Economic Activities and Public Diplomacy

Abdul-Hameed Al-Kayyali [1]

First of all I would like to thank The Turkish Asian Center for Strategic Studies (Tasam) and The Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) for organizing the 2nd think tanks forum of OIC countries.

Allow me start my discussion with some remarks about the Draft Vision Document of the forum that we have received earlier. It was stated in the document that "After the collapse of the bipolar world system and Cold War we are facing a new international system that is based on communication, informatics, strategy and technology". That might provoke a vital question i. e., did the collapsed or old international system take into consideration all these elements or not?. Of course, the "old international system" was collapsed due to the extreme domination of the Western Camp; mainly represented by US, in the fields of "work strategy", "technological development" and "information".

In the same vein, it could be argued that globalization has certain consequences i. e., economic, political and cultural that affect "the new international system". But is it true that all instruments of old international system were collapsed? Then has the role of "public diplomacy" been extremely emphasized at the expense of hard power to accomplish the goals and the strategic visions of the state? At this point of dissection we can assume that desire is vastly intermingled with truth, due to the fact that the new international system has witnessed some of the worst world wars such as: the destruction of Iraq and before that Afghanistan, then the destructive wars of Israel against Gaza and Lebanon.

It seems that we continue moving from one contradiction to another within one sided way of thinking that dominates our world of thoughts. In other words, we move form the "military action" that denies the "diplomatic action" to the "diplomatic action" that might avoid, as well, the "military action". The solution which is close to logic and historical experience might be

represented by dual action, which means that "military action" or hard power get benefit from "diplomacy" or soft power, and simultaneously diplomacy puts aside military power.

It is hard under the title of public diplomacy to distinguish between "internal policy" and "external policy". Therefore, if we turn the eyes to soft political- diplomatic solutions for our problems with the exterior, it might save efforts and power to concentrate on the interior and settle the equation in most of our countries where "reconciliation" with the exterior and "war" with the interior. The outcome of this drive is all these consecutive revolutions in most of Arab and Muslim countries.

Hence, Public Diplomacy should not be double faced; external that calls for peace, and internal that calls for suppression which will finally lead to civil war. Public diplomacy should stand on two pillars that consider politics and diplomacy as a base for resolving internal and external problems on the same footing. As for the security and military solutions, we confirm its failure not only because they are highly expensive, but also because they do not really resolve the problems. However, the rule does not forbid an exception to take place, but it remains, anyhow, an exception and should not turn to be a rule.

Let me then pass to the second part of my intervention that related to the subject of this session i. e., "Economic Activities and Public Diplomacy". The previous session of this forum "Foreign Policy and Public Diplomacy" has actually facilitated our discussions of this session. It has been clarified that the function of "public diplomacy" is meant to cater for the high interests of the state in which economy occupies the highest rank. Since we previously correlated the power of "public diplomacy" and then the power of "foreign policy" to the comprehensive power of the state, we can underline that economy occupies the first place in this regard, because when we talk about interests, we do talk about the size, nature and the quality of economy that determines the overall external demand of the country.

It should be clear that economy is not this portion or that of money, production, export or import. Economy is actually the vast social network that involved in economic process, whether as producer or consumer. Therefore, the importance of the country is highly dependent on the economic impact upon other countries. When we talk about "external participation", which is the first function of public diplomacy, we actually talk about the portion of certain country of global economy and its ability of being effected or influenced.

In the time of "cold struggles" we argue that the influence of economy turned to replace the

military influence. In theses terms, we might not be mistaken when we consider Germany a great power without nuclear weapons more important and influential in the international arena than unclear Russia. This might lead us to shed the light on the shocking absence of effect of the Arab-Muslim economy, as a major oil producer, on its foreign policy and diplomatic work. In conclusion, we emphasize upon working to bridge the gap between "economic importance" and "political importance" in the Arab Muslim world.

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[1] Researcher and Managing Editor of Middle Eastern Studies Journal- Middle East Studies Center, Jordan.