

State Department launches 'Opinion Space' website

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Front of the US State Department in Washington, DC. The US State Department launched a new website on Monday seeking the opinions of people around the world on global issues and US foreign policy.

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The site located at state.gov/opinionspace is designed to "foster global conversations on foreign affairs," the [State Department](#) said.

"Opinion Space will harness the power of connection technologies to provide a unique forum for international dialogue," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in a statement.

"This is an example of what we call 21st century statecraft and an opportunity to extend our engagement beyond the halls of government directly to the people of the world.

"I can't wait to be a part of this exciting new conversation," she added.

The site, accessible worldwide, invites users to "share their perspectives and ideas on US [foreign policy](#)."

Opinion Space users are asked to provide an email address and identify the country where they live to make their views known.

A visual "opinion map" illustrates "which ideas result in the most discussion and which are judged most insightful by the community of participants."

The State Department said Opinion Space was developed jointly with the University of California at Berkeley's Center for New Media (BCNM).

BCNM director Ken Goldberg said the map "is not based on geography or predetermined categories, but on similarity of opinion.

"Opinion Space is designed to 'depolarize' discussions by including all participants on a level playing field," the University of California professor said.

To get the conversation going, the State Department posted an initial discussion question.

"If you met US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, what issue would you tell her about, why is it important to you, and what specific suggestions do you have for addressing it?" it asked.

Users are also asked whether they "strongly disagree" or "strongly agree" with statements such as "[climate change](#) poses a threat to political stability around the world."

The State Department has enthusiastically embraced the Internet and social networking tools as part of the exercise it calls "21st century statecraft."

Its recently revamped website, state.gov, features front-page links to the State Department's official blog, DipNote, its YouTube channel, its Twitter feed, its Facebook page and its Flickr photo account.

President Barack Obama relied heavily on the Internet during his election campaign and his new media team has been pushing agencies across the government to incorporate Web 2.0 tools into their operations.

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