



Answering the Questions About Smart Power

by David Jonathan Wolff

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The US State Department has put forth a strategic vision embodied in its first Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR). Modeled after the Defense Department's own four-year planning effort, the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), the QDDR describes the priorities of State and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). More importantly, it lays out an integrated strategy for achieving US diplomatic and development goals in concert with the Pentagon, while DOD's QDR likewise advocates closer coordination with State and AID. The challenges are many and the ability to put this more integrated approach into practice remains to be seen, but the fact that key US national security agencies are taking a more holistic and coordinated approach to complex global problems signals that US national security strategy in the 21st century will be a whole-of-government effort.

That is the right approach. Power relationships in the world are changing. The US still dominates at the military level, and leads in many other respects, but must also be responsive to world opinion, accommodate growing influence from other economic powers, and work with an increasing number of state and nonstate actors who have a say in global affairs. Awareness that hard power alone was insufficient for addressing complex global challenges gave rise to what is known as the "smart power" approach. Raised to prominence by Joe Nye, Richard Armitage, and the CSIS bipartisan Smart Power Commission, it has become a defining element of the US National Security Strategy. Administration leading lights Hillary Clinton and Robert Gates have teamed up to champion the new *modus operandi*. Their sage message: The US must use all the tools in its national security tool box, and it must apply the right tools in the right combination to get the job done. This requires integrated effort across the traditional "3Ds" – diplomacy, defense, and development. It also requires recognition of the resources of diverse entities outside of government – whether civil society, nongovernmental organizations, or private sector – that can be integrated and brought to bear. *Megacommunities*, a book our firm authored in 2008, put it more succinctly: "The growing density of linkages in today's globalized world will need to be matched by growing integration of government's response to those problems."

As always, money is an issue. The administration is rebalancing expenditures across the 3Ds, spending billions to

better resource civilian segments of the national security apparatus, while building partnerships with the private sector in what some would call a fourth "D" – other diverse entities. There are tradeoffs of course, but in our current economic climate Washington is more interested than ever in the cost-effectiveness offered by such integration.

No one quarrels with the wisdom of taking a more comprehensive and cost-effective approach to international problem-solving, but government agencies still have to figure out how to do it. To help them answer that question, consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton supported several in-depth studies of smart power and how it might best be put into operation. The conclusions provided new insight on the current reality, serious obstacles, great importance, and true potential of smart power in action.

What is it?

While many have called for restructuring of the US national security apparatus and Congress has considered legislation to promote interagency coordination, nothing so revolutionary is in the works. Smart power is not a thunderbolt from above. It is the sober realization that networked use of all elements of national power offers the best chance of influencing positive outcomes in the world. The military calls that working across the DIMEFIL (each letter denotes a different dimension of a problem: diplomatic, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement). At its core, it's about better understanding the foreign terrains in which the US military operates. Military commanders must be good diplomats as they operate in complex foreign environments, while diplomats must understand the military as their toughest foreign policy challenges often have a military component. There is a pressing need for greater cross-pollination. Dedicated advisory cells to inform US leaders in four dimensions would be a good way of putting smart power into action. Specialized training that helps grow this crop of future leaders is another. Strategic games and knowledge management systems that enable a whole-of-government perspective on complex problems are other useful means to advance a smart power approach.

How can it be further developed?

A recent Booz Allen survey with the Government Business Council showed federal executives anticipate greater interagency collaboration will bring positive results ranging from enhanced mission success to improved efficiency. Unprecedented collaboration is taking place between the diplomatic, defense, and development sides of our government to take a more integrated approach in each region of the world. It's an excellent start. However, success depends on leaders at all levels adopting a true whole-of-government outlook. Smart power is US policy, but it is up to every senior official

to fulfill the mandate. Commanders who are serious about the importance of the “DIME” will spend one for every dollar to enhance the critical understanding and coordination embodied in that concept. Regional bureaus at State and USAID, meanwhile, need only embrace the best opportunity they’ve had in decades to grow soft US power capabilities.

How should it be applied to the Asia-Pacific region?

Our analysis indicates the most appropriate smart power focus areas for this region are *whole-of-government preparedness*, *regional capacity building*, and *disaster management*. The USG needs to be prepared as a whole for whatever happens in North Korea. Stronger mission integration will also help counter terrorism, weapons proliferation, and illicit trafficking. Meanwhile, the US is engaged in a soft power competition with China for friends in the region, a contest we can afford to win and can’t afford to lose. While armed conflict is unlikely in the Pacific, earthquakes, tsunamis, and typhoons occur regularly. A smart power approach would map out what all the responders do, then apply supply chain logistics expertise to streamline those ad hoc efforts, closing gaps and eliminating redundancies. It would save lives and money, while casting the US in a positive light. Taking more of a disaster *management* approach would also be wise, since helping other countries improve their indigenous capacities to cope with disaster has all the benefits of teaching a man to fish. Smart power could take other useful forms, including shared training to help countries better perform the crucial functions of good governance, human security, economic development, and disease prevention. Many institutions do good work in these areas, but could do more with increased funding. That would be a smart investment for the US because such strategic partnerships serve as force multipliers, accomplishing more than any single country or sector of society can accomplish on its own. Whatever its form, the US quest to be a smarter power is well worth the effort, as the rewards it brings are greater efficiencies at home and improved mission effectiveness abroad.

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