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**Sent:** Sunday, March 25, 2012 9:38 PM  
**To:** H  
**Cc:** Cheryl Mills; Jacob J Sullivan (SullivanJJ@state.gov); Abedin, Huma  
**Subject:** You will like this: discussing your "pivot to the people"

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I wrote it last week for Project Syndicate, which gets columns translated all over the world. It was great to see you last week. Best, AM

## **Slaughter: A pivot to the people**

*Editor's Note: Anne-Marie Slaughter, a former director of policy planning in the US State Department (2009-2011), is Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University. For more from Slaughter, visit [Project Syndicate](#) or follow it on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). The views expressed in this article are solely those of Anne-Marie Slaughter.*

By **Anne-Marie Slaughter**, [Project Syndicate](#)

On February 1, the United Nations Security Council met to consider the Arab League's proposal to end the violence in Syria. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton represented the United States. Midway through her remarks, she began speaking not to the Syrian ambassador, who was in the room, or even the Syrian government, but directly to the Syrian people. She said that change in Syria would require Syrians of every faith and ethnicity to work together, protecting and respecting the rights of minorities.

Addressing those minorities, she continued: "We do hear your fears, and we do honor your aspirations. Do not let the current regime exploit them to extend this crisis." She told Syria's business, military, and other leaders that they must recognize that their futures lie with the state, not with the regime. "Syria belongs to its 23 million citizens, not to one man or his family."

Speaking directly to citizens – seeing a country's people, as well as its government – is not just a rhetorical device. While many foreign-policy pundits have focused on the US "pivot to Asia," Clinton has also executed a less-publicized, but no less important, pivot to the people. She has introduced policies, programs, and institutional reforms designed to support government-to-society and society-to-society diplomacy, alongside traditional government-to-government relations. These initiatives do not get headlines, but they will gradually transform much of American foreign policy.

In January, the State Department unveiled a new "super-office" of Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, under the leadership of Under-Secretary Maria Otero. The office brings together agencies that focus on international law enforcement, counter-terrorism, and reconstruction and stabilization with those charged with advancing democracy, human rights, and humanitarian assistance to refugees and migrants.

Otero explains the logic behind the initiative in terms of "protecting individuals." That, in turn, requires "not just engaging state to state," but also working "with players and actors outside of the traditional [channels] we've engaged in."

Viewed from this perspective, countering terrorism includes rebutting terrorist propaganda with a strategic communications campaign. Countering narco-gang violence includes working with Mexican telecommunications mogul Carlos Slim to develop tools that allow ordinary citizens to report violence anonymously by text message and enable police to map the results. Strengthening democracy means working with the Kenyan developers of a crisis-mapping platform that allows anyone with a cell phone to text information about election fraud or violence to a central monitoring station.

On a country-by-country basis, pivoting to the people means engaging with Egypt's bloggers as well as with the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces; convening young entrepreneurs in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco and connecting them to funding and mentoring; and using social media in Russia to rebut government efforts to smear the US ambassador. And, working at an official level, it means co-sponsoring with Brazil the Open Government Partnership, which brings together governments committed to increasing transparency, accountability, and citizen participation, and uses mutual peer pressure and open reporting to hold them to their commitments.

Thinking about countries in these comprehensive terms also provides a different strategic perspective. Clinton has created a raft of new positions at the State Department to spur outreach to different social segments. The strategies and programs developed by the Ambassador for Global Women's Issues, the Special Adviser for Global Youth Issues, the Senior Adviser for Civil Society and Emerging Democracies, the Special Representative for Outreach to Muslim Communities, the Special Representative for Global Partnerships, and the Special Representative for Commercial and Business Affairs often present a very different face of the US.

As a result, Clinton has launched an actual strategic dialogue with civil society. For example, Ambassador Melanne Verveer has attended more than 1,000 events around the world focused on empowering women in areas ranging from peace negotiations to farming. Similarly, she has launched programs such as mWomen, designed to expand and support mobile technology that increases women's independence, security, and access to health care and vital knowledge. The Office of Global Youth Affairs is building a local youth council at every US embassy around the world, to advise and help to implement embassy programming aimed at local youth.

Much of the programming aimed at youth, women, entrepreneurs, diasporas, technologists, and other social groups is partly funded and conducted by the private sector. Indeed, the Obama administration's National Security Strategy mentions "public-private partnerships" more than 30 times. Clinton created the Global Partnership Initiative to build as many coalitions, networks, and partnerships as possible with corporations, foundations, NGOs, universities, and other civic organizations.

Here, the pivot to the people includes the American people: the dynamism, creativity, and resources of American business and non-profit organizations already engaged around the world. One privately-funded initiative spearheaded by the State Department will send 300 dogwood trees to Japan this spring, to be planted in the tsunami-affected region and in Tokyo to express the American people's support for the Japanese people; another will send English teachers throughout Southeast Asia.

After participating in the Friends of Syria conference in Tunis, Clinton convened a town hall meeting with Tunisian youth. In her opening remarks, she told her audience that "young people are at the heart of today's great strategic opportunities and challenges." Speaking about her lifetime efforts to put "women's empowerment on the international agenda," she added, "It's time to put youth empowerment there as well."

The implications of all of this activity, which Clinton calls "twenty-first-century statecraft," are profound. From now on, US diplomatic relations with other countries will engage directly with their people and connect them to the American people as much as possible. From the perspective of US diplomats, the people of every country stand on the same footing as their government. That assumption is the heart of democracy; it is a revolution for diplomacy.

*The views expressed in this article are solely those of Anne-Marie Slaughter.*

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