

Keeping the Mexican Moment Alive: A Case for Public Diplomacy

Fernando de la Mora

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Abstract

Despite a sound political and economic outlook, Mexico's international image has been on a roller coaster ride. After years of downward spiral, the Mexican moment has again raised expectations. However, structural and systemic factors hamper Mexican public diplomacy at a time when keeping that positive momentum is critical for the country's national interests. The systemic challenge for all emerging nations derives from widespread confusion and uncertainty regarding future power shifts and dynamics. Whether the world is to be multipolar, nonpolar, or inter-polar, public diplomacy will play an important role in accomplishing foreign policy objectives. Unlike other emerging countries, Mexico has unique historical and geopolitical considerations that can hamper its public diplomacy, or serve as catalysts for sustained growth. Considering Mexico's unique circumstances, two tracks are suggested for public diplomacy in the coming order: one specifically for the United States and one for the rest of the world. In both cases, the Mexican population must participate in the dialogue and connect its own well-being to Mexico's international reputation.

Biography

Fernando de la Mora is a career diplomat in the Mexican Foreign Service. He currently serves as Director for Institutional Coordination at the Matias Romero Institute, Mexico's Diplomatic Academy and is an Associate of the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations (COMEXI). He is also a governing member of the Association of Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP). His previous postings include Consul for Protection Policies at the Consulate General of Mexico in El Paso and Consul for Legal and Political Affairs at the Consulate General of Mexico in Phoenix. In the nongovernmental field, he has researched human security and international humanitarian law in Darfur, Sudan and other regions.

He holds a degree in International Relations from the University of British Columbia and a Certificate in US Legal Studies from the University of New Mexico School of Law. He recently completed a diploma in Crisis Management from the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR).

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The Mexican Moment

In late 2012, the “Mexican Moment” began, triggered by an article penned by newly-elected President Enrique Peña Nieto. Media outlets and analysts followed by highlighting Mexico’s macroeconomic stability and growth prospects, all underlined by an ambitious reform package approved by Mexico’s Congress throughout the course of 2013. By most accounts, Mexico is a relevant country in the international system: 14th largest economy in the world and 2nd in Latin America, 11th in terms of population (with a median age of 27), and a top-twenty largest contributor to the United Nations regular budget. Nevertheless, Mexico’s image in the world is at an impasse. At a time when competition and uncertainty characterize international relations, poor perceptions are luxuries that no country can afford.

In the president’s 2012 Economist article, he stated that “As the largest Spanish-speaking country in the world, Mexico ought to play a key international role” (Peña, 2012). The move from Mexican moment to Mexican momentum implies an ambitious and results-oriented domestic and foreign policy agenda. Public diplomacy practices are slowly becoming commonplace. For example, it is now customary for a letter to the editor or an op-ed signed by the minister or the president to appear in local newspapers in the country they visit prior to their arrival. The social media outlets for embassies and consulates are beginning to listen to their constituencies. However, all countries are competing for exposure in

a sluggish global economy and Mexico faces unique challenges as it attempts to prolong the Mexican moment into a cycle of positive development and reputation.

This article discusses opportunities and obstacles in defining the role that public diplomacy can play to consolidate Mexico's image as a responsible player domestically and globally.

Mexico emerged

French President Francois Hollande recently stated that "Mexico is not an emerging economy. It is an economic power." (González, 2014). With 11 free trade agreements, it enjoys preferential market access to 43 countries. Accordingly, it is also extremely vulnerable to fluctuations in the global economic and financial markets, more so considering its interdependence with the United States, which remains the country's primary trading partner par excellence. The country trades over \$500 billion annually with the United States (Census, 2014) equivalent to approximately \$1 million per minute. If Mexico is an economic power, the underlying causes for what could be termed "perpetual emergence" should be analyzed. The general public does not see such Mexican leadership in their daily lives.

The problem with the term "emerging economy" is that there is no finite end, no point at which the national image can legitimately move on to "emerged". In the Mexican psyche, this only reifies a generational struggle for development characterized by pessimism, distrust of authority and a revolutionary history distrustful of major power influence. Until average Mexican citizens begin to

objectively compare their economic, social and political well-being with that of most countries, rather than limiting comparisons to the United States, the sociological stigma of “underdevelopment” is likely to stymie public diplomacy efforts. Mexico’s biggest strategic problem is not its international reserves or its debt-to-GDP ratio, but economic inequality amongst the population. More Mexicans need to reap the benefits of foreign policy at every level, rather than believe that there is no correlation between their standard of living and the international image of their country. By constantly hearing that Mexico is emerging, some parts of society may simply understand that the goal posts have been moved once more and foresee a longer road ahead.

What kind of power in which kind of world?

Despite sharing a border with the United States and fostering substantial relationships with other parts of the world, Mexico’s foreign policy, and public diplomacy specifically, need to be anchored in an understanding of power dynamics in the world. The main difficulty in contemporary strategic planning is the absence of consensus regarding the type of world we live in, or the one we will see emerge in the coming years. The United States is likely to continue to be an important player for decades to come, but so-called middle or emerging powers such as Mexico are both subjects and directors in the polarity debate. The power of networks and the changing nature of power require states to base their strategies on contextual intelligence (Nye, 2013). For the purposes of this paper, three paradigms will be analyzed and related to public diplomacy.

Richard Hass suggested that we are in a “world dominated not by one or two or even several states but rather by dozens of actors possessing and exercising various kinds of power” (Hass, 2008). This is known as the “non-polar” world.

Meanwhile, Samuel Huntington saw a continuation of American dominance but cautioned that “some combination of other major states” would be needed for effective action in the future (Huntington, 1999). In such a multipolar world, the imperative is to maintain a balance of power amongst a variety of actors, meaning that there will always be forces of power maximization and minimization at play at any given point in time.

Beyond nonpolarity and multipolarity, Giovanni Grevi coined the term “interpolarity”, arguing that states will remain the dominant actor in global politics but non-state actors will have increasing capabilities to stimulate systemic change. While competition exists, contemporary interdependence is difficult to ignore.

For some years, Mexican officials have stated that the country has “multiple belongings”, meaning that it is part of North America, but also Latin America. It shares strong historical and cultural ties to Europe, but is also Latin America’s gateway to Asia Pacific. While diversification is undoubtedly an economic and financial imperative, little has been written about the public diplomacy implications of these strategic relationships. Do such multiple belongings downplay Mexico’s unique identity in a globalized world? Can strategic insertion benefit the country’s projection in diverse communities? In part, these questions remain unanswered due to the lack of consensus regarding global power structures. The multiplicity of

actors and the finite capabilities of a state make its relationships more, rather than less important.

Regardless of the paradigm with which one ultimately agrees, if any, “it is very likely that only a few countries will emerge as central hubs of the system in the 21st century, creating a sort of asymmetrical multipolarity with a distinction between dominant or central powers, major powers, regional powers and local powers” (Renard, 2009). Ergo, how a country is perceived and how it seeks to be perceived by other states and non-state actors will have a direct correlation with its exercise of power, whether globally, regionally or locally. In this light, it is possible that “the only remaining superpower is international public opinion” (Anholt, 2014).

Where does Mexico stand?

As with any neighborhood, the way its inhabitants perceive their home and their neighbors will ultimately dominate the narrative about the area’s reputation. Mexico in the North American neighborhood is a case in point. While the United States has a tangible interest in ensuring that Mexico is prosperous, peaceful and stable, American public opinion remains steeped in ages-old stereotypes. According to the global Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index (NBI), Mexico ranked 31 overall in 2010, down from 28 in 2009. Amongst those polled in the United States, Mexico scored lowest, coming in at 42 (Anholt, 2012). The trend is not promising, demonstrating “...a country with an already weakened reputation and, in some cases, a severely damaged image.” (Anholt, 2012).

Before the Mexican Moment, a Vianovo study showed that 50% of Americans had an unfavorable opinion of Mexico, 39% had a neutral point of view and only 17% had a positive view (Curzio, 2013). All of this, despite the fact that Mexico is far from being a hostile country towards the US or its citizens. Yet 72% associated Mexico with drug trafficking, 21% with corruption and merely 7% as a good tourism destination.

While it is instinctual to claim that American opinions are not necessarily shared by the rest of the world, international discourse about Mexico is inexorably linked to US perceptions. The impact of the American media enterprise on Mexico's image cannot be understated because much of the world sees Mexico through the eyes of Hollywood, not Mexico's. American society feels the need to portray Mexico in a negative light in order to highlight positive aspects of its own. As articulated by Nicholas Cull: "a Mexico outside of the law to contrast with American respect for it; a dirty and chaotic Mexico in the face of a clean and orderly United States, and a lazy Mexico vis-a-vis a hard working United States." (Cull, 2012). No other emerging country faces such a direct challenge.

Whether there is a relative decline of US power, a relative rise of other actors shaping perceptions, or a combination of both in various fields, the extent to which Mexico is able to influence the American lens or reframe the means through which its image is projected abroad will be critical in developing public diplomacy strategies going forward. Because the US will be relevant to some degree in the years to come, it will do little good to ignore the weight of this relationship in public diplomacy planning. Specific narratives for other actors should be

developed, but they cannot neglect the triangular nature of the American lens when it comes to Mexico.

How Mexicans see Mexico: the need for public diplomacy within

The Mexican population was asked, “Do you consider Mexico to be more Latin American than North American or more North American than Latin American?” Those surveyed were divided into leaders and the general public. Leaders feel increasingly North American. The public feels increasingly Latin American. Less than 10% of those polled felt that Mexico belonged to both (México, las Américas y el Mundo, 2013). The majority of the population does not feel that it belongs in both North America and Latin America, as the “multiple belongings” discourse suggests. Accordingly, government efforts to portray Mexico as an integral part of both face the challenge of finding civil society and business partners that genuinely agree on such a multifaceted image.

The fact that the public feels more Latin American is both cultural and economic. 45% Mexicans live below the poverty line. Meanwhile, tens of thousands have died in the past 7 years as a result of organized crime (CNN, 2013). Such self-identification with Latin America invariably ties the country’s reputation to that of the rest of the continent, which, at least until recently, is one associated with poverty, corruption and exoticism. Despite catchphrases like “The Aztec Tiger” in the international media, widespread domestic skepticism exists, leading one analyst to conclude that “If Mexicans are not convinced, Mexico’s moment will not last long.” (Oppenheimer, 2013).

Cull has written that “In many ways, for Mexico to have a better reputation, it needs to be a better place” (Cull, 2012). Such analysis is entirely in line with Joseph Nye’s assertion that “The effectiveness of public diplomacy is measured by minds changed (as shown in interviews or polls), not dollars spent or slick production packages...It is sometimes domestically difficult for the government to support presentation of views that are critical of its own policies. Yet such criticism is often the most effective way of establishing credibility” (Nye, 2008). In the case of Mexico, efforts to build a better country and project a balanced image abroad are intertwined, but its citizens need to be included.

“Pick me!”

A major challenge for public diplomacy of emerging countries lies in the inherent competition for investment, prestige, tourism and trade shared by all growing economies. The only real similarity between the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) and the MIST [MIKTA] (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey [Australia]) countries are that they were both conceived by Jim O’Neill of the financial firm Goldman Sachs. Other groups, such as Next 11 (Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Turkey, South Korea, Vietnam) and the Emerging Market Global Players (EMGP) hail from private or academic sectors. The fact that governments’ actions attempt to live up to these expectations is a testament to the influence and power of non-state actors not only in messaging, but in agenda-setting.

The BRIC countries have held sideline meetings at the UN General Assembly and also presented common positions on certain multilateral issues. The public

diplomacy payoff is primarily the reiteration of the group itself, particularly at times when other groups, such as MIKTA seek to take their place as the darlings of foreign investors. In April of 2014, the MIKTA countries held their first ministerial summit beyond the General Assembly, in which they agreed to meet at least three times annually and discussed important global governance issues. They also recalled that they are all members of the G20 and took the opportunity to reiterate their support for that forum. All these actions are byproducts of competition.

If we see the world as multipolar in the traditional realist sense, Mexico is unlikely to become an international power hub because it would necessarily challenge the United States directly. Such a new balance of power would, at the time of writing, be unrealistic and undesirable considering the interdependence between the two countries. Established powers interested in altering the balance of power are more likely to choose the path of least resistance by increasing the capabilities and forging alliances with other emerging powers where they have greater competitive influence before attempting to alter the United States' intraregional balance. Regional power hubs are a more likely scenario in a multipolar world. A balance of power is more manageable with a smaller number of major regional players. For Mexico's public diplomacy, this would mean projecting regional identity (North or Latin America) and exercising peripheral soft power via a hub state.

A non-polar world, in turn, allows for Mexico to advance specific interests through ad-hoc coalitions with various power brokers, but is destined to be messy because "a large number of actors tend toward greater randomness and disorder in the absence of external intervention" (Hass, 2008). However, such disorder is

reminiscent of the phrase “Anarchy is what states make of it” (Wendt, 1992). In other words, there are risks and opportunities in that relative disorder that emerging countries can capitalize on. For example, nonpolarity facilitates niche diplomacy. In the past, Mexico has excelled in disarmament and climate change negotiations. Public diplomacy in a non-polar world opens a host of possibilities by projecting values, culture and trade in various constituencies with coalitions of other states and non-state actors to accomplish foreign policy objectives. Given the inherent “messiness” of this world, all of diplomacy will be subject to a process of creative disruption, where only those who adapt can be winners.

Meanwhile, interolarity posits a synergy between power shifts and increasing interdependence, arguing that established and emerging powers converge to form global governance structures (Grevi, 2009). In such a world, both emerging and established powers recognize the necessity of working together and accommodate each other's interests, arguably redefining the balance of power. The clearest example of interolarity may well be the G20, which emerged gradually through the G8+5 formulas (Jokela, 2011). In this paradigm, Mexico must work alongside both stronger and weaker actors to advance mechanisms of systemic management and thrive. A public diplomacy problem in the interolar paradigm is that it presumes the agreement of major players. As time passes, new players emerge, power shifts, and the mechanisms put into place may no longer be beneficial. Thus, interolar public diplomacy requires actors to identify these shifts and decide whether to promote changes to the status quo or advocate for its continuity.

In all three paradigms of polarity, countries and other actors are competing to be included in the new world order (whatever that may be). They feel they cannot afford to be left out of the game in a strategic environment characterized by volatility. Mexico is very much in this competition.

The Mexican advantage in the competition is access to American elites, as demonstrated by the NAFTA negotiations and other successful lobbying efforts (Ferrer, 2007). The immediate disadvantage (ironically) is an excessive focus on the United States in the past. While China, Brazil and others have engaged emerging regions, such as Africa, and are consolidating their relationships, Mexico is late to the party and beginning construction those relations. Nonetheless, tremendous steps are being taken in the right direction. In September, the president announced Mexican participation in UN peacekeeping operations during the High Level Debate of the General Assembly. Combined with other policy initiatives, “walking the talk” of global responsibility is a promising asset for public diplomacy.

Which paradigm ultimately prevails (if any) is not up to Mexico alone. Its geopolitical position as a neighbor to the US, an energy producer, and a top exporter give it a unique place among emerging countries that complicates the application of policy recommendations that might suit other so-called emerging economies. In other words, Mexican policy formulations will necessarily be somewhat different than those that could apply to other emerging states. This does not mean that the country is destined to be forever alone and misunderstood.

Rather, it has the capacity to make truly unique contributions.

Two roads lead to Rome

Mexico's public diplomacy strategies going forward must differ from those of traditional, established powers in order to work. While the country benefits from being grouped into favorable categories that predict an economic boom, it is equally vulnerable to harsh criticism if it fails to live up to such high expectations (Alper and Rojas, 2014). An analysis of how the BRIC countries have been portrayed in 2013 compared to 2009 would demonstrate this effect. Mexico must seek to be an attractive member of the "emerging" groups of countries, but must also differentiate itself from those groups at times.

Mexican public diplomacy should function on two basic tracks: the first is directed at the United States and recognizes the disproportionate influence of actors within that country in shaping global public opinion. The second involves a "back to basics" strategy that should be deployed in places where either little is known about Mexico or where there is a strong official relationship, but the foreign public is either not engaged or (in the case of other middle powers) could feel threatened by the potential of Mexico's rise. This should not be confused with simple promotion, but be driven by coalitions and people-to-people connections around particular issues. Adaptability of such strategies to the contemporary realities of each country, region or community is key.

In an ideal public policy planning exercise, a country's public diplomacy strategy should be able to function in the multipolar, nonpolar and interpolar paradigms, guiding decisions with contextual intelligence. Because we have no crystal ball, the

adaptability of public diplomacy strategies and constant evaluation will determine their effectiveness. Ironically, the sources of such contextual intelligence come from the very practice of public diplomacy itself. Nicholas Cull defines public diplomacy as “an international actor’s attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public” (Cull, 2009). Since the end of public diplomacy is the change of the environment itself, the core approaches are listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange, broadcasting and psychological warfare (Cull, 2009). With a mix of these approaches, and marked emphasis on various ones in particular situations, a country is able to garner the contextual intelligence that Nye posits as fundamental to guiding policy.

Approach 1: A Mexican lens for American eyes

As demonstrated earlier, Mexico and the United States have ties that bind. The official relationship is multifaceted, mature, and comprehensive. Because both countries are democracies subject to influences from not only domestic, but transnational non state actors, network diplomacy is inherently complicated. The issues on the bilateral agenda cover everything from immigration to trade to security. Perhaps more than any bilateral relationship of that scale, what happens in one country directly impacts the other, leading public opinion to play an important role in guiding policy outcomes.

Fortunately for Mexico, it has the infrastructure in place to engage in serious public diplomacy with its northern neighbor. The world’s largest consular network in any one country is Mexico’s 50 consulates in the US. In each of those, relationships are fostered with diaspora groups, commercial interests, opinion leaders and other

actors with standing in politics. Effective use of the consular network constitutes “polylateralism”, a form of engagement that widens relationships beyond organizations and includes interested individuals (Wiseman, 1999). On the other hand, these consular offices must also deal with the traditional documentation and citizen assistance functions and are often overburdened with these duties, limiting proactive engagements and communication (Ferrer, 2007).

The need to publicize high-level arrests and accomplishments against drug cartels during President Felipe Calderon’s administration hampered rather than enabled public diplomacy efforts. In 1993, economic issues dominated Mexican coverage in the American press. Only 13% of articles in the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal dealt with crime, corruption or undocumented immigration. In contrast, 84% of the articles published in those periodicals in 2010 were crime-related. A mere 7% and 8%, dealt with economic and political issues, respectively. The Mexican press did not help matters at all, as 57% of Reforma’s headlines between April and May of 2011 were also negative (Newell, 2011). As a result, the average American citizen associated Mexico less with economic opportunity and more with violence, corruption and undocumented immigration.

Impressive efforts were made to promote tourism and dispel myths. The “Mexico Taxi Project” was an overt attempt to counter the negative perceptions about Mexico. It consisted of hidden cameras in taxis and town cars picking up American tourists returning from Mexican vacations. The cab driver would ask them about their trip and they expressed candid and positive opinions (Elliot, 2011). After all, Mexico is the top foreign destination for Americans, with 20,546,361 visitors in

2013, up 1.2% from the previous year (US Office of Travel and Tourism Industries, 2014).

Digital promotion also played a major role in this endeavor, with user-friendly and attractive websites such as visitmexico.com and mexicotoday.com. According to Jaime Díaz and Mónica Pérez, these efforts gave Mexico a more competitive image and marginally increased positive perceptions of Mexico in the US population (Díaz and Pérez, 2012).

However, these efforts suffered from several shortfalls: 1) they were government-directed; 2) they highlighted eccentricities and exoticism of Mexico at a time when foreign policy highlighted the “shared responsibility” of the US in its southern neighbor’s troubles and 3) they were essentially promotional campaigns focused around tourism. In parallel, while most Mexican embassies and consulates abroad did open Twitter and Facebook pages during the Calderón administration, they lacked a coherent government-wide strategy that tended to be unidirectional and, in most cases, did not engage with the local publics (Lozano, 2013). Brand managers today are running into the same obstacles. Most governmental entities continue to view public diplomacy as an extension of marketing, rather than as a means to compliment and achieve foreign policy objectives in a world exponentially flooded with actors of varying degrees of influence.

Mexican public diplomacy in the United States has been defensive in recent years due to political backlashes in both countries and structural asymmetrical realities (Starr, 2010). Fortunately, public diplomacy is “moving away from a

straightforward promotional perspective” and towards a form of diplomatic engagement with other actors (Melissen, 2011). The natural evolution of this development is the participation of civil society and people-to-people connections. For example, the diaspora policy went from “what can the diaspora do for Mexico?” to “what can Mexico do for its diaspora?” (J.C. Lara in Mexican Public Diplomacy Workshop, 2013). The interactions between Americans and Mexicans exponentially outnumber and out-impact governmental relationships. In this light, Mexican public diplomacy should seek to be permanently present in debates of interest to second and third generation immigrants.

Social media must be a part of the solution. Collen Graffy sums up the concept: “Public diplomacy is the art of communicating a country’s policies, values and culture to the people of another nation. Public Diplomacy 2.0 is the art of using this new Internet phenomenon in order to achieve those objectives—‘citizen to citizen, person to person’—and more.” (Graffy, 2009) Mexico’s efforts were classified as “Public Diplomacy 1.5”. While efforts were present, the full potential of social media was not used to multiply and engage stakeholders in messaging (Lozano, 2013). To date, there is no evidence that marketing campaigns actually have a lasting effect on a nation’s brand (Anholt, 2012).

The public diplomacy approach with the US should take into account the following strategic guiding principles:

1. If the Mexican population is not enthusiastic about their country’s potential for economic growth, and a stronger global role, the US population will reflect it. People-to-people connections drive the relationship.

2. The economic competitiveness narrative must focus on America's own middle class. If the only targets of public diplomacy are elites, the majority of the US population is less likely to see Mexico as an opportunity and more as a threat. Listening first and advocating later will help.
3. 65% of Americans receive their news primarily online (Franceschi, 2013). A full-fledged public diplomacy 2.0 strategy needs to account for local political views and engage grassroots movements as impromptu brand ambassadors that can communicate shared futures.
4. Mexico must still tread carefully in lobbying efforts on divisive issues such as immigration reform. If the American political establishment perceives intervention on a domestic issue tied to national identity, such as immigration, efforts are likely to backfire.
5. A special strategy to engage second and third generation persons of Mexican origin must be developed. These groups are more educated and politically active than first generation migrants and should promote Mexico as a partner rather than "the place my parents left to seek a better life". These communities are natural sources of political influence and candidates for exchanges.

Approach 2: Back to basics

Nation branding refers to the perceptions in people's minds about a country. It includes general qualities and appreciations between the consumers and the brand (country). A nation brand exists without the control of the brand owner, and effective brand management requires a robust coalition of government, the private sector and civil society required for this enterprise (Lozano, 2013). Consequently, the concept of competitive identity becomes relevant. It recognizes that any country

must compete for the attention of other states, companies and private individuals in a global marketplace. Furthermore, it should be a “component of national policy and not [...] a ‘campaign’ that can be separated from conventional planning, leadership, governance or economic development (Anholt, 2012). The primary similarity between nation branding and public diplomacy is that relationship building remains the central paradigm for both (Szondi, 2008).

While Mexico is an undisputed cultural power because of its unique historical and social identity, the link between its cultural diplomacy and soft power is not developed. In part, this is due to a lack of human and financial resources, a misunderstanding of soft power as subordinate to hard power, the greater influence of cultural commerce (books, movies, arts) over diplomacy, and an absence of lasting strategic relationships beyond the governmental sphere (Gutiérrez-Canet, 2013). An excessive focus on the cultural component in Mexico’s foreign policy has led the diplomatic apparatus to neglect the other functions of public diplomacy: listening, advocacy, exchanges and broadcasting (Cull, 2012).

In order to have effective public diplomacy, Mexico should build on its strong cultural diplomacy and incorporate the other functions of public diplomacy alongside it. Using the core approaches of Nicholas Cull’s model, Mexico can identify areas that deserve greater focus and investment. Other recommendations, such as establishing a “Mexico Institute” to promote Mexican culture and Spanish-language (Curzio, 2013), are long overdue and necessary to build synergies that facilitate listening, advocacy, exchanges, and cultural diplomacy. Curzio also suggests having an international broadcasting channel, an idea in line with Cull’s

core approaches. Mexican telenovelas have been translated into over 27 languages and have proven to be an effective cultural export that increases Mexican presence among foreign publics (Guajardo-Villar, 2012). However, Mexican society has failed to capitalize on this tool to project the kinds of messages it wants (and needs).

Neither the multipolar, nonpolar or inter-polar paradigms deny the relevance of regional or thematic blocs of states. Mexico is beginning to adapt the experiences of other regions. Jan Melissen wrote about East Asia: "...in the absence of well-established multilateral structures, the potential for public diplomacy to contribute to regional community-building is recognized." (Melissen, 2011). Mexico, despite being a staunch supporter of robust multilateralism, has displayed diplomatic pragmatism. The Pacific Alliance is a deep integration mechanism that goes well beyond free trade. However, one of the three primary objectives of the alliance is to "Become a platform for political articulation, and economic and trade integration, and project these strengths to the rest of the world, with a special emphasis on the Asia-Pacific region" (Alliance, 2014). Such a focus on promotion, and the explicit mention of Asia-Pacific is an example of what could be called "network mirroring". Just as other states that seek bright economic futures have projected themselves in strategically integrated regional or thematic blocks (i.e. The European Union); Mexico, Colombia, Chile and Peru are doing the same in the name of competitiveness. The face of Mexico's competitive identity is now the Pacific Alliance on one hand, and the overall North American scheme on the other.

The back-to-basics approach should be based on the following:

1. There must be a conscious move away from a government-centered marketing approach and towards resilient non-state-based alliances.
2. Public diplomacy must become a domestic endeavor to convince Mexicans of the importance of their international image, facilitate travel, work, and volunteer opportunities abroad, and support international development assistance schemes.
3. Competitive identity should be region-based and move away from the nation brand concept, as regions theoretically fare better off than individual states in the polarity debate.
4. Cultural promotion is the most developed tool in Mexican public diplomacy to date, and should be strengthened. It requires better coalitions to reach populations that have traditionally not come into the picture. Having the coalitions in the first place allows space for activities incorporating other tools and approaches.

Keeping the Mexican Moment alive

Mexico has been blessed with a sibilant intake of fresh air thanks to the Mexican Moment. As this paper has demonstrated, significant challenges stand in the way of making that moment a lasting one. The Mexican moment was not entirely constructed by the government, but is a byproduct of national circumstances interacting in the current global environment. Both the domestic and the international spheres must be tended to in order to turn the moment into Mexico's great leap forward and keep it from becoming Mexico's long drag. In using public diplomacy for this endeavor, Mexico (and all emerging economies) need to understand that public diplomacy is a means and not an end.

The Mexican moment has created high expectations both at home and abroad. Mexico's ability to project itself as a reliable economic and political partner with strong social capital is not separate from the domestic agenda, and must therefore become a coordinated, coherent part of national policy.

However we understand polarity in the years to come, the world is unquestionably made up of overlapping networks in which traditional and new forms of diplomacy coexist. The strategic lines set out in this paper are mere contemplations of how public diplomacy can play a role in shaping that environment at this snapshot in time. What is clear is that public diplomacy for emerging states cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach, and that Mexico specifically has at least two general spaces for action with unique considerations.

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