

# Transformational Diplomacy

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IN JANUARY 2006, US SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZA RICE GAVE A SPEECH at Georgetown University on transformational diplomacy. As a historian, Dr Rice took the long view and said that if you look at the fork of events in the latter part of the twentieth century, leading up to where we are now, you had a bipolar world: East and West, Europe/US/Canada and others and the Soviet Bloc, and to a certain extent China. And this structure often defined third-country relationships. So, if the Soviets got interested in a country in Africa, we got interested in a country neighboring that particular country in Africa. We danced a minuet with a certain amount of rules and a kind of stability that we don't see so much today. When the Soviet Union broke up, we had another set of challenges. This bipolar world disappeared. The center did fall apart and a tide of inattentiveness descended on certain parts of the world. The US became more disengaged in areas that we had previously focused on because of Soviet presence.

But the slow realization of the trans-national danger created by groups that operated in countries where control beyond the capital was limited or which tolerated terrorists' presence, formed the challenges we face today.

As a result, Secretary Rice has formed a long-term strategy to deal with this new structure in the world—a world where Westphalian relationships form only a part of how we all conduct the business of looking after the interests of our respective countries.

As she said in that speech at Georgetown:

I would define the objective of Transformational Diplomacy in this way: To work with our many partners around the world to build and sustain democratic, well-governed states that will respond to the needs of their people—and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system. Transformation diplomacy is rooted in partnership, not paternalism—in doing things with people, not for them. We seek to use America’s diplomatic power to help foreign citizens to better their own lives, and to build their own nations and to transform their own futures.

Transformational diplomacy requires us to move our diplomatic presence out of foreign capitals and to spread it more widely across countries. We must work the front lines of domestic reform as well as in the back rooms of foreign ministries.

The objective to support and to sustain democratic, well-governed states is more nuanced than one might think at first glance. Not every country has reached a degree of democracy as others have. Some lie along the continuum from deep and strong democracies to full-blown dictatorships. We must deal with each of them, often to prevent or reduce widespread abuse, even genocide. And the interest of the community of democracies is to bring more towards nations the democratic side of this scale. So while we nurture and sustain those moving to the democratic side of the ledger, we must promote those parts of society which share that hope even if their government is repressive.

Turning back to changes we have in the last decade and a half, we can see emerging regional leading countries that hold promise not only for themselves but for neighboring states as well. The Secretary has stressed in her remarks that when you project this arc of history further into the twenty-first century, you can see power relationships developing in these countries. They will play critical roles in whether we have a fairly stable system of international relations among countries—where trans-national threats are minimized, and stability and prosperity are the controlling trends. The countries that she had mentioned: China, India, Indonesia, South Africa, Brazil, and a number of others will be the key players. The Secretary discussed what transformational diplomacy means practically for us, and laid out long-term objectives. At the heart of her concept is

that while diplomacy is traditionally associated with managing relations between states, Transformation Diplomacy aims to work with our partners to improve conditions within states.

If, as the old saying goes, nations have interests not friends, and I am not sure that is true, Transformational Diplomacy supports the goals of democratic nations because their interests thrive best where fundamental values are shared. Furthermore, countries that respond to the needs of their citizens tend to be more stable, and countries that understand and are committed to democratic practices and goals tend to be the strongest partners for peace and progress.

So if we hope to form partnerships with more nations based on these ideals, what are the practical steps? First, you have to move people to these emerging influential states. The Secretary mentioned that there would be a hundred positions moving out from Europe and from the US this year, with more following. At the State Department, we have six regional bureaus. If you look at any of those regions, you will note that some countries are staffed based on old relationships, not just in Europe but elsewhere. In addition to shifting staff from some of our European missions, we told the regional bureaus that we would want them to reprogram themselves. So, China may get more positions, but the East-Asia Pacific Bureau has to take a percentage of those positions from somewhere within its staffing. There will be fewer foreign service positions in Washington, fewer in Europe, and more in the other regions where we have a presence.

Second, the Secretary emphasized the need to get out of the walls of the embassy. With the number of terrorist attacks we have had over the years, we have become, regrettably, fortresses. And a fortress mentality means that you don't get out and move around and about as you really should if you're going to understand the country that you're in and be able to represent the interest of your own country within that context. And so the idea is: get out, get about, do a lot more work with press, and have your presence known. Reach beyond the capital to the major population, business, and intellectual hubs. We are expanding our presence across India; we hope to establish additional presence in cities in China, and we are training our staff to be effective communicators who analyse where and to whom to reach out to.

There are a lot of ways besides a physical presence to create a good

outreach program. Technology has given us the tools if we know how to use them. Using technology to get messages out, to rapidly respond to events, to enable others within a country to promote democracy and human rights, is very effective. We have also set up virtual presence posts and American presence posts. In virtual presence posts, a member of the staff at the embassy establishes personal contact with those of a particular city or region, then uses websites, blogs, emails to deepen the contact and create a dialogue.

Third, if you want people to do this kind of outreach, they have to be prepared to be a lot more flexible, so we have changed our requirements for career development. Diplomats know that they will be required to be experts in at least two regions and fluent in one language in order to be promoted to the senior ranks. Fluency in a second language is strongly encouraged and will become, we believe, the norm over time. We are also putting in incentives for critical-needs languages, such as Farsi, Arabic, Turkic languages, Indic languages, and Chinese.

We also expect professional development. That means that we want people to not just take jobs at embassies and in the State Department. We want them to go out and work at our Treasury Department, for example, or do a year of academic work. Once you are in for seven to ten years, it is that extra broadening experience that is really going to make you much more effective and less hide-bound in the way you think. There are a number of requirements for career development.

Finally, one of our shortcomings is that our foreign assistance programs, running around US\$20 billion, have not really connected well to our policy side, and we are taking a new approach, so that the person who is in charge of international development is also the senior advisor to the Secretary on assistance matters. The idea behind it is that if you're looking at your assistance programs, you need to link them to transformational diplomacy and the five objectives on the assistance side: peace and security, governing justly and democratically, investing in people, economic growth, and humanitarian assistance. One of the problems that we have is that, in fact, foreign assistance has not yet adjusted to the challenges of transformational diplomacy. For example, the 25 wealthiest recipient countries receive over 20 per cent of all foreign assistance.

In sum, Transformational Diplomacy recognizes the quickly changing face of the international order; it requires that we shift resources to those

regions and countries that are emerging to more greatly influence the turn of events in this century. On a practical level, we must reach out, understand the country that we are in, make sure that the interests of our country are best served by whatever means that are appropriate within the kinds of activities that we are allowed to engage in. Technology helps to get the message out, but there is nothing that can replace a person on the spot, fluent in the language, with the skills to get things done.