

RELEASE IN PART B6

From: Anne-Marie Slaughter [redacted]
Sent: Monday, January 14, 2013 8:15 AM
To: H
Cc: Abedin, Huma; Cheryl Mills; Ross, Alec J
Subject: Look what you have wrought!

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I thought you would be interested in the following description of a nightcap discussion that I will be participating in at the Munich Security Conference with Carl Bildt and possibly Peter Thiel, moderated by our own (formerly) Ben Scott. Note the first question re the "pivot to the people," which is how I often describe the 21st century statecraft revolution.

„Nowhere should we be more attuned to social media than in international relations“, a British ambassador recently wrote. While some argue that the new focus on social media and more direct government-to-people interaction in the foreign policy of some countries is, at best, a waste of time, many officials and diplomats do acknowledge the indispensability of social media for their work. After all, social media are not, as a common misconception has it, merely a new tool for communicating messages in one direction. According to a study, the U.S. State Department today communicates with more than 15 million people via social media. These means give diplomats the ability to listen to and understand more constituencies and to interact with them directly and in a transparent fashion. At a time when Youtube videos uploaded on one side of the globe can cause riots on the other, diplomats can hardly ignore or underestimate new ways of understanding societies. Eventually, this recognition may even fundamentally change the job description of a diplomat. However, social media use certainly is not always risk-free or unproblematic, as the debates about tweets by the U.S. embassy in Egypt last year and the activities by Israel and Hamas during the Gaza crisis have shown, respectively. Moreover, the continued acceleration and permanence of communication and information streams could make foreign policy, especially the crucial distinction between the urgent and the important, even more challenging.

Guiding Questions

Is the "pivot to the people", the assumption that "the people of every country stand on the same footing as their government" really "a revolution for diplomacy" as Anne-Marie Slaughter has argued? Is the use of social media an inevitability for diplomats in the future?

Will it change the job of embassies altogether? In other words, could it even be more important for diplomats in the future to analyze and engage movements and public debates than to keep track of backroom whispers and deal with governments sources?

How should countries harness the opportunities the digital age affords – and the deal with the challenges it presents – in their foreign policies?

How can and should digital networks and information and communication technologies be used, both as an instrument for policy and as a means of public diplomacy? What are the risks?

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