Q358 The Chairman: Tara Sonenshine, good afternoon. I am David Howell, Chairman of our House of Lords Select Committee, here in London. We are very grateful to you for sparing time to join us this afternoon and share some thoughts with us on the subject preoccupying us, namely the pattern of international diplomacy; how it is changing with globalisation and the hyper-connectivity of the planet; how the new techniques of soft power or the marriage between hard and soft power or the smart power that is the result of that marriage can now be applied successfully in world affairs, both by the United States and, obviously, by the United Kingdom, with which we are concerned. That is the scene. I hope that sets it for you clearly. We would like to ask you a few questions. I am going to go straightaway with the first one and perhaps give you the opportunity to share some of your overview of the whole question.

We have lived through a decade or more of hard power activity in Iraq and in Afghanistan and, frankly, there is a general feeling that it has not produced the kind of results we would have liked to have seen. Indeed, we seem to have lost touch with some of the aims with which we were originally concerned. To what extent is the renewed interest in soft power on both sides of the Atlantic a bit of a rebound as a result of the disappointments in those two theatres?

Tara Sonenshine: Good afternoon to all of you. It is with great respect and humility that I come before you to provide some testimony to this Select Committee. I will address your question directly but, very briefly, I will say that my career has been at the intersection of international policy/smart power communications and media, and so I am delighted that you are taking such a hard look at it. Terminology is important. As you may know, I subscribe to the term used by Secretary Clinton, "smart power", and with great respect, of course, to Professor Nye who has spoken to you about soft power and hard power.

I think what I would like to focus on, in looking at the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, is first that we need to have a toolbox approach to this whole question of traditional diplomacy hard power/soft power. We need to see this as a whole of government, whole of community effort around using key tools: education exchanges, social media, foreign
assistance, government media, sport, traditional film. I would argue even travel and trade are part and parcel of the overall deployment of a number of techniques.

In response to the two conflict areas, I think you are right. First, the polling, to the degree to which you accept polls, suggests that Americans are particularly wary and leery of military involvement, especially when there are long-term engagements that cost lives and treasure. We see now a renewed interest in the alternatives to traditional military use of force, troops on the ground, and all of the military means; although I will tell you, and we will get into it, that the military can be very important in what I call a public diplomacy strategy. By that I mean engaging publics for the purposes of furthering your own national security objectives and for the purpose of communicating your values, interest, culture, short-term objectives, medium-term and long-term.

I see this whole public diplomacy field as a way in which Governments communicate with individuals overseas to further their national security objectives and, as you say, we must be clear what those objectives in an individual place are.

The Chairman: Thank you very much for that opening overview. I suppose the question that then follows from that—and I am going to ask Baroness Goudie, who is a member of our Committee, to come in on this—is: does the US have such a strategy or is this just the formulation of informal opinions?

Q359 Baroness Goudie: Good afternoon. On the question of soft power, since President Obama’s Administration I have seen that you have put, through the State Department and others, much more funding into soft power activities. I look on those as appointing Ambassador Melanne Verveer as Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women, appointing other people within the State Department and the Foreign Service to do work about empowerment across the divide, taking people from Afghanistan to Pakistan, Pakistan to Iran and other places like that. You are doing far more funding—I think more than the American people realise—into soft power activities, through the funding of NGOs and other organisations, and convening events together in a much softer way than you did before, and also not using the phrase, “We do it this way”.

Tara Sonenshine: We do believe that you need an overarching strategy and then you need the tactics and instruments to carry out that strategy. One strategy that you have identified well is the strategy of engagement and exchange and education: three “Es” that we feel are very much strategic pillars of this soft power/smart power public diplomacy.

On engagement, we can come back to social media and other forms of engagement, education, exchange and economic use of some of these tools. With regard to women, girls, marginalised populations, youth, all of this, we see that you must interact with people where they are and often where they are is on the web. While I was there the State Department committed to a very robust social media engagement strategy.

On the education side we see, whether it is Fulbright programmes or 140 other forms of educational exchange, that that is a very powerful vehicle for explaining your foreign policy, your values, your culture, your interests, but within the matrix of what people’s lives revolve around and that is their educational attainment.

The engagement strategy or all of these programmes that you see involving women entrepreneurs going back and forth or India/Pakistan bridging of dialogues is all premised on the belief that contact is important between and among individuals of different countries. Whether that contact happens virtually or physically around a dinner table or in a classroom or on a programme, what you are seeking is this interactivity around which you may see
short-term benefit, mid-term benefit and long-term benefit, and you need to measure those outcomes in a very systematic way. What are we gaining from these interactions and exchanges? Be they for women and girls, be they for vocational training, entrepreneurship or through foreign assistance, all of these are means by which you are engaging other cultures.

The Chairman: May we take some practical examples? There have been plenty. Only a few months ago, on both sides of the Atlantic, Governments were considering a very hard power action towards Mr Assad over his alleged chemical weapons use. The British and the French, with American support, used some hard power involvement in Libya. The whole situation in Iran is now changing in a very interesting way, where hard power has been threatened and is still on the table as a last resort. How do your thoughts and ideas fit in with all that? Give us some comments on that.

Tara Sonenshine: On Syria, I think we have all seen the polling data. The American Congress and the American people did not subscribe to the notion that military strikes would be the most effective way. I think this goes back to this opening point about the wariness and being leery of how much time we will have to spend in a given region and to what end. I think the public are looking for alternatives to that military use of hard power. They do not distinguish so much between whether that alternative is traditional, government to government diplomacy, international activity through the United Nations or through other bodies, or whether that means soft power as we would define it in a traditional way, but they know they want some alternatives tried, with the use of militaries being the last resort.

In the case of Iran, I think we can say that there has been a combination of efforts around trying to move the Iranians short of use of force. I would say the sanctions are obviously a form of more government pressure, international pressure, but in the case of Iran I would also call your attention to the fact that Secretary Clinton, and now it has continued under Secretary Kerry, created a virtual embassy for the United States in Iran. Absent a physical embassy, we have used the power of social media to deliver messages to the Iranian people. I would not discount the interest on the part of Iranian citizens to be engaged with the United States or the UK and the degree to which that will factor in to decisions that Iranian officials may make. There is contact, albeit in that case virtual, and we do have Iranian students in the United States. I think in each of these scenarios we are still dealing with some element of public engagement beyond simply Government to Government or international responses.

Q360 Baroness Hussein-Ece: You mentioned Pakistan earlier and you talked about engaging and diplomacy. I want to ask you about the United States policy on drone attacks because you will be aware of the negative impact that does have on diplomacy, for example. I wanted to know whether you think there is a danger of that undermining all the investment in the work that is going into soft power and diplomacy. For example, we have a large diaspora here in the United Kingdom of Pakistan origin who are extremely negative and angry about what the United States is doing in terms of drone attacks. I believe that when she spoke at the United Nations recently, Malala, the young woman who was shot by the Taliban made a plea that this policy was recruiting and radicalising more young men than it was resolving. I would just be interested in your views on this.

Tara Sonenshine: For one to be very honest and genuine about the field of public diplomacy one has to concede that there will be times when what you are seeking to achieve through your cultural diplomacy, your educational outreach, discussions of your values, will most definitely clash with what may be happening on the policy side of the ledger. I think it is
fair to say that there are times when those things come into conflict, but you stay the course on the engagement front, in my view, because you are looking beyond the short-term stresses and strains in the bilateral relationship over particular issues. Drones in Pakistan are a good example.

I did a public diplomacy mission to Pakistan during my stay as Under-Secretary and I knew, in speaking at a college in Lahore, that I would face very difficult questions. Students did come to the microphone and say, “But how can we be engaged with you educationally when you are having drone strikes that take casualties?” They were critical of the United States coming in to get Bin Laden. They were critical of a shooting that had happened in Lahore. What I explained to them—and I think those young people understood—was that there will be ups and downs where our countries will disagree over issues relating to countering violent extremism or particular policies vis-à-vis Afghanistan, but there are some common areas of concern: education; health; finding employment; living in a secure and safe environment; having individuals like Malala able to speak out without retribution.

Once we got to those issues I must say that something happens with publics. Then when I tell them that one of the largest Fulbright programmes that the United States has in the world is in Pakistan and that we do a State Department scholarship programme to teach English for impoverished world marginalised communities, you will be amazed particularly with young people who can accept that we may disagree on foreign policy and defence issues but still find respect for American science, technology, education, even our films, although some would prefer we not export too much of our values by those means. I do think you can get through that maze and minefield, literally, of policy dispute if you see a broader engagement strategy that you think will deliver some benefit to both societies.

The Chairman: I have not quite got hold of the connecting links between the soft power engagement you are talking about, Tara, and the actual policy being pursued by the United States Government. All over the world you hear both tunes, if I may say so. You hear about American culture, its contribution and major programmes of scholarship. We all know that certain aspects of American culture dominate the world, like Hollywood, and yet you hear about American insensitivity, demanding that certain values be swallowed regardless, heavy-handedness and so on. How do these two things match up? Are you winning? Is your line of thinking winning over the idea of tougher gentlemen and ladies who would say, “Just send in the rockets; send in the gunboats”?

Tara Sonenshine: Let me give you some concrete examples where we have measured the impact of this. One is in the area of extremism. Can you use engagement and contact with others to lower the temperature in terms of countering violent extremism? A couple of years ago our President asked if we would look at the possibility of utilising some of this social media interaction to take a look at a very hard power issue of countering violent extremism. What became formalised in presidential executive order 13584 in 2011 was the establishment of an interagency Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications. This was a new concept to try to see if we could orientate and inform others in this space on social media where we know a lot of communications happens around terrorism and violent extremism, particularly in the case of al-Qaeda.

This was moved into the Office of Public Diplomacy to co-ordinate. What goes on there is that we are essentially taking a very upfront, transparent US Government media, social media, video communications and going into previously uncontested space. What I mean by that is we are joining the online conversations in which there is a great deal of misinformation about US intentions and what our strategy is vis-à-vis countering extremism.
What we have seen over time is that you cannot one-for-one say, “I am preventing this individual from going down a given path”. However, you can see that the conversation begins to change around issues such as: what is the alternative if you are seeking a violent path to get your objectives? What else might be an alternative open to you, a programme, an education, a job, training. We have ways of noting that we are more in that conversation by pulling up our chair at the table.

Congress would say, “I need something more concrete”. We would say, “All right, what is the economic impact of engaging foreign students?” Congress has asked me at times, “How many foreigners are on our American campuses, international students?” The answer is: close to 800,000 per year. People will say, “What do we get from that beyond exposing Tunisian students or Egyptian or Libyans to our values and culture? Tell me something you get from this?” My research determined that the presence of those international students on American campuses, beyond the moral, cultural soft power/smart power, public diplomacy value, delivers roughly $22 billion to our US economy across 50 states. It was stunning to know that the presence of those international students delivers real economic value.

Then we looked years hence from the time students arrived; five years, 10 years and 15 years. Many of those who came on Fulbright scholarships, Gilmans, went back and became productive citizens in their Parliaments, their Governments, and their non-governmental organisations. Many became Nobel Prize winners. I must say there is an untold story of impact and influence and real change that happens if you are willing to see this in the long sweep. It is not just, “What is the reaction to drones on Monday?” but, “What are we doing to produce productive citizens who share a positive, productive, global peace and prosperity agenda in the out years?” I would say, finally, what is the alternative to doing it? It is such a small amount of our budget that it is almost paltry when you compare it with other things we may do to try to influence or shape publics overseas. I hope that is the beginnings of an answer for you.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed. That is very clear.

Q361 Lord Forsyth of Drumlean: First, can I just say how much I admire what you are doing in respect of education and engagement in countries like Pakistan, and if you will permit me a small anecdote? In the summer before 9/11, I went to climb a mountain on the far borders of Pakistan and China. We had 40 porters. They came from a village where the life expectancy was less than 40. There was no school apart from a school that had been provided by an expedition. I spent three weeks with them. Every one of them hated America with a passion. They said that Americans took more than their fair share of world resources. They said that the Americans have no respect for other people’s culture and their only way is their own way. They said that Americans took more than their fair share of world resources. They said that the Americans have no respect for other people’s culture and their only way is their own way. One of the reasons I was opposed to the war in Iraq was because I just imagined—and these people would not have televisions so they would not have seen it—the impact on a whole load of people around the globe of seeing on the television screens the so-called shock and awe.

My question to you is, yes, I can see how Fulbright scholarships are going to bring opinion-formers and so on, but what do you think is the source of these people who have no education? They are lovely people, some of the most balanced people that I have met. How can they have such a distorted view? Where is this coming from? Social media and so on is fine if you have a mobile phone, but there are millions of people like this around the world who have this view of the United States and indeed, more broadly, of the west. One of them said to me, “We would never bear guns when the British were here”, and I said, “It did not
feel like that at the time”. So there is a duopoly of views. To my mind, what you are trying to do is terrific but the problem is much broader. Would you agree?

**Tara Sonenshine:** Indeed. The answer to your question of what is the source of the disdain and the resentment, I truly believe is estrangement. I do think, when you are cut off and you have no information about the other, you are left with rumour, innuendo, a glimpse here and there, or what you imagine another society might be.

**Lord Forsyth of Drumlean:** I do not want to interrupt you but do you think that the clue might lie in, “The Americans only think their way is the best way”? Does it not have to be a two-way communication?

**Tara Sonenshine:** I think it is multiway at this point. For those who are not wired and connected, you have to get out into those rural villages. You have to do what the British Council does. What American spaces do. For example, we have 850 small spaces around the world, many of them outside the embassy and some of them now mobile, where essentially they are places of contact with ordinary citizens. I think about it in a way like the old circus tents that would come around.

You do have to come down to personal relationship-building, particularly when you cannot do this virtually. It is expensive and you will not reach every single remote village. You send your public diplomats out from every embassy. All of our embassies now have expertise in public diplomacy, local contact with local media, with citizens. Unfortunately, security is one of the greatest challenges now for public diplomacy. If you cannot get out from behind that high embassy fortress wall you may not be able to reach people.

In my travels in Ethiopia beyond Addis I went to very small places where those students did not have computers, but I must tell you the proliferation of cell phone mobile technology, even to the most remote areas, begins to connect. Even a rural farmer who has no access to the marketplace can now pick up information through mobile technology. In a sense, we have to keep pace with where that is going. If we simply abandon the notion of reaching individuals, just at a time when a globalised economy and information infrastructure allows so much more penetration, I am afraid we would be ceding the ground to all notions that it is simply too high a wall to scale and I think we have to keep coming at this and cutting at it from different points.

I would also mention to you the role of the military in an effort such as Tomodachi after the triple disasters in Japan. Many of the missions that US military do in the wake of a disaster are in areas where they will tell you there was great suspicion about America, but then came the earthquake or the tsunami or a nuclear disaster and then the US military sends its Mercy ships to provide medical care; then these helicopters come dropping food; then come these large US aid boxes that have the American flag on them and opinions shifted greatly in Tacloban in the Philippines or in areas of Japan where people were very dubious of our military presence for a very long time.

I think you simply have to stay the course with these efforts and not abandon ship, because you have your eye on something very long term and something that requires developing a field of expertise around this public diplomacy. It must be trained and taught in a systematic curriculum that says, “How are you going to extend your values, your national security and your ideals, extending it around the world?”

**Q362 Lord Janvrin:** Can I pick up on something you mentioned earlier about the overarching strategy of engagement, exchange, education and economic impact and how that relates to the overarching hard power strategy? If you took as an example the pivot to Asia
and the American policy towards Asia, which involves a significant deployment of hard power resources, naval resources, is there integrated with that a soft power strategy of the same sort of dimension and what is the shape of it? What I am trying to find out is how you integrate the Pentagon with your thinking about public diplomacy.

**Tara Sonenshine:** I do think you need a civilian military strategy. First, as we know, the Pentagon defence budgets are such that they can do a great deal in the communication space, although there is always suspicion around strategic communications deployed by US military. None the less, I think there are more and more conversations across the so-called civil divide around how we can work together. If we are going to have an increased naval presence in the Asia region, for example, what else do we need to be doing on the education exchange front;—sport diplomacy with Burma, for example?

Certainly we all know the Chinese strategy has been to match whatever they do with a soft power/smart power strategy. Their Confucius Institutes have sprung up in the United States and overseas where they have deployed teachers, instructors of Chinese language and participants in political science discussions, and it is no secret that they believe that there is some impact. Whether they are having that impact we can debate separately but, in terms of the Asia-Pacific region, I think we do try to say: as well as having more military power in the region, what are we doing to match the fact that 25% of our international students here are coming from China?

What are our Peace Corps volunteers or the equivalent in other countries doing to have a presence in parts of the world where we can do good? What is our strategy around empowering women and girls in Burma or media development or whether it is BBC or Voice of America? How are we taking multiple tools from this public diplomacy toolbox so that we leverage what the military might be doing and what the diplomats might be doing? Can we set the table for a Middle East peace agreement? Can we encourage some sort of civil society discussion that might fortify what the diplomats are doing or might make it less likely that we need militaries to resolve conflicts, to prevent them or to deal with post-conflict societies?

Governments are large, so they fall victim to the bureaucratic resource debates and the lack of coherence around this kind of joint holistic strategy. Unless you see this in a very holistic way it is very difficult to achieve, but very important to set out to weave the tapestry.

**The Chairman:** But, Tara, one of the oracles of soft power is Joe Nye, who I am sure you know and we know; he has given evidence to our Committee. Does he not say that the secret of the whole different approach must be to engage with and work with rather than work against, to gather around the intentions and aims of others in order to establish a common direction? What you have just said partly answers that because you say there are thousands of Chinese students and so on, but you have also said that the battle fleets are floating round the Pacific. How do these two things match up together? It is very hard for us to understand.

**Tara Sonenshine:** If you take Afghanistan, to go back full circle, in addition to Afghan communities relating to the presence of US military, we found early on that we needed female US military to be on the ground in Afghanistan if we were going to use the military to create some kind of community that would be less hostile to the presence. If you simply said, “We have guys in helmets, well armed in villages in Afghanistan doing hard power”, it was important to explain. The Pentagon was quite good about saying, “Then what you are saying is we need to deploy female engagement teams as well, because you are saying there is
something that even the presence of military can do to better relate to the community if we want a lessening of tensions”.

I do not see the military as a zero-sum game, with regard to integrated thinking about individual lives, who you are trying to either protect against something or enjoin to something. If you do not have the ordinary citizen in your mind at that checkpoint and you are going to search every female Afghan woman coming in by a male soldier, you may breed the very hostility that your colleague found in a remote mountain area of Swat or Pakistan, simply because you did not consider the individual and the people diplomacy, soft power, smart power, hard power integrated strategy and so you have defeated your objectives rather than enhanced them. I hope that perhaps gives you a sense of taking into account this individual some place and their needs for security, education, engagement, contact and business.

The perceptions of one another cannot also be lost here. None of us like polling data, but we all look at it very closely: what is the US view of other countries and how is the United States perceived by other countries? Those snapshots are simply snapshots in time, but what we can see over time: is there some movement on some fronts that we might see as trend lines going forward?

The Chairman: Baroness Goudie, are there some themes there that you would like to pursue?

Baroness Goudie: I find it very difficult to accept, in terms of military on the ground in Afghanistan, that you would only consider putting women there because of the situation in Afghanistan. I find that quite difficult to reconcile as part of soft and hard power because women are part of the military, I would take it.

Tara Sonenshine: Yes. They are increasingly but not targeted. In that case they were not utilised in a needs assessment way.

Q363 The Chairman: Still on this theme, early on you talked about public diplomacy experts in every US embassy. The question in our mind is: who briefs them? How do they know what message to put over? What is the source in the Administration or in Washington generally that generates the messages that these public diplomacy experts have to convey?

Tara Sonenshine: Let me give you some of the facts on this because, in part, it is a combination of public diplomacy and public affairs. My title at the State Department was Under-Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, because oftentimes in the field your public affairs officer is very much tied to what your public diplomacy intentions are. For example, the State Department budget oversees 3,540 public diplomacy and public affairs positions. Some of those are Foreign Service officer positions in embassies. Some are civil service positions in Washington or the US and, often and very importantly, are locally engaged staff from those countries who speak the language and know the culture. There is still centralised guidance, talking points, messages that emanate from Washington to the field, and more and more some listening by Washington to the messages from the field. Just as you might have your British Councils or other presence—Goethe Institutes are what the Germans might be using—we have both American spaces and public diplomacy officials within embassies that are doing that constant contact on the ground in local regions. I hope that answers the question.

Many are trained at the Foreign Service Institute, taking courses in public diplomacy, social media, online, business contact, trade and travel. More and more we see tourism, for example, as a very important tool in the toolbox. If you increase contact, utilising tourism,
you also begin to see not only the value upside of contact but the economics and jobs upside if you can create that back and forth. That is part of what we are talking about here in terms of engaging civil society.

**The Chairman:** Let us go on to question 4.

**Q364 Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top:** Good afternoon. The work that is going on with Iran and the beginnings of an agreement with Iran, do you see that as having come from a hard power perspective of tough sanctions? In relation to everything else that you have been saying, it is interesting to think where it is going to go because it is also bringing a lot of anxiety to some of America's traditional allies: Israel, Saudi Arabia and so on. How do you deal with that level of complexity?

**Tara Sonenshine:** I think we all know this is a multilayered chess game, the situation in Iran being particularly multidimensional in the layers of complexity. Clearly, in terms of sticks and carrots, the economic sanctions have begun to wear down on the Iranian public, in a sense setting the scene for renewed interest in contact for their purely economic reasons. At the same time that we like to focus on those sanctions, I am deeply aware that there have been other ways of seeding the ground for this kind of development. One is we have had a Persian news network operating in Iran and I think the BBC has been in and out. We have had some reporting, some contact.

As I say, we have had this virtual embassy. Even when the Iranian Government has virtually pulled our embassy down, we put it back up and the cat-and-mouse game continues. I think that you have to say: in the end is this going to be something that publics, even when their respective Governments do not like it, think should succeed? Should it progress? Will it have popular support in countries irrespective of their foreign policy positions early on? Clearly we do not know that yet, but I guess what we are all saying is that you cannot discount the role of individuals in these dramas because the very same individual, who might be a cleric or a government official, also deals with a flock of sermon listeners or students in a class or a public square where a protest may emerge.

How could we even think that we might wall ourselves off behind traditional diplomacy with simply hard power and then be surprised when the public is galvanised because they have chosen to see something different? My argument is that we constantly integrate this public diplomacy piece. Overwhelming as it is to imagine how you might engage an individual Iranian cleric, what we have seen in other regions is that engaging mullahs or religious leaders sometimes will make the critical difference as to whether you have an eruption of violence in a given area or not, if you have any human contact with these individual leaders in a local or civil society context.

**The Chairman:** Of course, one area where the negotiations in Iran have not been at all popular is Israel, among the Israeli leadership. Israel has been highly critical. Where does your line of thinking meet up with that situation? Are you looking to those Israelis who are feeling in a more positive state of mind? Are you working on the Israeli Government? How does soft power meet this very hard and difficult situation that you have encountered with the strong Israeli criticism of negotiations with Iran on anything?

**Tara Sonenshine:** Certainly Israeli public opinion is very multifaceted, multilayered. I think we hear mostly the hard line position communicated but I think when one probes a bit you can find those—even in the Israeli military, and certainly in different parties in their Parliament and their Government—parts of coalitions that might not project the same hard
line. I would agree that their public diplomacy is very much focused on the animosity towards this agreement.

At the same time, when you look at the issues around Middle East peace for example, what you see are these shades of difference in the public opinion. In a small country I will tell you that those different blocks and coalitions and strange bedfellows and public views can strongly influence where a Government in a place like Israel may or may not go. We certainly hear the loud voices of the opposition to this, but I think a more sophisticated reading would say it is not the only voice emanating from there.

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** I wanted to go on to looking the other way round.

**The Chairman:** We are about to do that, yes. I am now going to turn the tables and see if you have some advice for us, because we have run up against some blockages and lack some progress. I am particularly thinking of the relations with Argentina over the Falklands and that sort of thing, so perhaps there are some soft power ways through here. Let us have a question from Lord Forsyth as to how you see our affairs.

**Q365 Lord Forsyth of Drumlean:** The Scottish poet Robert Burns pleaded for some power, “the giftie gie us to see oursels as ithers see us”. Can I encourage you to be quite frank with us and perhaps give us your view on where you think the US views the United Kingdom today? Are we seen as the US’s best and most compliant friend or as a lesser member of the EU, with Germany as the continent’s real player, or somewhere in between? We will not be offended.

**Tara Sonenshine:** I think, first, with all the caveats around polling data, what I have looked at is two sets of research. I will give you my own personal view at the end, but I think what is more important is the public’s view. Gallup, as you may know, recently had Americans listing Canada and Great Britain as their two favourite countries, with 88% favourability for the United Kingdom. Of course, when you dig deeper into that you find some obvious reasons: common language, a sense of fascination with British royalty, a love of everything from “Lord of the Rings” to “The Hobbit” to “Shakespeare” to television.

I think there is at least in that a US/UK special relationship. When you ask citizens of your country they generally give the US high ratings, but not as high as we give you. That is interesting. I do think that on the education front the UK hosted the largest number of US students last year, close to 35,000; so it is a common destination for us and, of course, sport diplomacy, Olympics, travel and trade, all of that.

Where I think there are questions and some concerns is around diaspora communities. You mentioned that earlier. I do think this complex added factor that both societies have over immigration and how to deal with essentially “the other” is probably where you would get the most candid expert opinions saying, “We are not quite sure how we are handling the issue of dealing with those who emanate from other countries, even though we see ourselves as a melting pot, and we are not quite sure how you are managing on that issue”. Those very much influence those places of origin from whence and where those diaspora communities arise.

I think there is a major public diplomacy challenge for both countries in how to relate to diaspora countries. We used to think of it not as a foreign policy issue but as a local national question, when it is very much a global issue with the mobility, the transportation, the remittances that go back and forth, and the ideas over the web that go back and forth. I would say that is probably the weak suit when one is looking at public diplomacy.
Lord Forsyth of Drumlean: About the special relationship question, I asked you specifically whether we were seen as your most compliant and reliable friend or as a lesser member of the EU?

Tara Sonenshine: On that one I would say that when you ask people how they define the relationship they often use the word “partner”. I do not think the ordinary citizen knows the special transatlantic relationship. I do think that the UK still emerges in the EU pact for most Americans as their relatives in a familial sense.

There is a growing understanding that the European Union, which has been doing its own public diplomacy by the way, is creating a sense of almost a flag that is very much Europe in the United States. It is going to be interesting to see how that plays out against French public diplomacy, British public diplomacy, German public diplomacy and now this kind of European day approach. I think that is something interesting to look at: will there be coherence around the tip and other things that represents?

I do think you only need look at the Royal Family coverage here or the television shows to know that there is something unique grounded in commonality over history in English. I think we see it as a very special, very unique, very family-like relationship. You might be probing, but I do not sense anything that is negative.

The Chairman: Would it be fair to say that America would be even better received in Britain than it is—and it is pretty good—if there was less talk about leadership by America of the free world and American values and so on, and more talk about partnership, the very word you have just mentioned? Is that a change of emphasis that you would like to see in America? I think probably we would like to see it here.

Tara Sonenshine: I think there is much more of a multilateral conversation that I sense going on under President Obama for years now, which has been about shared interest, mutuality, commonality and trade agreements. I do not sense as much this arrogance over unilateral positioning but, again, I am not on the receiving end of it. I do think we have moved to talk about partnerships and global climate, dealing with poverty and food insecurity and multilateral institutions.

I presume every country, in seeking to draw attention to its unique role in the world, risks that kind of backlash against an egocentric view of some unique leadership position. I think this has been rather a coalition-type approach to issues, but you may be hearing it through a different set of ears and eyes.

Q366 Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: I want to follow up what Lord Forsyth asked you. You have been far too nice to us. The one very helpful point you made is about the diaspora communities. I think that is something we have to pick up because we haven’t had that fully explored yet how we deal with the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent people here. I think that is a very helpful point you have made. But there must be other things that annoy you about Britain. You must say, “They are doing too much of that”, or “They do not do enough of that”, or “They go about this the wrong way”. You are being far too nice. Can you think of anything else?

The Chairman: There is a challenge for you.

Tara Sonenshine: I would not put your culinary diplomacy as your top—

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: That is a start.
**Tara Sonenshine:** The Italians have it over you on food diplomacy. I think there is always a perception of, “Is it stuffy?” I say that most public diplomacy begins at the airport. That is your first contact and so I have never had any problems—

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** Do you have a lot of people saying to you they have problems when they arrive at British airports, huge queues and problems like that?

**Tara Sonenshine:** Yes, Customs. Your first view of another country is, when you step off the plane on to their territory, will the person be warm and welcoming? Will I feel that I do not just get my stamp, but I am now viewed as an asset to your culture and society? The formality. I keep saying even to our folks, TSA and others, “This security issue”, and it is in a very serious way, “can be a turnoff to people travelling to another country”.

The five things that people look at when they come to another country are, “Will I find my way around? Are their maps good? Are the guides good? Are the hotel prices reasonable? Can I get into the museums?” That is clearly at an elitist level of contact, “Can I make my way through your system of applying for visas and documents?” Truly, I think we are all looking at how easy it is to have contact with British society.

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** You were a TV producer. Supposing you were sending one of your reporters to Britain to winkle out some of the things that you find we are weak at and we could do better on, what other things could you point to? Where would you send them?

**Tara Sonenshine:** I would start in the airports, of course. I would send them out to some of the immigrant communities and see if they felt welcome at a mosque. If they were travelling with a scarf on their head, would they feel comfortable? We have the same issues. Would I feel profiled? Would I feel in any way diminished by how I visually or visibly look? We have looked at this in regard to other European countries, how women feel travelling. We have looked at it in the context of India and other places. Do I feel physically safe? Is there crime? Is there terrorism? Are the prices reasonable?

This is where I think the economic piece of engagement is becoming so critical, “Can I afford to even visit some of these places?” Again, it is back to putting ourselves in the mind of individuals, not just Governments, and imagining that we are part of the public and how we receive those images and perceptions beyond what we think of drones. I think there is a more human part of this soft power/smart power, even hard power, traditional diplomacy that is about public understanding. At the end of the day we are public servants and, therefore, we take our cues from the board of directors, which is ultimately the consumer, the citizen and the person who is on the receiving end of our policies.

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** Thank you very much. That is very helpful.

**The Chairman:** Of course, the consumer is empowered as never before with information and connectivity. This has been very useful. Baroness Hussein-Ece, you are going to have the last question.

**Q367 Baroness Hussein-Ece:** Thank you very much. I was going to come back and pick up your point on the diaspora, which I asked you about in the drone question, but my colleague here, Lord Foulkes, expanded it somewhat.

I want to ask you your views because you mentioned that, in terms of the United Kingdom, perhaps there are some issues in our diaspora community about how they may be treated or how their views might be reflected, certainly with the host countries from which they originated from. You brought this up and you did not expand on it.
Looking at the United States now, you have a black President. You have many more women and ethnic minority-origin people in key positions in the United States Administration. Sadly, we are very far behind on that score, even though we have had diaspora communities settled here in this country for over half a century. Earlier there have been questions asked about: are we seen as perhaps being a small group of people from an elite background still in positions of power without some of the diaspora communities perhaps getting a fair share of influence?

What is your perception in terms of when you look at the United Kingdom, leaving aside the monarchy, “Downton Abbey” and these sorts of things? In reality what is your personal perception?

Tara Sonenshine: I think outreach to the Muslim world and to Muslim communities remains a very important separate conversation and session to be had because it deals with very sensitive issues of faith diplomacy, of understanding differences and of our tendency in all societies to reach prejudice or discrimination conclusions based on events that have occurred and linger, but we do not have an open, honest conversation about stereotypes, about interfaith dialogue and about people's comfort level with others who occupy the country.

These are conversations that have to happen, beginning in younger primary schools where we formulate images, where we hear what our parents or grandparents think or what they have experienced, and I do think there is a whole host of outreach around women and girls in this space.

I think the Malala episode has brought to the fore, frankly, a very positive image of a young Pakistani girl that becomes a symbol. When you now think, “Young girl, Pakistan youth”, right away from a media perspective you have a slightly different image. Seeing her give her book to the Queen, these are powerful metaphoric moments and they have to be followed with real change, with curriculum, with the way public messaging happens.

I could spend a great deal of time simply on that. At the same time with our Asian communities I think there is a perception abroad that China has moved in, even in places like the UK and others, and just simply invested and put their money into things. What is the country itself getting back? They may be getting a new airport or jobs or a hotel sector, but we do not spend time in dissecting what these images may lead to. At the end of the day this whole field is about influencing how people think, feel and behave.

I think we were content to just see this as a hearts and minds issue, but it comes down to how people act upon the information they receive, the impressions they form, and meeting these people where they are as opposed to simply projecting where we want them to be. That respect for one another's faith, culture, identity, place and position, that is where the hard work happens in that communication of values and impressions.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Tara Sonenshine. We must leave it there because we have taken up a lot of your time. You have vast experience, which you have shared with us. You have acted as a little mirror. We can look at ourselves a bit, which is one of the tasks we have to do to report both to our Government and to our wider public, and I think it is the wider public that is the big actor in this story. Thank you very much again for your time. We appreciate everything you have said very much indeed. Thank you so much.

Tara Sonenshine: Thank you. I look forward to reading more on the website. Thank you so much.

The Chairman: Thank you.