "long war" for credibility, not a military or political battle for land or resources.

The problem with much of the talk about strategic communications, said Amre Moussa of the Arab League, is that much of it reflects the concerns of the institutional establishment, not the public. "How the general public receives the messages we are talking about is a totally different story." Moussa said that more attention must be paid to "how the audience gets the messages that you are sending…. There is a lack of credibility when it comes to the messages sent by the industrialized world to developing nations."

The United States and other industrialized nations do not have great credibility in their dealings with the Middle East and many developing nations, said Moussa. He speculated that this lack of credibility might have to do with inaccurate factual claims (such as the discredited U.S. claim that Iraq had tried to buy "yellow cake" bomb-making uranium from Nigeria). He also believes, however, that the public has become more discriminating in how it treats government and media assertions. "It is not easy to send different messages to different audiences all over the world," he said, because messages to one audience are likely to be heard by others; double-talk will be found out. Once inaccuracies or fabrications are discovered, it is difficult for a government or an organization to recover credibility.

Speaking as the former director of the VOA, Geoff Cowan said that an organization's "only real currency is credibility. It's the only thing it has going for it. Once your credibility is shot, you can't have an impact in the world." Cowan notes that the law governing the VOA includes a charter that requires its broadcasters to "tell stories that are accurate, balanced, and comprehensive, so that we are not thought of as an agency involved in 'spin.'"

Cowan insisted that government agencies such as the Voice of America must be accurate and balanced to get a message across. One example came in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, which many American news sources (but not the VOA) initially blamed on foreign terrorists. The VOA dealt with this issue in its Farsi-language broadcasts to Iran by profiling an Iranian-born American who was an emergency

room doctor at an Oklahoma City hospital. "If you hadn't reported [discrimination against Arabs], you'd never be credible," said Cowan. "But Iranians could relate to a man who was speaking to them in Farsi, who was from Iran and who was living in Oklahoma City and was a part of the solution [helping victims of the bombing]." Interestingly, Cowan said, one of the main problems facing the VOA today is complaints by U.S. government officials and U.S. allies "who don't want a story told in a particular way."

For Jamie Metzl of the Council on Foreign Relations, the key to earning credibility is showing respect and allowing others to speak in their own voice. "We need to have faith in our own values as we respond. There will always be a tension between trying to cram our views down people's throats and creating avenues for dialogue, which may allow things we don't really like to come back our way. It's challenging, as in any democratic process. We have to have faith that over time the values of democracy and openness will prevail. Then we'll get a more engaged, globalized world in which people feel that they're stakeholders, not just observers."

Strategies for Closing the Credibility Gap

Roundtable participants offered a range of suggestions for how the United States might close its credibility gap with Middle East peoples. Suggestions include:

Understand audiences on their own terms. One reason Middle Eastern leaders are so effective in presenting their point of view, said Robert Hormats of Goldman Sachs International, is that they know their audience. "When Osama bin Laden used metaphors and historical references about 90 years of humiliation, everyone in the Middle East understood what he was talking about," said Hormats. "He was digging deep into the history of the region, a feeling that people have been badly treated, that they have been victims of imperialism. Unless American spokespeople can understand what is inside the people of the Middle East, what really is troubling them—unless you can begin a dialogue with those feelings—it's very hard to have an open and constructive dialogue."

The opposite is also true: Other nations need to learn about American society in a deeper way. Ambassador Fahmy reported that

was why a leading Egyptian university in Cairo recently started an American Studies department—so that Egyptians could begin to better understand American culture.

Don't just communicate; actively listen and engage. "Unless you can listen to what concerns people, rather than what you think should concern them, you can't succeed," warned Ambassador Fahmy. Hormats agreed: "Leadership begins with listening. America has missed or neglected that point for some time."

Listening is not just a "nice" thing to do but a necessity in the networked environment, argued Metzl. "In a networked environment, we have to respond in a 'network way.' That means developing credibility and cooperative relationships that allow you to use network tools." Instead of trying to dictate a policy or point of view, for example, the more effective long-term strategy is to develop relationships of trust and reciprocity.

Such relationships, however, can emerge only if government policies honor the sovereign voice of citizens. That is why the U.S. government invested in indigenous, independent media in Bosnia, said Metzl: It helped shape an information environment in which multiple, autonomous voices could be heard.

If citizens can express their own concerns through public media, they can begin to make their governments more responsive and dispel their frustrations, said Hormats. Free expression and accessible media are critical to building honest relationships, civic participation, and social well-being.

Rather than trying to shut down access to the media—in Iraq or elsewhere—it is more advisable, counseled Zoë Baird, president of the Markle Foundation, to nurture an open, accessible media environment. Investing in Internet capacity in Indonesia could help fight terrorism, she said, by opening up a new public space for discussing terrorism. Baird tells government officials that they need to hear from mothers about how their children are being recruited as terrorists.

Anticipate how the United States will be depicted. Several roundtable participants noted how many major American events such as the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City and the Academy Awards ceremony gave little deliberate thought about the images of America that they

projected to global audiences. As platforms for public diplomacy, both represent missed opportunities.

"At the conclusion of the Olympics," said Geoff Cowan, quoting *The New York Times,* "'What began in splendor and spiritual unity at the opening ceremony on February 8th is ending with charges of North American bias and vehement anti-American fervor.' *The Washington Post* wrote, 'The Winter Games finished sour and ugly, with everything under protest and just about every kind of modern social ill on parade.'"

Although such events cannot be strictly controlled, said Cowan, it also is true that little advance attention was given to the opportunities for public diplomacy that the Winter Olympics offered. Indeed, the Olympics were so disconnected from U.S. policy that its organizers asked Madeleine Albright, then U.S. Secretary of State, to carry the Olympic torch for a ceremonial distance while wearing a running out-fit made in Myanmar—a nation against which Albright had personally instigated sanctions! (She did not wear the outfit.)

Cowan noted that the Academy Awards ceremony, which is watched by hundreds of millions of people around the globe, ignored a similar opportunity to present a more attractive and diverse American face to the world. The show featured a Woody Allen film tribute to September 11 victims and New York City but made no attempt to suggest that the entire world might properly mourn the tragedy. No Arab Americans were primarily depicted in the film or featured in the awards ceremony or performances.

Make positive counter-propositions. Violence is symptomatic of a lack of positive alternatives, said Mircea Geoana. One reason governments cannot connect with the public is that they have no heroes to celebrate in the fight against terrorism. They tend not to have attractive counter-propositions to address poverty, economic development, education, and religious fundamentalism. Although poverty is not "the cause" of terrorism, roundtable participants agreed, it does provide a fertile ground for terrorism to flourish.

If the United States and world bodies began to focus credibly on humanitarian and economic development issues, they could redirect public frustrations toward some more constructive goals. Beyond addressing poverty, said Queen Noor, the most urgent priority is to give

people a real voice in their future so that they feel a stake in getting involved positively. Public anger and frustration are likely to intensify in nations whose governments are insulated from public opinion.

Facilitate person-to-person contact. Echoing a point made earlier by John Rendon, cultural exchange and interpersonal encounters are a way to have genuine dialogues about people's feelings and world views. Jerry Murdock, co-founder of Insight Venture Partners, a venture capital firm, noted that "while media has helped create a global community, it has also warped our views of each other and exaggerated those views."

"We have to understand each other better," agreed Ambassador Fahmy. "We have to speak out better. We have to engage." Fahmy believes this sort of interpersonal exchange and enlightenment is less likely to occur through the media, given its captivity to ratings and profits, than through person-to-person contact.

The Rising Power of NGOs in a Networked Environment

In some ways, nothing has changed in the new media environment. National governments remain the dominant political actors on the world stage. Television and radio remain the dominant shapers of public opinion.

In other significant ways, however, the exercise of power by these established institutions has become more problematic and complicated by the networked environment. The emergence of unregulated, unmediated channels of global communications has introduced a potent new force into international politics and culture. Although the implications of electronic networking are not fully understood, it is clear that the Internet is spawning new social and political configurations of people. In diverse ways, this phenomenon often shifts certain powers to political newcomers.

The "Second Superpower"

Citizens and nongovernmental organizations are two of the key beneficiaries of Internet empowerment. This theme received a great deal of public attention in an essay, "The Second Superpower Rears Its Beautiful Head," by James F. Moore, that was widely circulated on the Internet following its debut in March 2003. Moore, a fellow at the Berkman Center at Harvard Law School, wrote:

> There is an emerging second superpower, but it is not a nation. Instead, it is a new form of international player, constituted by the "will of the people" in a global social movement. The beautiful but deeply agitated face of this second superpower is the worldwide peace campaign, but the body of the movement is made up of millions of people concerned with a broad agenda that includes social development, environmentalism, health, and human rights. This movement has a surprisingly agile and muscular body of citizen activists who identify their interests with world society as a whole—and who recognize that at a fundamental level we are all one.

Moore cites NGOs such as Amnesty International and Doctors Without Borders/Medicins Sans Frontieres, as well as other manifestations of "emergent democracy": the coalition of anti-landmine activists that arose in the early 1990s; the coalition of NGOs that organized to push the Kyoto treaty on global climate change; the peace movement that quickly arose to try to stop the U.S. war against Iraq; and Moveon.org, the progressive activist group in the United States.

What each of these phenomena shares is a sophistication in using the Internet to execute "a kind of near-instantaneous, mass improvisation of activist initiatives," in Moore's words.

The rise of the "second superpower" ratifies an observation made by Jessica T. Mathews in an important 1997 article in *Foreign Affairs* magazine. Mathews wrote: "The absolutes of the Westphalian system—territorially fixed states where everything of value lies within some state's borders; a single, secular authority governing each territory and representing it outside its borders; and no authority above states—are all dissolving. Increasingly, resources and threats that matter, including money, information, pollution, and popular culture, circulate and shape lives and economies with little regard for political boundaries."

There have always been new voices and transnational activists seeking to challenge the political status quo. Today's networked NGOs are different in that their voices are being heard. Virtual communities of citizens are more politically consequential than ever before. This power

stems from the new technologies and new patterns of social organization such technologies enable. "Prior to the existence of the technology we now have, NGOs had a much harder time finding each other," noted Geoff Cowan of the Annenberg School. "They couldn't communicate in real time with each other the way they do now."

The growing political power of NGOs—largely a function of the new communications platforms—is starting to batter the great edifice of international politics. "One of the great problems of all cartels," said Monroe Price of Cardozo Law School, "is the danger of a new voice." In international politics, said Price, NGOs and corporations have always been regarded as "secondary players in the market for loyalty."

As NGOs become more powerful players in their own right, however, they are assuming two significant roles, noted Price: as *partners of governments,* supporting and implementing their policies in one way or another, and as *sovereign players in the market for loyalty,* independent of governments. These are two distinct but overlapping roles.

Governments are finding that NGOs often serve as useful proxies for them, helping governments achieve ends they cannot pursue directly or enabling governments to enter the market for loyalty (by affiliating with an influential NGO). Many NGOs, however, also are discovering that they want more than proximity to power; they wish to act as "second superpowers" in their own right and are therefore wary of allowing themselves to be co-opted as mere tools of government.

However the choice of roles is negotiated, the real power of super-empowered NGOs may be more subtle. By serving as a host for new narratives in international politics and policy, NGOs are altering the cultural context in which storytelling occurs, observed Price. The clash of narratives in international debates is not monopolized by governments; now NGOs are able to put forward competing narratives that cannot simply be ignored. Governments must grapple with alternative stories and empirical evidence if they are to maintain their credibility. The issue for governments is not simply "How do we get our message out?" but "How do we advance our interests in a dynamic environment of many competing national interests and NGO voices?"

In a sense, the very term "nongovernmental organization" is a misnomer, participants pointed out. Governments invented the term to

justify excluding civil-society groups from the policymaking process. To speak of NGOs in a traditional sense, therefore, is to understate the actual role played by NGOs today—as influential, international, citizen-driven pressure groups.

The Symbiotic Relations of NGOs and Governments

If governments are sometimes constrained in what they can do without the support or acquiescence of NGOs, it also is true that NGOs can do only so much without a government ally.

This history is not entirely new, of course. At its most extreme, it can be seen in the ways in which the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for years used civil society institutions to carry out propaganda functions during the Cold War. What may be changing is how more civil society groups are acquiring a moral authority and financial autonomy of their own and how new sources of financial support are materializing. "In some respect, philanthropist George Soros has been doing what the CIA tried to do in another era—building up civil society organizations in a way that the United States government couldn't do by itself," noted Cowan.

In the 1990s the Canadian government entered into one of the most extensive and sophisticated collaborations between a government and NGOs. The Canadian foreign minister at that time, Lloyd Axworthy, told the roundtable how he pioneered a new national communications strategy that worked closely with NGOs to achieve mutually desired goals.

Axworthy's first inkling that NGOs could be a valuable advocacy resource for the Canadian government came when, as the minister for human resources, he attended several major U.N. conferences: "At the Beijing Women's Conference in 1995, I learned how important networked communications was becoming in mobilizing broad-based public opinion around the world. In Beijing, the women's organizations used cell phones and fax machines to totally and completely outmaneuver the government. We came in with our traditional agendas and briefing notes, and all of a sudden found ourselves short-circuited by very quick, effective communications by feminist organizations around the world. The same thing happened in Denmark at a social conference."

A great many of the issues being championed by NGOs are not nationally based issues but more transcendent global concerns. They

tend to involve threats to individual rights, health, and security. On the basis of these insights, Axworthy developed what he calls a "human security strategy" for Canada's foreign policy: "We began to establish our own sort of edge—politically, internationally—on helping to develop treaties, institutions, practices, conventions, rules, and norms to protect individuals. We thought that the best way of protecting individuals is to establish a broader *collective* system of protection because we are, after all, becoming globalized as well."

The Canadian government built a strategy of working with newly emerging civil society groups to define and design a joint agenda. It then worked with these groups to mobilize public support. The first major test of this strategy was Canada's advocacy—in collaboration with a coalition of NGOs coordinated by Jody Williams, Bobby Muller, and others—for an international treaty to ban landmines.

"It was one of the most powerful mobilizations of people ever," said Axworthy. "I will never forget getting a call from a foreign minister in Europe who, with great indignation, said, 'Turn off the machines!' I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'Our assembly is debating the treaty and we're getting faxes from around the world!' Every country was being besieged. He said, 'How do you turn off the machine once you've got it started?' I said, 'Well, it's beyond my control.'"

Axworthy explained, "Our objective was to influence the behavior of the publics around the world so that they would influence *their* decision makers." Using the same sort of partnership with NGOs, Canada subsequently sought to ratify protocols to protect children in war and to establish an International Criminal Court. Canada has also used Internet-based networks to establish a whistleblower program for human rights in a wide variety of countries, which channels information to the United Nations Human Rights Commission. The network acts not just as an international citizen lobby but as a decentralized force of political accountability.

Axworthy believes that similar electronic networks could be fashioned to solve other global problems—a theme explored by Jean-Francois Rischard, vice president of the World Bank, in his book *High Noon: Twenty Global Problems, Twenty Years to Solve Them* (Basic Books, 2003). Already Canada has made some experimental ventures in

this direction. It established a "Connectivity" program that equipped and trained Canadian young people to communicate via the Internet with teenagers in the Caribbean, Sierra Leone, Colombia, and Mozambique. The initial goal was to open up new conversations about illegal drug use and trafficking.

"What I found fascinating," said Axworthy, "was that once they moved beyond the reality of the problems, they also began to bond as young people and talk about schools and music. Kids in Sierra Leone with their hands cut off were communicating with kids from the suburbs of Winnipeg! I began to recognize that the Internet is a very powerful tool for bringing people together and generating a common set of values."

Yet some roundtable participants questioned how transformative NGOs can be in the networked environment on their own, without a government ally. "There's only so much you can do with e-mails and faxes until you have the government of Canada, say, actually agreeing to negotiate a treaty," said the U.N.'s Shashi Tharoor. "Similarly, you may have tremendous success in mobilizing support for peace marches, but these groups had zero impact in actually preventing the war in Iraq. So is this a communications mechanism as a vehicle of protest, or can it be channeled into constructive change? I think the jury is still out."

An important caveat, said Mircea Geoana, the Romanian minister of foreign affairs, is the existence of civil-society norms in the first place. Given its communist history, said Geoana, Romania has no tradition of a "civic fabric." Without civic norms, it makes more sense to bribe a government official than to start a trade association or civic organization. In such a climate, it is hard to cultivate the norms of an open civil society. Nonetheless, Geoana said, Romania is "slowly seeing a transfer of know-how from Western NGOs that have been active in my country."

The real quandary, Axworthy said by way of recapitulation, is, "How do you take this new technology and begin to develop new kinds of global connections?" The new global activism being led by NGOs "is not theoretical," he said. "It is happening. It is a counterforce. A fourth way, if you like. As a politician, I saw it emerging. If you're going to deal with global issues, you've got to define a common language and vocabulary for that perspective and not fall back into regional viewpoints."

Hierarchies and Networks: An Unresolved Tension

The symbiosis of governments and NGOs can be understood more abstractly as a clash and collaboration of two modes of organization—hierarchy and network. Nation-states, government agencies, and corporations tend to be hierarchical organizations. In contrast, the new communities of shared interest emerging on the Internet—as well as many international NGOs—tend to be networks.

Hierarchies and networks have their own cognitive sense of order and change. Each generates information, sustains themselves, and behaves in different ways. Hierarchies tend to be the traditional structures through which power is exercised. It is not surprising, then, that the decentralized, "out-of-control" power of virtual social networks seems strange and alien indeed.

Networks and Social Identity

One of the key powers of networks is their role in helping to organize and foster personal identity. "So much of communication is really based on a Cartesian point of view: 'I think, therefore I am,'" said John Seely Brown, former director of Xerox PARC. "But in fact, communication is more like, 'We participate, therefore we are.' By participating, our whole sense of self comes into being."

Brown argued that identity and meaning really emerge from social membership in communities. The construction of communities is part and parcel of constructing personal identity. "I become someone as I enter and join a community of practice," said Brown. "In one sense, it's an individual engagement in the construction of the community. On the other hand, the grand narrative of that community shapes how individual identity gets conditioned."

Stories can be powerful vessels for constituting community and identity. It was pointed out, for example, that during the long resistance of the East Timorese to the Indonesian occupation, an online community of East Timorese exiles kept alive the vision of and conversation about an independent state. By mobilizing the commitment and energies of dispersed East Timorese, this narrative literally helped create the "imagined community" of that nation as it later came to be.

The social dynamics for creating identity and meaning are especially germane to the Internet, which is an incredibly powerful vehicle for creating grand narratives and constructing community. Indeed, it is useful to regard the Internet as "a platform for social software," said Brown. "The Internet offers all kinds of new ways to create memberships, to participate, and to construct grand narratives." Among the "social softwares" that the Internet now enables are instant messaging, web logs, meta-sites that index web logs, open source software, collaborative "wikis" (server software that allows "open editing" of shared documents), and massive multiplayer games—not to mention more traditional genres such as websites and e-mail discussion lists.

These new vehicles of communication are noteworthy for their role in forging identity and meaning, said Brown. "I draw a distinction between *mass culture* and *popular culture*," he said. In mass culture, meaning is generated and disseminated centrally, through television, radio, and film, for example. In popular culture, however, meaning is actively generated through a dynamic social process in which everyone can participate. People appropriate and change meaning as it suits their needs, tastes, and circumstances—a process that cultural anthropologists have called *bricolage*. The new forms of social participation and collaboration enabled by the Internet are creating new structures of identity and meaning.

How Context Creates Meaning

Bricolage implies a radically different strategy for "getting a message out." In the mass media, context is famously irrelevant. (A memorable book about the social vacuity of television, by George W. S. Trow, is titled *Within the Context of No Context.*) In Internet communities, however, *context* is supremely important. In popular culture, the social context of a message—the implicit meanings that the receiver brings to the message and the timely circumstances that inform the meaning—is at least as important as denotative meanings.

For example, attempts to communicate "safer sex" messages directly to the public through public service announcements have been far less effective than safer sex messages embedded into television soap operas. Why? It seems that when viewers are empathizing with soap opera characters,

they are more receptive to a safer sex message: The message is more compelling. The context, a soap opera, gives the message greater urgency and credibility than a heavy-handed public health advisory, which is perceived as propaganda. Meaning resides not in the sender's message alone but equally in the receiver of the message and the context in which it is received.

Even the subconscious plays a greater role in generating meaning than we generally acknowledge, said Brown: "One reason we have a sense of information overload is because everything is designed in terms of cognition," explained Brown. "But our periphery works subconsciously. Looking at a computer screen, we feel fatigued. Riding a motorcycle through the Aspen mountains, we feel wonderful. Yet we're processing much, much more data [riding a motorcycle]. What's happening? It has something to do with the way the subconscious and the periphery work.

"I bring this up because we never talk about the subconscious social mind," said Brown, "yet the interplay between the subconscious and the conscious is very important." For example, the "lateral connections among web logs"—the extensive cross-linking among blogs in a given subject area—might be regarded as the collective subconscious at work. Similarly, Brown said, "meaning hovers around the edge of online communities such as massively multiplayer games. The narratives that occur on the fringes of the cognitive interchanges are the glue of meaning."

Because identity and meaning reside in such subconscious, peripheral realms, said Brown, it is important for software interfaces to be designed in ways that honor the subconscious mind, not just the conscious, cognitive mind. The real durability of a community may lie with the embedded meaning that resides in the subconscious mind.

"You may blow up a leader of a network, but the grand narrative continues on," said Brown. "Maybe the leader isn't any longer important. Maybe the leader *slows* the narrative." To understand and connect with deeply rooted social meanings that are sustained by online technologies, we must pay much more attention to the "social physics" of online communities, Brown advised.

Such an approach might have spurred second thoughts about the State Department's widely criticized ad campaign featuring a "typical" Muslim American family, which seemed to ignore Arab cultural sensibilities

abroad. Accordingly, many Muslims regarded it as propaganda—a transparent artifact of mass culture.

A key problem in communicating with other cultures, added Brown, is understanding the fundamental difference between a "guilt culture" and a "shame culture." When someone behaves irresponsibly, the grand narratives of some cultures ratify feelings of guilt, whereas other cultures uphold shame as the appropriate response. This major cultural divide in psychology and intersubjective relations has real implications for the global economy and politics, said Brown, citing a book by C. Fred Alford, *Think No Evil: Korean Values in the Age of Globalization* (Cornell University Press, 1999).

The United States and Israel are guilt cultures, for example, whereas South Korea and many Middle Eastern countries are shame cultures. These are important facts in learning how to "read" subjective outlooks and cultural dynamics in other countries. "We must stop seeing the world through our own conceptual lenses to understand this reality," said Brown. "This issue transcends the issue of power, which most people focus on. As a result, they often miss the bigger picture of how subjective meaning is made."

As transnational communications become more diversified and interactive, it becomes even more important to come to terms with cultural misunderstanding. "Communication is moving beyond one-way broadcast and even dialogue to new and different kinds of participation," said Sergey Brin, co-founder and president of technology for Google, the Internet search engine. "As we go forward, we have to think about what those new forms of participation might mean to public discourse."

What Are the Principles of Networks?

If the creation of meaning and identity through electronic networks has its own dynamics—distinct from those of the mass media—and if networks seem destined to become a powerful cultural force in the 21st century, it becomes imperative to learn more about the organizing principles of virtual social networks.

Several recent books explore the properties of emergent networked organizations. *Smart Mobs,* by Howard Rheingold (Perseus, 2003), describes networking systems as "technologies of cooperation" that

make it easier for people to come together to pursue shared goals. Many new genres of online "commons" are proving to be more efficient, fast-paced, and socially convivial than market structures. WiFi Internet access, wireless telephony, and peer-to-peer networks are shifting power to decentralized "smart mobs" animated by timely streams of location-specific information.

Another book, *Linked: The New Science of Networks*, by physicist Albert László Barabási (Perseus, 2002), examines the mathematical principles that seem to govern many virtual social networks and their different topologies. One of the more fascinating phenomena Barabási describes is the prevalence of "power law" distribution curves in networked environments.

The distribution of linked nodes on the World Wide Web is not entirely random, for example. Nor do these nodes follow a "bell curve" distribution in which most nodes have roughly the same number of links to others (a "bulging median"). Instead, the linkages of nodes in networks tend to follow a *"power law" distribution curve,* often known as the 80/20 rule. In general, roughly 20 percent of the nodes in a network tend to account for 80 percent of the links. The power law rule predicts that most nodes will have only a few links to other sites while a few highly connected hubs will provide the majority of links.

The prevalence of power law distribution curves on networks, Barabási writes, "forces us to abandon the idea of a scale, or a characteristic node. In a continuous hierarchy there is no single node which we could pick out and claim to be characteristic of all the nodes. There is no intrinsic scale in these networks." Because of this topology, networks tend to be dominated by a few influential hubs that exercise "winner-take-all" prerogatives (think Amazon.com and eBay).

Another much-remarked phenomena of networks is the "six degrees of separation" rule, which purports that everyone is linked to everyone else through no more than six separate linkages via friends, relatives, and colleagues. A renowned play by John Guare, *Six Degrees of Separation,* popularized this idea, but the "small world phenomenon" has received serious and sophisticated treatment by mathematicians and physicists, most notably in Duncan J. Watts' *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age* (W. W. Norton, 2003).

Taken together, the new analytic tools being developed to explain network principles are giving rise to a new literature on social network theory. Some experts in social software argue, however, that the empirical sociology of networks is more complex than the mathematical models suggest. The processes by which identity, trust, and social reciprocity are forged in the online world need much more empirical study.

Based on their own observations, roundtable participants proffered their own theories about the growing tensions between networks and hierarchies in the conduct of international relations. Jamie Metzl of the Council on Foreign Relations proposed some general lessons of the information age:

> • Networks trump hierarchies.

> • You must give up control to get it back.

> • Soft power trumps hard power,

> • Unless hard power decides otherwise.

These principles imply that governments ought to try to use the network architecture to "turn everyone into diplomats," said Metzl. For example, "If you're a small country and can't afford a foreign ministry, another way of engaging a population would be to build communities of engagement at all levels of your society." Instead of states interacting with states, or states interacting with foreign populations, the idea is to encourage subgroups within states—lawyers, judges, others—to interact with their counterparts elsewhere, without a significant state role. This is precisely what Lloyd Axworthy sought to do as foreign minister of Canada by instigating Internet conversations among schoolchildren in different nations.

Another implication of these principles, said Metzl, is to identify the key nodes of influence in global networks, so that you can try to engage them constructively. Years ago, American embassies should have tried to identify key reporters for Al-Jazeera, the Arab-language television network, and cultivated personal relationships with them, he said.

This example points to a larger problem: the failure of the State Department and other government agencies to train and reward diplomats for using networking tools effectively. The current incentive-and-

reward structures favor diplomats who are skilled at working in a hierarchical system. In hierarchies, power tends to be centralized at the core, whereas in networks, power tends to gravitate and flourish on the edges. Metzl hastened to add that it is not an either/or proposition—networks or hierarchies—but more of a loose integration. The point is that hierarchical organizations would do well to take network principles into greater account: "When governments begin to internalize the lessons of networks," he said, "they will become more effective."

It is worth pondering that networks are not simply anarchic and random but actually contain deep but often-veiled structures that enable them to function effectively. One reason the Internet is not inherently democratizing is precisely because there are hierarchical design architectures—not to mention political and economic structures—that affect its use. There is speculation that the Al-Qaeda terrorist network is not really as decentralized and autonomous as it initially seemed—but also is hierarchical in important respects.

Even the ultimate open network—the online auction site eBay, with 80 million registered users and 8 million weekly users—is based on a subtle but powerful hierarchical structure, said John Kunzweiler, a partner at Accenture. "About 80 percent of the dollar value of things sold on eBay is sold by about one to two percent of the sellers," he said. "The hierarchy knows that you have to make it look incredibly fluid, but the economic power of eBay is actually very centered on a handful of people."

"My point is, we bounce back and forth on the issue of networks or hierarchies," said Kunzweiler. "What I've learned is that networks make the influence of hierarchies much more subtle—and in a lot of ways, far more powerful than explicit or overt hierarchies."

Yet networks and hierarchies rarely meld seamlessly into each other. The more common spectacle is a vivid confrontation. The Recording Industry Association of America's campaign against peer-to-peer file sharing of music is a case in point. In such instances, said Monroe Price, hierarchies exhibit a classic pattern of behavior in response to network insurgency: increased surveillance, intimidation, new uses of state power, stepped-up public education, and propaganda. To help mitigate such polarization, John Seely Brown said, there is an urgent need for "new formal and informal 'negotiation structures' that can bring networks and hierarchies into a new alignment."

Networks and Soft Power

If the interplay between hierarchies and networks is complicated and subtle, so is its analogue: the relationship between hard power and soft power. It is not a bipolar struggle with one being stronger than the other; their powers are qualitatively *different.*

"I disagree that networks trump hierarchies," said Shashi Tharoor of the United Nations. "Hierarchies are still—regrettably perhaps—able to trump networks." Shanti Kalathil of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace agreed: "State structures are extremely effective in trumping networks precisely because they're set up to do so. They have methods at their disposal that networks don't have."

Of course, Metzl did concede that soft power trumps hard power only as long as hard power chooses not to act otherwise. This observation, however, begs the question of how the two types of power differ in nature and how they interact.

Soft power is not inconsequential. Although it may not be decisive in specific, short-term circumstances, soft power can be highly influential in a nation's ability to exercise its hard power. A case in point is the United States' attempts to persuade the Turkish government to allow it to use Turkish military bases to invade Iraq. The Turkish government, responding to anti-American domestic sentiment, refused.

Even when hard power "wins" through direct military might, soft power has its own potency over the long term, noted Geoff Cowan of the Annenberg School. He cited Jonathan Schell's book *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence and the Will of the People* (Metropolitan, 2003), which describes numerous instances in which hard power conquered a population or suppressed a movement but over the long term was unable to prevail against "the will of the people." Recent examples are the former Soviet states and Eastern Europe.

The interplay between networks and hierarchies, and soft power and hard power, has another parallel in the interplay between social norms and laws. "It's very hard to have a legal system if you don't have norms," said John Seely Brown, "and it's very hard to have norms that stay in place without some legal system. So you can't say that one trumps the other, necessarily. There are powerful synergies between the two."

Looking at social norms, especially as they operate in a networked environment, reveals a whole range of phenomena that matter a great deal—but often are neglected. "The CEOs of most companies do not begin to understand the importance of the social fabric of the corporation," said Brown. "Yet these dynamics have a lot to do with how corporations work and don't work. We need to pay more attention to that social structure."

Understanding social networks may also help explain why American soft power is declining among so many foreign populations. "Visa applications to the United States are down from 10 million to 8 million," said Cowan, "and [the number of] people coming to the United States [is] down from 7 million to 5.6 million…. Furthermore, the people who are coming to the U.S. are finding it a lot less easy to come here. Every one of these people has a story to tell about why they aren't coming to the U.S., and those stories are being told through communication networks. It would be interesting to know how the 'six degrees of separation' phenomenon is spreading word of their experiences and affecting how America is being seen today."

Many participants ratified the existence of this problem. The harassment that people experience in getting visas, the frustration of students who can no longer get government permission to study in the United States, the visiting professionals and academics who cannot attend important meetings—"all of this is having a profound effect in the Arab world, where these connections, academic and institutional, are more important now than ever before," said Queen Noor.

Tharoor put it more bluntly: "Can you imagine what's going to happen to your soft power as fewer people can have the experience of living in the United States and appreciate it?" Ironically, the new barriers to foreign students and visitors have less to do with fighting terrorism than with inefficiencies in processing visa applications. Yet if fighting terrorism is indeed going to be a "long war," such people-to-people opportunities will be more important than ever.

Conclusion

The complexities of carrying out international relations in the age of the Internet argue for humility. We know very little. We have much more to learn about the actual dynamics of social, political, and economic life in the electronically integrated world that is now emerging.

Nevertheless, we can identify some provisional paradigms and principles. It is clear that the conduct of foreign relations, military actions, and public diplomacy must more aggressively grapple with the powerful role played by communications. Governments seeking to "get a message out" must understand the burgeoning diversity of media delivery systems, each with their own social dynamics and viewer/user communities. They must understand that transnational communications are expanding, outside the control of governments.

As torrents of new information and cultural flows leap national borders with ease, the established order of international politics is changing profoundly. Social identity and political affiliation can "go global," recruiting loyalists from any number of geographic locations. Diasporic ethnic communities and activist movements can create global public platforms from which to advocate their political interests and maintain their loyalists. Governments that try to pursue traditional communications strategies are finding themselves outmaneuvered by NGOs, terrorist organizations, and activist networks that more skillfully use network tools.

Although nation-states and the mass media remain the dominant players in international politics, the exercise of their power has become more problematic and complex. The new media have empowered a wide array of "bottom-up" newcomers to participate directly in politics and culture. For the most part, clashes between the newcomers and established powers have been episodic and inconclusive, so it is premature to identify patterns that will govern future engagements. Yet it is clear enough that the Internet and other digital technologies are greatly intensifying tensions—between hierarchical organizations and networks; between hard power and soft power; and between legal systems and social norms.

Successful future strategies in international relations are likely to revolve around these antinomies. It remains an open question, however, who will be the first to understand these deep structural tensions and orchestrate an effective rapprochement. A great deal rides on meeting this challenge.

Notes

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APPENDIX

Twelfth Annual Aspen Institute
Roundtable on Information Technology

Navigating the Market for Loyalties: Communications Strategies for Global Influence

July 30–August 2, 2003 • Aspen, Colorado

Roundtable Participants

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Zoë Baird
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The John and Mary R. Markle
  Foundation

Larry Bettino
Managing Director
Warburg Pincus

David Bollier
Independent Journalist
  and Consultant

Sergey Brin
Co-Founder and President of
  Technology
Google

John Seely Brown
Former Director
Xerox PARC

William (Bill) T. Coleman, III
Founder, Chairman and Chief
  Customer Advocate
BEA Systems, Inc.

Geoffrey Cowan
Dean
Annenberg School for
  Communication
University of Southern California

Nabil Fahmy
Ambassador of the Arab Republic
  of Egypt to the United States
Embassy of the Arab Republic of
  Egypt

Charles M. Firestone
Executive Director
Communications and Society
  Program
The Aspen Institute

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Mircea Dan Geoana
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Romanian Ministry of Foreign
  Affairs

Robert D. Hormats
Vice Chairman
Goldman Sachs (International)

Walter Isaacson
President and Chief Executive
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The Aspen Institute

Shanthi Kalathil
Associate
Carnegie Endowment for
  International Peace

John T. Kunzweiler
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Accenture

James Manyika
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Philip Merrill
President and Chairman
Export-Import Bank

Jamie Metzl
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Council on Foreign Relations

Amre Moussa
Secretary General
The League of Arab States

Jerry Murdock
Co-Founder and Managing
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Queen Noor
Office of Her Majesty
Jordan

Brian Peace
Chairman and Chief Executive
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Peace Software, Inc.

William Perry
Co-Director
Preventive Defense Project
Center for International Security
Stanford University

Monroe E. Price
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  Professor of Law, and
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Howard M. Squadron Program in
  Media, Law, and Society
Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law
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President
The Rendon Group

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  Information
United Nations

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Staff:

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Program Coordinator
Communications and Society
 Program
The Aspen Institute

Sunny Sumter-Sana
Program Manager
Communications and Society
 Program
The Aspen Institute

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About the Author

David Bollier is an independent strategist, journalist, and consultant specializing in progressive public policy, the impact of digital media on democratic culture, consumer rights, and citizen action. Much of his recent work has focused on developing a new analysis and language for reclaiming "the commons"—the diverse array of publicly owned assets, gift-economies, and natural systems that function in tandem with markets. Bollier's critique of the commons is set forth in *Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of Our Common Wealth* (Routledge, 2002; available at www.silenttheft.com).

Bollier has been an advisor to television writer/producer Norman Lear on politics, public affairs, and special projects since 1984. He also is a senior fellow at the Norman Lear Center at the USC Annenberg Center for Communication and co-founder of Public Knowledge, a new public-interest policy advocacy organization that represents the public's stake in copyright, patent, and Internet issues. He is based in Amherst, Massachusetts.

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The Communications and Society Program is a global forum for leveraging the power of leaders and experts from business, government and the nonprofit sector in the communications and information fields for the benefit of society. Its roundtable forums and other projects aim to improve democratic societies and diverse organizations through innovative, multidisciplinary, values-based policymaking. They promote constructive inquiry and dialogue and the development and dissemination of new models and options for informed and wise policy decisions.

In particular, the Program provides an active venue for global leaders and experts from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds to exchange and gain new knowledge and insights on the societal impact of advances in digital technology and network communications. The Program also creates a multidisciplinary space in the communications policymaking world where veteran and emerging decision makers can explore new concepts, find personal growth and insight, and develop new networks for the betterment of the policymaking process and society.

The Program's projects fall into one or more of three categories: communications and media policy, communications technology and the democratic process, and information technology and social change. Ongoing activities of the Communications and Society Program include annual roundtables on journalism and society, international journalism, telecommunications policy, Internet policy, information technology, and diversity and the media. The Program also convenes the Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society, in which CEOs of business, government, and the nonprofit sector examine issues relating to the changing media and technology environment.

Conference reports and other materials are distributed to key policymakers and opinion leaders within the United States and around the world. They are also available to the public at large through the World Wide Web.

Charles M. Firestone is executive director of the Aspen Institute Communications and Society Program. Prior to joining the Aspen Institute in 1989, Mr. Firestone was director of the Communications Law Program at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and an adjunct professor at the UCLA Law School. He was also first president of the Los Angeles Board of Telecommunications Commissioners. Mr. Firestone's career includes positions as an attorney at the Federal Communications Commission, as director of litigation for a Washington, D.C. based public interest law firm, and as a communications attorney in Los Angeles. He has argued several landmark communications cases before the United States Supreme Court and other federal appellate courts.

Previous Publications
from the Aspen Institute
Roundtable on Information Technology

The Rise of Netpolitk: How the Internet Is Changing International Politics and Diplomacy (2002), David Bollier

How are the Internet and other digital technologies changing the conduct of world affairs? What do these changes mean for our understanding of power in international relations and how political interests are and will be pursued? The Rise of Netpolitik explores the sweeping implications of information technology for national sovereignty, formal and informal international diplomacy, politics, commerce, and cultural identity. The report begins with a look at how the velocity of information and diversification of information sources are complicating international diplomacy. It further addresses the geopolitical and military implications as well as how the Internet is affecting cross-cultural and political relationships. It also emphasizes the role of storytelling in a world where the Internet and other technologies bring our competing stories into closer proximity with each other, and where stories will be interpreted in different ways by different cultures.

69 pages, ISBN Paper: 0-89843368-1, $12.00 per copy.

The Internet Time Lag: Anticipating the Long-Term Consequences of the Information Revolution (2001), Evan I. Schwartz

Some of the unintended consequences of the Internet and the freedoms it symbolizes are now rushing to the fore. We now know that the network of terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon made full use of communication technologies including e mail, Travelocity.com, automatic teller machines (ATMs), data encryption, international money transfers, cell phones, credit cards, and the like. Is the Internet an epochal invention, a major driver of the economy for many years to come, or just a passing fad? Will the new phenomena of recent years—such as the contraction of hierarchies, instant communication, and lightning-fast times to market—last beyond the funding bubble? What is the next new economy? What are the broader social consequences of the answers to those earlier questions? This report

takes a wide-ranging look toward the economic, business, social, and political consequences of the Internet, as well as its wide-ranging ramifications for the process of globalization.

58 pages, ISBN Paper: 0-89843-307-X $12.00 per copy.

Uncharted Territory: New Frontiers of Digital Innovation (2001),
David Bollier

This report looks critically at key insights on the new economy and its implications in light of the digital revolution. The report begins with an examination of the interplay between the current economy and the capital economy and then probes the emerging world of mobile commerce and its potential for driving the next great boom in the economy. It further explores new business models resulting from the combination of mobile communications and the new economy.

68 pages, ISBN Paper: 0-89843-307-X 12.00 per copy.

Ecologies of Innovation: The Role of Information and Communications Technologies (2000), David Bollier

This report explores the nature of innovation and the role of information and communications sectors in fostering ecologies of innovation. In this context, the report examines the ways that the creation of new ecologies are affecting significant societal institutions and policies, including foreign policies, industry and business structures, and power relationships.

44 pages, ISBN Paper: 0-89843-288-X, $12.00 per copy.

The Global Wave of Entrepreneurialism: Harnessing the Synergies of Personal Initiative, Digital Technologies, and Global Advance (1999), David Bollier

This report examines problems arising from the growth of entrepreneurialism and digital techologies.

41 pages, ISBN Paper: 0-89843-264-2, $12.00 per copy.

The Global Advance of Electronic Commerce: Reinventing Markets, Management, and National Sovereignty (1998), David Bollier

This report addresses issues of electronic commerce in the context of global marketplace impact and the transformation of national sovereignty.

64 pages, ISBN Paper: 0-89843-236-7, $12.00 per copy.

The Networked Society: How New Technologies Are Transforming Markets, Organizations, and Social Relationships (1997), David Bollier

This report explores how electronic networking—the Internet and intranets—is transforming commerce, organizational performance and leadership, business and social relationships, and personal identity and allegiances.

43 pages, ISBN Paper: 0-89843-213-8, $10.00 per copy.

The Future of Electronic Commerce (1996), David Bollier

This report examines communications and information technologies that are redefining the fundamental conditions and relationships of commercial transactions, as well as the implications of the new electronic commerce for individuals, businesses, and society.

64 pages, ISBN Paper: 0-89843-188-3, $10.00 per copy.

The Future of Community and Personal Identity in the Coming Electronic Culture (1995), David Bollier

This report concentrates on issues of personal identity, community-building, and setting boundaries in our lives and our environment; it includes a background paper titled "The New Intermediaries" by Charles M. Firestone.

48 pages, ISBN Paper: 0-89843-166-2, $10.00 per copy.

The Promise and Perils of Emerging Information Technologies (1993), David Bollier

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