Preventing the Clash: Reexamining U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Middle East

Clifton Martin

University of Denver

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Preventing the Clash:
Reexamining U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Middle East

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by
Clifton Martin

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Advisor: Dr. Nader Hashemi
Abstract

This paper analyzes U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East. In explaining the concept of public diplomacy itself and its evolution in the United States, four factors are identified as most crucial to the capabilities and limitations of U.S. public diplomacy in the region: U.S. foreign policy options, institutions, strategies, and tools. These factors are shown to affect the outcome of U.S. public diplomacy programming in the Middle East and are the foundation for a new U.S. public diplomacy model.

The paper continues by examining the development of contemporary U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, providing a traceable landscape upon which U.S. public diplomacy sits and responds to increasingly negative public opinion of the United States. Generally, U.S. foreign policy has shifted toward more aggressive containment policies while promoting support of democratization despite partnership with repressive regimes. While the United States is able to pursue a containment strategy, such contradictory elements exacerbate the structural and institutional limitations of its public diplomacy outcomes in the region.

Finally, this paper considers whether or not U.S. public diplomacy has been an underdeveloped foreign policy tool. The conclusion is that the capabilities of the current U.S. public diplomacy experiment are substantially limited due to a lack of institutional participation in the outset of policy formulation. As such, brief recommendations are put forth to correct these contradictory elements of U.S. foreign policy.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Nader Hashemi who served as my thesis advisor. I would also like to thank Professor Andrea Stanton, Professor Paul R. Viotti, and Professor Lewis Griffith for serving on my defense panel. Each of these scholars prompted me to approach this topic critically. I am grateful to the practitioners of public diplomacy who provided unique insight: Andrew Koss, Matt Armstrong, Ambassador Christopher R. Hill, and Dr. Condoleezza Rice. I must also thank Doug Garrison, Brett Schneider, and Kara Kingma, who shared their encouragement, commiseration, and willingness to listen to my ideas for the past two years. And I am forever thankful to Meghan Moynihan, who will get to hear my ideas for the rest of her life.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“It is possible to manage processes, but not outcomes.”

-J.E. Grunig

Current foreign relations between the United States and Middle Eastern states vary from cooperative to hostile. In December 2011, after more than seven years of war, the United States ceased combat operations in Iraq; however, troops remain to “advise and assist” in restructuring efforts. In May 2012, President Obama announced the end of the war in Afghanistan with a similar corollary. Unmanned aerial systems operations against terrorist targets persist in Yemen. Meanwhile, the current administration reemphasizes the “special” U.S. relationship with Israel—one seen as belligerent to the majority of Arab states and Iran. In the decade since 9/11, America’s complex mix of armed intervention, containment of terrorist threat, and democratization agenda while upholding the region’s most repressive regimes, foster negative perceptions of U.S. foreign policy that exist throughout the Middle East.

Following the events of 9/11, the U.S. Government began to reinvest in public diplomacy as a means to alleviate the preponderance of Middle Eastern populations’ negative attitudes toward the United States. One public diplomacy objective is to influence foreign opinion of the United States, thus opinion polls such as Gallup and Zogby are widely assumed to represent whether such strategies are accomplishing their goals. For example, President Barack Obama’s Cairo speech in June 2009 was meant to rebuild American credibility in the region. However, Gallup’s 2010 poll “Measuring the
State of Muslim-West Relations: Assessing the New Beginning,” reported that the U.S. Government’s approval rating in Egypt dropped from 38 percent in 2009 (post-Cairo speech) to 18 percent the following year.¹

The U.S. Department of State broadly defines public diplomacy action as informing and influencing foreign publics, as well as expanding and strengthening the relationship between the people and government of the United States and their counterparts abroad. The Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs manages public diplomacy conducted by the U.S. Department of State, a position inaugurated during the first George W. Bush Administration and expanded under the leadership of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. However, public diplomacy programs are supported across the government agencies; cultural and professional exchanges are government-wide projects overseen by the State Department’s Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs, and the independent Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) operates international broadcasting under the guidance of the Secretary of State.

Tara Sonenshine assumed the authorities of Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs on April 5, 2012. Her swearing-in remarks included the mantra of public diplomacy: "Policy is about people."² This simple statement echoes President Barack Obama’s 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS) wherein the President calls for sustained efforts in “engagement among peoples—not just governments—

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around the world.” The unfolding Arab Spring has demonstrated further the critical need to consider public opinion. As Shibley Telhami points out:

> When America pursues a strategy that ignores public sentiments in the region, we should have no illusion about the means that governments will have to employ to accommodate such policies: more repression.¹

As restructuring of states continue throughout the Middle East, there is no question that public opinion will have enormous influence on U.S. foreign policy.

The results of public opinion polls, however, comprise just one set of variables that may reflect and affect the strategy of U.S. public diplomacy practiced in the Middle East and where U.S. public diplomacy may be headed in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. Over the next decade, U.S. military presence will change, Middle Eastern governments will continue to liberalize, economic partnerships and official relations with the United States will shift, more students will possess a higher education degree, and rising public diplomacy spending is expected to continue. Analysis of the possible variables that affect changes in the types of public diplomacy may permit a better understanding of the next decade of U.S. public diplomacy planning and development.

The following bar graph was prepared by Eric Lief for the Armitage-Nye Joint Testimony before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 24, 2008. The data is derived from the U.S. Office of Budget Management. Since 2000, there has been a steady increase in U.S. public diplomacy spending. FY 2009 witnessed a slight decrease in appropriated funds ($932,806,000) but increased by 21.52% ($1,133,521,000) the following year, and a 13.6% requested increase in FY 2011($1,287,680,000). The

implication is that public diplomacy is not a disintegrating practice in U.S. foreign policy, and understanding how and why the United States conducts its public diplomacy is essential.

**Figure 1: U.S. Public Diplomacy Spending, 1994-2008**

Current annual public diplomacy spending is just under $1.5 billion—a small fraction of what France and Britain each spend annually on public diplomacy efforts. Figure 6 shows the past 15 years of U.S. spending on public diplomacy.

**Research Question, Thesis Statement, and Purpose of Thesis**

There are several research questions guiding this paper: What is public diplomacy? What are the historical foreign policy objectives of the United States in the Middle East? How have these historical objectives informed U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East? Within what institutional framework does U.S. public diplomacy exist? What are the post-9/11 era’s implications for the U.S. public diplomacy process?

This paper identifies three broad but increasingly aggressive foreign policy themes of the United States in the Middle East over the course of their historic relations: diplomatic engagement, containment of adversaries, and armed intervention. It is across
these thematic periods that both the external threats to U.S. security and internal organization of U.S. public diplomacy institutions will be examined.

My thesis is that U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East has been an underdeveloped process due to its lack of inclusion at the onset of policy formulation; despite public diplomacy’s considerable institutional development over the past one hundred years, minimal incorporation of Middle Eastern public opinion at the onset of policy formulation has limited the capabilities of the U.S. public diplomacy programs in the region. By extension, recent criticism of public diplomacy is in part due to a fundamental misunderstanding of the concept of public diplomacy itself, which led to an ill-suited application of public diplomacy in the immediate response to 9/11. A weakened post-Cold War public diplomacy institution and mounting popular discontent with the United States since WWII explain how twenty-first century public diplomacy in the Middle East was doomed to fail.

Following the attacks on 9/11, there was a surge in writings on public diplomacy. However, much of this contemporary analysis has focused on prescriptions for “winning the hearts and minds” of the peoples of the Middle East or an opportunity for polemical critiques of U.S. foreign policy in the region. Others focus narrowly on developing a public diplomacy theory, dismissing the institution of public diplomacy itself and its historical application all together.⁴ William Rugh, a public diplomacy practitioner and scholar at the Fletcher School, however, provides an excellent history of public diplomacy in the Arab world. This thesis follows a similar organization, tracing public diplomacy

diplomacy through historical case analysis, but departs from Rugh’s political-centric analysis toward a broader investigation of the structural and institutional process. The theoretical basis for this thesis focuses on when and why public diplomacy has been a prominent U.S. foreign policy tool in the Middle East. By taking a comprehensive view, this thesis should provide a firm understanding of the capabilities of public diplomacy in the Middle East, both historically and at present.

**Thesis Research Design**

This research will first provide a conceptual model of public diplomacy functions, by analyzing the procedural limitations of U.S. public diplomacy institutions, and by evaluating historical trends in U.S. foreign policy, which guides public diplomacy operations in the Middle East. This conceptual foundation of public diplomacy is drawn largely from the literature. However, building a more coherent understanding of public diplomacy will rely on application of both international relations and integrated marketing communications theory. This interdisciplinary approach encourages a comprehensive understanding of the policy objectives, organization, strategy, and instruments of public diplomacy to be evaluated across historical analysis of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

Due to legal restrictions on public diplomacy data, evaluation of U.S. public diplomacy institutions is based on documentary analysis, drawing from official U.S. government documents, newspaper articles, scholarly journal articles, authoritative books and interviews with public diplomacy practitioners, including career public diplomacy officer Andrew Koss, the last Executive Director of the U.S. Advisory Commission on
Public Diplomacy Matt Armstrong, former Ambassador to Iraq Christopher R. Hill, and 66th U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

The paper will consider U.S. history in the Middle East to build the argument that the capabilities of public diplomacy—as a tool of U.S. foreign policy—are ultimately limited to foreign policy objectives. U.S. foreign policy outside the Middle East will be explained to provide a context of policies within the region. This too will rely on documentary analysis. It is impossible to design a universally appealing foreign policy, or one public diplomacy tool that could communicate with all target populations abroad. Scholars and policy critics who lose sight of this simple premise will inaccurately aim to measure the success of effectiveness of public diplomacy without analyzing its capabilities or placing it into context. Essentially, the administrative and organizational structures of public diplomacy itself must be understood before attempting a comprehensive examination. These structures include foreign policy objectives, the institution managing the state’s public diplomacy operations, the public diplomacy strategy, and the tactics and tools used to execute that strategy. Contemporary literature concerning each component is explored in order to produce a public diplomacy model applicable for historical case analysis. Therefore, purpose of this thesis is twofold: 1) To provide a thorough model of a very muddy public diplomacy concept; and, 2) To take this new understanding for historical analysis in order to identify the capabilities and limitations of public diplomacy in the Middle East.
Significance of the Topic

Examining the role of public diplomacy is not a conversation borne out of the post-9/11 context. Rather, as evidenced in subsequent chapters, the debate over the proper role of public diplomacy in the formulation of policy has been going on since before World War II. The value of these divergent perspectives lies in their promotion of public diplomacy and specific recommendations for its improvement in the twenty-first century. The bulk of these studies, however, tend to focus on communications tools, or serve as reactionary pieces to the neoconservative policies of the George W. Bush administration, and overlook the broader implications of public diplomacy in the foreign policy process. Exploring public diplomacy’s structural development alongside the history of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East is integral to grasping the potential impact of U.S. public diplomacy in the region. This study separates the two in order to demonstrate where proponents of public diplomacy and foreign policy clash.

Organization

This paper approaches public diplomacy from an outward approach, establishing a conceptual foundation and then applying the historical case study in the Middle East. Chapter two evaluates the contemporary public diplomacy literature, explaining the functions and instruments of the public diplomacy apparatus in foreign policy—essentially, making sense out of this muddy concept. Building on this conceptual foundation, Chapter three begins to view describes America’s early diplomatic engagement with the Middle East and initial attempts to influence and inform the region’s populace prior to the Cold War period. Chapter four highlights the dramatic shift
in U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East due to containment of the Soviet threat and the rise and fall of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), an independent agency for managing U.S. public diplomacy operations. Chapter five continues this historical analysis, pointing to a post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy characterized by armed intervention and a weakened public diplomacy institution. The final chapter concludes the study and offers recommendations for policy makers and future research.
Examining public diplomacy is muddy territory that requires substantial contextual investigation. In 1965, Edmund Gullion, former U.S. diplomat and founder of the Edward R. Murrow Center for Public Diplomacy, first explained *public diplomacy* in its modern sense:

> Public diplomacy... deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications.\(^5\)

Gullion’s description demonstrates a broad public diplomacy concept ready to be explored. Since the Cold War, international relations scholars have attempted to piece together a coherent public diplomacy theory. More descriptive than definite, some scholars focus on the many approaches to public diplomacy including *exchange diplomacy* or *political advocacy*. Others discuss contemporary innovations in public diplomacy programming such as religious dialogue and social media. Consideration of the current political context leads to more active descriptions such as *coercive diplomacy*. In 2008 public diplomacy expert Eytan Gilboa concluded that a multidisciplinary effort and close collaboration between practitioners would result in a sound public diplomacy theory.\(^6\)

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\(^5\) http://fletcher.tufts.edu/Murrow/Diplomacy

Constructing a basic model is necessary to make sense of public diplomacy reality. This chapter seeks to establish a comprehensive way of thinking through the many positive and normative public relations problems raised in the following literary summary. This chapter’s concluding positive statement is derived from a public diplomacy model to be used for historical analysis and a foundation for future public diplomacy studies. This general, multidisciplinary approach does not attempt to explain everything about public diplomacy. Rather, theoretical analysis, based on the literature and existing concepts derived from integrated marketing communications and international relations theory, will support a model for public diplomacy. Elements of the public diplomacy model include foreign policy option, message strategy, and tools. These elements lend well to the overall organization of the historical case analysis in succeeding chapters. A brief addendum will focus on the measurement limitations associated with public diplomacy.

**Definitions**

As an element of the broader foreign policy framework, public diplomacy is best understood within the context of the diplomatic process. Diplomacy can be viewed as:

> The first resort in the nation’s policy tool kit. It can be defined as the management of international relations by negotiation; the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys; the business or art of the diplomatists.\(^7\)

Raymond Cohen, a negotiation specialist at the U.S. Institute of Peace, defines diplomatic negotiation as:

> A process of communication between states seeking to arrive at mutually acceptable outcome on some issue or issues of shared concern. On the spectrum of diplomatic

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activity it is to be distinguished, on the one hand, from the simple exchange of views and, on the other hand, from the practice of coercive diplomacy by which one party attempts to impose its wishes unilaterally.  

Public diplomacy, however, can and does occur across all points of this spectrum.

For this thesis, public diplomacy is a soft power tool with strategies determined by the state’s foreign policy objectives and with operations managed by state institutions. Nye observes public diplomacy as a foreign policy function with three dimensions: 1) daily communications, which involves explaining the context of domestic and foreign-policy decisions; 2) strategic communication, which develops a set of simple themes, and is considerably a long-term strategy if compared to the first dimension; and 3) the development of lasting relationships with key individuals over many years or even decades, through various programs, in order to enhance “the credibility that reciprocity creates.” However, Nye’s dimensions fail to adequately distinguish public diplomacy from traditional diplomacy: daily and long-term communications strategy and relationship building are part and parcel of traditional diplomacy. In a separate study, however, Nye considers public diplomacy as the information element of power that “directly affects perceptions and attitudes, which, in turn, can influence other countries’ behavior.”

As a long-term strategy, public diplomacy leads to decisions about which foreign publics are being influenced and informed, what foreign policy the state is going to

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9 Joseph Nye famously distinguished the state’s power capabilities into “hard” and “soft” categories: This soft power- getting others to want the outcomes you want- co-opts people rather than coerces them. It can be contrasted with ‘hard power’, which is the use of coercion and payment. Soft power can be wielded not just by states but also by all actors in international politics, such as NGOs or international institutions.

10 Nye, The New Public Diplomacy

11 Nye, as quoted in Jordan, Amos, ed. 239-243
present to them, and how the state plans to reach them. The influence function is often
tied to an embassy’s information management. This has driven many definitions of public
diplomacy: “The use of information resources to collect, control, and disseminate
information that influences the perceptions and behaviors of international audiences” or

The way in which both government and private individuals and groups influence directly
or indirectly those public attitudes and opinions which bear directly on another
government’s foreign policy decisions.12

To sum, public diplomacy consists of the state’s efforts to inform or influence the
population of a foreign state through direct (public meetings, media broadcasts) or
indirect communication (professional and educational exchanges, cultural exhibitions).

**Public Diplomacy Objectives, Functions, and Institutions**

*Objectives*

Ultimately being a strategic instrument of foreign policy, one might imagine public
diplomacy as permanently tied to the spectrum of foreign policy options. Professor Paul
Viotti explains three American foreign policy options derived from historical analysis
and international relations schools of thought:

> In the broadest sense, American foreign policy in practice takes one or more of three forms (or combinations of them): (1) Constructive or peaceful engagement not only with “friendly” countries, but also with adversaries—diplomatic, commercial or financial, cultural, and other essentially positive forms of exchange; (2) containment, which includes essentially negative measures of adversaries; and (3) the use of armed intervention or warfare . . . 13

Interestingly, these three forms are applicable to the major trends of American twentieth
century foreign policy in the Middle East. Roughly the first half of the century consisted

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of largely peaceful engagement with the authorities and peoples in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{14} During the Cold War, containment of the Soviet threat extended to offensive public diplomacy measures in the world’s developing regions. Armed intervention has dominated the post-9/11 era through decade long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. These forms are generalizations of foreign policy—and certainly not mutually exclusive. For example, in the wake of 9/11 the United States opted for a combination of containment and armed intervention in the Global War on Terror. Essentially, Viotti’s American foreign policy forms are helpful in developing and applying a model of public diplomacy.

\textit{Functions}

Signitzer and Coombes (2002) divide public diplomacy functions into political information and cultural communication.\textsuperscript{15} Malone adds a slight modification to this dichotomy, referring to the information aspect as ‘political advocacy’ and attaches a two-way meaning to the term ‘cultural communication’: the purpose of cultural communication is both to help foreign citizens gain a better understanding of one nation’s culture and institutions and to foster mutual understanding between these people and those of other countries.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14} For the broad purposes of this essay, I will use the term “Middle East” to refer to the states under the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau at the U.S. State Department: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

\textsuperscript{15} Information and culture are two terms which have had many interpretations, particularly when applied to foreign affairs. While it is very clear that these two terms are not mutually exclusive—one can inform about culture—it appears to be generally accepted in the area of international affairs that information connotes the one-sided advocacy of a point of view while culture signifies the furthering of mutual understanding. It was in 1972 that Representative Zablocki used the term “public diplomacy” to collectively refer to U.S. government’s political advocacy and cultural communications programming abroad.

\textsuperscript{16} Glasgold, 50-52
The origins of the culture and information dichotomy dates back to the 1950s; American policymakers and communications scholars debated over whether culture and information were valid foreign policy functions that should be managed by the Department of State, and whether they should be combined or managed separately.\(^{17}\) In 1976, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) commissioned a study that explained the relationship of information and culture in modern international affairs:

First, all public diplomacy programs have a primary responsibility to explain and defend government policies to foreign audiences. This is a necessary role because so much of today’s foreign policy depends at least partially upon popular acceptance for its support. It is not enough today simply for a government to explain its policy in private to other governments; the world expects to be informed if not consulted. This role as spokesman for governmental policies, therefore, must be performed by every government.

Alongside it, however, lies a second important function, that of portraying that national society \textit{in toto} to foreign audiences. This is the cultural side of what is public diplomacy.”\(^{18}\)

Glen Fisher, a former Foreign Service officer with an education in social anthropology, has identified several cultural limitations on the diplomatic process. For Fisher, cultural limitations originate both within the diplomat’s host country and parent society. Two of Fisher’s limitations are striking: First, “Diplomacy is about the means, not the ends, of foreign policy.” Following this logic, one assumes that consideration for cultural values goes beyond the responsibility of the traditional diplomat. This seems absurd given the individual relationships borne out of the diplomatic processes occurring across a variety of cultures. Cohen aptly states that “political culture, in brief, cannot be

\(^{15}\) Malone, Gifford D. \textit{Political Advocacy and Cultural Communication: Organizing the Nation’s Public Diplomacy}. Lanham, [Md.] ; [Charlottesville, Va.]: University Press of America ; Miller Center, University of Virginia, 1988. 44-45

understood in isolation from the wider culture.”  

From this assumption, the role of the public diplomacy practitioner is to understand his or her host culture in order to determine the best instruments necessary to advocate the parent state’s foreign policy objectives. Conversely, the culture of the diplomat’s home country impacts diplomatic operations. This leads to a second profound limitation: that diplomats “continually refer to their homebase for instructions.”

Indeed, reducing public diplomacy to people-to-people relations should not blind us to the usual presence of other persons, sides, and organizational influences—each of which may have separate or differing interests. Conceptually, the distinction between cultural and political programming makes sense. In practice, however, there is a constant blend. According to Andrew Koss, a good public diplomacy officer is very political but grasps the culture of the host country. Ultimately, this thesis considers both information and culture as functions of public diplomacy, or “government-to-people” operations.

Empowerment of foreign publics is also referenced as third primary function of public diplomacy. Turning to history may show how this lofty, if not contradictory, responsibility may have originated. In the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Leon Trotsky argued for an end of secret diplomacy:

>The abolition of secret diplomacy is the primary condition for an honest, popular, truly democratic foreign policy. The Soviet Government regards it as its duty to carry out such a policy in practice.

If effective in its functions, public diplomacy can influence foreign publics to most often

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20 Ibid

be aware, and at best support, U.S. foreign policy. In turn, this influence is derived from a government-to-people practice. This is the value of public diplomacy. If used appropriately, public diplomacy represents an extension of a quintessential American value: liberal participation in a political process. The will of the foreign people affected by the actions of the state are being considered, evaluated and, given the ideal conditions, incorporated into foreign policy. But does this actually translate to empowerment as a chief public diplomacy function? So far, no. We do not see Arab publics altering the course of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East as a result of empowerment efforts—if that were in fact the case, the United States may have been less guarded in its response to the needs of an empowered populace overthrowing long-term regional allies during the Arab Spring.

If a state is to empower foreign publics abroad through a truly democratic public diplomacy, then that state and its people must also be willing to accept the diverse viewpoints concomitant with that empowerment. These viewpoints “will include some that are critical and even openly hostile.” Empowerment may, in fact, be a part of the foreign policy objective, as was the case under the Bush administration’s democratization agenda in the Middle East, and civil society development may be facilitated through coordinated public diplomacy efforts with other U.S. agencies and NGOs, but empowerment is not a direct function of public diplomacy. If it were, public diplomacy becomes an ostensibly unmanageable process or potentially interpreted as covert: how could the state overtly manage a foreign public’s empowerment? As career diplomat

22 Ibid, 6
Christopher Ross emphasizes that the “prime directive of US public diplomacy is to ensure that we advocate the policies of the United States as clearly and as powerfully as possible.”

Procedural limitations must be explored through examination of the institutions responsible for managing the state’s public diplomacy operations. Institutions in the diplomat’s parent country change over time. For example, in the United States information and policy advocacy was for a period of time centralized under the U.S. Information Agency, whereas international cultural programming was reserved for the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Currently, both functions are consolidated in the Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs at the Department of State. The authors of the 1976 CSIS study ultimately proposed that articulation and defense of foreign policy be managed by the State Department; the portrayal of the American culture and society to be managed by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (then the Voice of America). As historical analysis will show, fundamental changes in public diplomacy occur over time providing new resources and challenges for public diplomacy operations.

Ultimately, the link between foreign policy and public diplomacy is the core of the public diplomacy model. Directly guiding the public diplomacy objectives, the foreign policy option is seen as the model’s top-level concept. By extension, foreign policy toward a given state or region determines the context—and capabilities—in which

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public diplomacy institutions operate. Conceptually speaking, the institutions of public diplomacy are the next step below the foreign policy option. Subsequent chapters will explore three separate U.S. foreign policy eras, implying fundamental changes in public diplomacy institutions over time. The institution’s selection of strategies and tools selected are explored in the following sections.

**Public Diplomacy Strategy: Incorporating IMC Theory**

While international relations theory is helpful in determining most of the administrative and organizational structures necessary for a comprehensive public diplomacy model, integrated marketing communications is another interdisciplinary field helpful in determining strategies. Relatively speaking, integrated marketing communications may be thought of as the ‘international relations’ of the business training because of its evolving incorporation of a variety of fields. Integrated marketing communications (IMC) can be defined as the process of using promotional tools in a unified way so that a synergistic communication effect is created. Public relations is a particular IMC function with objectives and institutions applicable to public diplomacy. “The classic role of public relations is to foster goodwill between a firm and its many constituent groups.” Public relations practitioners share functions similar to that of public diplomacy officers. These include promoting a product or service (or a foreign policy), preparing internal communications, counteracting negative publicity, and giving advice and counsel to decision makers within the organization. W.A. Ostick observes

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24 Van Dessel, Maria. “Integrated Marketing Communications” presented at the Session 1, Daniels School of Business, University of Denver, January 2012.

public diplomacy “as public relations focused on building long-term relationships with foreign audiences and providing policy explication and advocacy for the United States.”

Public relations is an essential component of a company’s overall communications efforts—misinformation or disinformation could compromise more mainstream communication such as advertising. Translation: public diplomacy as an essential component of a government’s overall communications efforts abroad, wherein mismanaged programming could compromise the mainstream communications concerning foreign policy. A public diplomacy strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve the objectives of the public diplomacy institution. The IMC literature puts forth two broad strategies in public relations: proactive and reactionary. Proactive strategies are guided by information objectives, seek to publicize an organization and its brands, and take an offensive rather than defensive posture in the public relations process. Reactive strategies are dictated by influences outside of the control of an organization, and require defensive measures. Proactive strategies in public diplomacy are planned and resourced, and may help identify key stakeholders who favor U.S. foreign policy, developing a base of moderate support. On the other hand, reactive strategies are less structured, but require a level of preparedness to react with available resources to unexpected changes in the host country or international system. The strategic goal is to

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Signitzer and Coombes’ 1992 study identified conceptual convergences between public diplomacy and public relations and included. This seminal study supported interdisciplinary efforts for empirical studies on public diplomacy and included a conceptualization of public diplomacy. However, the model rested fully on the cultural and political advocacy dichotomy of public diplomacy functions and tools rather than depicting a comprehensive administrative and organizational structure of public diplomacy.

27 O’Guinn, 658-662
use proactive diplomacy effectively to reduce the need for reactive action; of course, institution-wide readiness to respond is essential. 

During the Cold War, the USIA committed to a proactive public diplomacy strategy in order to spread democratic ideas and contain the spread of Soviet communism. Reactionary strategies were common during the initial months of the Arab Spring; outgoing Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Judith McHale toured Tunisia in April 2011 to demonstrate support for Tunisia’s liberalization following international criticism of the Obama administration’s hesitancy in praising Tunisia’s democratic aspirations. Condoleezza Rice mentions an example of a missed opportunity for proactive public diplomacy. Following the capture of Saddam Hussein, then U.S. Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority of Iraq L. Paul Bremer, flanked by U.S. military personnel, made the announcement at a coalition press conference in Baghdad. Dr. Rice said that it was too late before the George W. Bush administration realized that Iraqi officials should have been the ones to share this news with the world.28 A proactive public diplomacy strategy would have ensured that the U.S. foreign policy objective of a liberalized Iraq could be perceived as such. Instead, this important “Iraqi moment” appeared quite American and fed perceptions of the U.S. mission as an imperialist armed intervention.

Given the similarity in public diplomacy and public relations objectives, the theoretical comparison between the two fields is not an entirely unique approach to

conceptualizing public diplomacy. However, one must be cautious to assume too precise a conceptual semblance. The German scholar Koschwitz (1986) suggests that

> the actors in public diplomacy can no longer be confined to the profession of diplomats but include various individuals, groups, and institutions who engage in international and intercultural communication activities . . . bearing on the political relationships between two or more countries.

Therefore, a distinction must be made that while IMC theory is helpful to conceptualize public diplomacy strategies, international relations theory is “better suited to the understanding of the relationship between a nation-state and its foreign publics.”

A state’s public diplomacy officer will have very different objectives from their fellow citizens in business, NGO, or non-profit sectors operating abroad.

**Public Diplomacy Tools**

Using another integrative approach, public diplomacy expert Nicolas Cull classifies public diplomacy into five distinct subfields: Listening, Advocacy, Cultural, Exchange, and International Broadcasting. Recognizing that each subfield shares the overlapping goal of influencing a foreign public, Cull identifies four divergent characteristics: their conceptual *time frame*, the direction of *flow and information*, the *type of infrastructure* required, and the *source of their credibility*. Cull’s public diplomacy taxonomy provides the conceptual foundation for the tactics and tools in the public diplomacy model.

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29 Ostick also insists that if scholars “explicitly acknowledge Public Diplomacy as public relations, rather than the persistent view of it as a specialized diplomatic function, [we] will more consistently adopt the approaches and techniques developed and tested by private sector practitioners and those of integrated marketing communications.”


31 Signitzer & Coombes, 138 (1992)
It is important to emphasize that the intention of this thesis is not to project the success of U.S. public diplomacy programs. That is to say, this study will not attempt to evaluate message content or target audience response to U.S. public diplomacy programs. Despite the surge of interest among contemporary political scientists regarding these very topics, this thesis is concerned with analyzing the historical conditions favorable to application of public diplomacy as a tool of foreign policy.\footnote{Cull includes source of credibility in order to differentiate a sovereign state’s internal public diplomacy structure across several examples, source of credibility will not be included as a defining characteristic of public diplomacy tools in this thesis.} The interrelationship of time, flow, and infrastructure will be used to categorize existing U.S. federal public diplomacy projects for this study. Adding innovation to this analysis, the following sections refine Cull’s typology, divergent characteristics, and examples of public diplomacy tools.

\textit{Listening & Advocacy}

Listening is an actor’s attempt to manage the international environment by collecting and collating data about publics and their opinions overseas and using that data to redirect its policy or its wider public diplomacy approach accordingly\footnote{Cull, 32} Cull classifies the listening timeframe as both short and long term, with a flow of information characterized by ‘inward to analysts and policy process.’ Infrastructure for listening projects typically consists of monitoring technology and language-trained staff. While useful in intelligence gathering, listening as a public diplomacy strategy is intended as a pull delivery mechanism with the benefit of increased potential as a launch pad for dialogue (a two-way communication strategy) between the U.S. Government and foreign publics. In the decade since 9/11, polling organizations such as Gallup and Zogby
have collected data concerning Middle Eastern public opinion of the U.S. Government. Many studies suggest that low Middle Eastern public opinion of the United States is related to the perceived lack of listening to the region’s perspectives on U.S. policies. Several U.S. Government reports, however, reiterate that U.S. foreign policy should not be based on foreign public opinion.34 American reconstruction and image-building efforts in the Middle East may drive a shift toward listening in the broader public diplomacy strategy. Indeed, the “Shared Values” campaign, 2001-2002, represents a rare but explicit example of a listening strategy in U.S. public diplomacy.35 The 2010 Public Diplomacy: Strengthening U.S. Engagement with the World Report emphasizes listening tactics as essential to the twenty-first U.S. public diplomacy strategy.

Advocacy in public diplomacy is an actor’s attempt to manage the international environment by undertaking an international communication activity to actively promote a particular policy, idea, or that actor’s general interests in the minds of a foreign public.36

Advocacy is further distinguished by a short-term time frame, outward flow of information, and is typically operated within an embassy press office. Historically, advocacy is the dominant strategy in American public diplomacy. Tools include daily press briefings, official state visits such as U.S. President Obama’s Cairo Speech in June 2009, and broadcasting American policymaking through satellite radio and television stations as well as Internet resources.


35 Cull 2008, 44-45. The purpose of the “Shared Values” campaign was for the United States to convey that Americans shared values with Arab Muslims through survey and dialogue. It was deemed a failure.

36 Ibid, 32
During an interview with Matt Armstrong, former Executive Director of the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, the notion that advocacy and listening are constants in public diplomacy programming became apparent. Mr. Armstrong stated, “Advocacy without listening is what people hate about public diplomacy.” Both advocacy and listening are broad, overarching public diplomacy tactics. Therefore, these subfields are the least amenable to narrow categorization for this study. Although advocacy appears to be the overwhelming tactic in American public diplomacy, listening has been utilized across all instruments. And as social media evolves, listening becomes more fully incorporated into ostensibly one-way, or push, public diplomacy instruments such as international broadcasting. This distinction allows us to conceptualize both listening and advocacy as two overarching tactics that guide the ebb and flow of public diplomacy instruments.

Cultural and Exchange

As an innovation to Cull’s analysis, I combine cultural and exchange diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy is “an actor’s attempt to manage the international environment through making its cultural resources and achievements overseas and/or facilitating cultural transmission abroad.” Cultural diplomacy is most often applied to a long-term strategy with outward flow of information, typically operating within a cultural center or library. After WWII, American Centers were established to stretch U.S. presence throughout the world. These centers functioned as libraries and venues for engagement between American and local audiences and countered Soviet communist thought.

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37 Cull 2008, 32
end of the Cold War, America’s cultural diplomacy centers were packed up along with other foreign entanglements. In the post-9/11 context, however, cultural diplomacy is reinventing itself. In June 2011, U.S. Ambassador Richard Olson unveiled a new “American Corner” at ALHOSN University in Abu Dhabi with plans “to develop programs to promote better understanding between the people of the US and the UAE.”

Exchange diplomacy is an actor’s attempt to manage the international environment by sending its citizens overseas and reciprocally accepting citizens from overseas for a period of study and/or acculturation.

Exchange diplomacy, therefore, is a very long-term strategy with inward and outward flow of information, usually operated under an exchange administrator or global education office. The U.S. Department of State houses cultural and exchange programs under the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. In June 2003, the U.S. Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World recommended innovative public diplomacy approaches in efforts to improve U.S. relations with the Middle East. Chaired by the former Ambassador to Syria and Israel, Edward P. Djerejian, the study suggests that “the apparatus of public diplomacy has proven inadequate, especially in the Arab and Muslim world.” The advisory group recommends “major increases in resources to help Arabs and Muslims gain access to U.S. education and urge creativity in finding ways to link U.S. educational institutions with those in the Middle East.” The Fulbright Program is one example of a U.S. federally funded exchange diplomacy project.

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39 http://www.alhosnu.ae/WS/site/News/NewsItem.aspx?nid=77f1b58b-5592-4848-b1dc-963951e94e17

40 Cull 2008, 33
Combining cultural and exchange diplomacy as *cultural and professional exchange* highlights both the long-term approach to tools, program duration, and information flow. This is not only simpler for building the conceptual model, but practical in that the historically both tools have been managed by the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs since 1959. Furthermore, hundreds of federally-funded cultural, educational, and exchange projects are recorded across Government agencies in the annual Interagency Working Group on U.S. Government-Sponsored International Exchanges and Training reports (IAWG).

*International Broadcasting (IB)*

“IB is an actor’s attempt to manage the international environment by using the technologies of radio, television, and the Internet to engage with foreign publics.”  

Cull classifies IB as a medium-term strategy with an outward flow of information from a news bureaucracy, editorial office, or transmitter facility. Based on the successes of IB during the Cold War, the United States developed the Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Inc (MBN) in 2002 with the naïve intention of winning the hearts and minds of the peoples of the Middle East. MBN includes Arabic language radio and satellite television stations overseen by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), an independent U.S. Government agency. The BBG’s Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) operates Radio Farda and Radio Free Iraq, broadcasting stations to Iran and the Iraqi diaspora respectively.

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41 Cull 2008, 34

42 Ibid, 35
A New Vision: Diplomacy 2.0

This section briefly touches on an overlapping contemporary public diplomacy tool not included in Cull’s taxonomy. Diplomacy 2.0 “uses digital media to maximize outreach to foreign publics.” Former U.S. Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, James K. Glassman emphasized technology as a vital resource of public diplomacy. Embassies now manage Facebook and Twitter accounts, and Secretary of State Clinton has referred to this new connectivity as an “absolute good” and named January 2012 as 21st Century Statecraft Month. Former Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy Judith McHale oversaw the development of updated @america centers. @america is the “new generation of American cultural centers,” with emphasis on use of technology and social media to reach target populations and potential for a new brand of two-way engagement. @america has just begun to develop, with the first of its kind opening in Jakarta in 2011. In April 2011, President Obama supported an additional $10 million fund from Congress to “expand unrestricted access to information on the Internet” to populations living under repressive regimes. Clearly, the increasing emphasis on application of advanced technology maximizes the global reach of American cultural centers, international broadcasting, and long-term exchange projects. As a new phenomenon, Diplomacy 2.0 will be included in the public diplomacy model but not examined until the latter chapter of the historical analysis.


Political visits are defined as:

Those rare platforms where one nation’s leader has the opportunity to reach the public of another nation’s, through ceremonial events, improvisational moments, and, most of all, press coverage of the visit, to influence and improve public perceptions of a country’s national image.45

Whereas cultural and professional exchanges:

Provide opportunities for people from different cultures to explore common interests, transfer knowledge and skills, and enhance mutual understanding. They can serve as a foundation for improved international relations and partnerships and are therefore an important component of U.S. foreign policy.46

Echoing Cull’s definition above, IB is a country’s deliberate attempt to engage with international audience by using the technologies of radio, television, and the Internet. These three instruments types are derived from the overwhelming characteristics of the collected public diplomacy program data, the availability of archival records describing these instruments, and their respective relation to public diplomacy theory as derived from Cull’s taxonomy.


Figure 2: Public Diplomacy Instrument Typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Flow (from U.S. position)</th>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Visit</td>
<td>Short term</td>
<td>Inward</td>
<td>State Visit/Speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Exchange</td>
<td>Long term</td>
<td>Inward/Outward</td>
<td>Fulbright/Professional Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Broadcasting (IB)</td>
<td>Medium term</td>
<td>Outward flow (transitioning w/ social media)</td>
<td>Satellite Radio/24 Hours News in Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomacy 2.0</td>
<td>Short term</td>
<td>Inward/Outward</td>
<td>Embassy Facebook page/@merica</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Public Diplomacy Model**

From the above analysis of public diplomacy, an American public diplomacy model can be constructed. Beginning with Viotti’s American foreign policy options within the international system, a choice or combination of the three forms drives the organization of the public diplomacy institution managing public diplomacy operations. As derived from IMC theory, the institution initiates either a reactionary or proactive public diplomacy strategy, or a combination thereof. The final step is the selection of cultural/professional exchange programs, political visits, and international broadcasting as three tools to deliver these strategies based a tailoring of Cull’s taxonomy.
Figure 3: Public Diplomacy Process

- Peaceful Engagement
- Containment of Adversaries
- Armed Intervention

INSTITUTION managing public diplomacy operations

Proactive
Reactive

Diplomacy 2.0
International Broadcasting
Cultural & Professional Exchanges
Political Visits

Institution
Strategy
Tool
Measuring Public Diplomacy

While the above model and literature review further conceptualize public diplomacy and its purpose within the broader foreign policy framework, they do not produce operationalized variables for quantitative measurement. Attempts to measure public diplomacy usually rest on public opinion polls, such as those conducted by Gallup and Zogby International. As discussed in the previous chapter, while public opinion polls indicate a population’s degree of support for another state’s policies, it does not reflect a causal relationship between public diplomacy and public opinion. In an earlier study, the author of this thesis used trend impact analysis to determine ideal internal and external conditions for the use of specific public diplomacy tools. While these experiments are of value in identifying some of the nuances of public diplomacy, there is simply no historical database available to determine even the total number of professional and educational exchanges prior to the 1990s.

Heiman and Ozer (2008) take a different approach to quantitative analysis of public diplomacy. The authors evaluate both internal and external structural and institutional conditions in order to measure the success/failure of public diplomacy. The study found that a high degree of wealth in a society and female participation in society predicts support for U.S. policies. The limitation of this study is the operationalizing of public opinion data as the dependent variable representing success of public diplomacy programs. Furthermore, their findings are less robust when applied to the Middle East.

Relatively wealthy nations with a lack of female participation in society, such as Saudi Arabia and UAE, hold increasingly negative opinions of U.S. policies.\textsuperscript{48} Perhaps a combination of these two factors is necessary. Regardless, these studies point to a void in comprehensive quantitative analysis of public diplomacy.

Beyond the academy, Andrew Koss, a retired career public diplomacy officer at both USIA and the Department of State best explains the practical implications of the public diplomacy measurement conundrum. During Koss’ assignment at U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv (2007-2009), the State Department’s Office of Assessment visited Israel with the intention of evaluating a speaker series program. Despite the audience feedback, the Office requested long-term tracking to gauge the direct effect of the speaker series on the audience’s perception of the United States and its policies. This idea was not popular with public diplomacy personnel and was viewed as interference.\textsuperscript{49} The conundrum for the State Department, therefore, is confusing input with outcome. Typically, multiple public diplomacy programs exist in concert with one another to reinforce broad information and influence functions within a specific country or across a region. Singling out one program does not guarantee a comprehensive measurement of public diplomacy’s effectiveness. Additionally, because institutions change and the policymakers continue to debate the function of public diplomacy operations, data prior to and during the Cold War—if it existed—would represent a quite different profile of public diplomacy than that of today.

\textsuperscript{48} Zogby, James J. \textit{Arab Voices}. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Applying the Model for Historical Case Analysis

It is important to reemphasize that the intention of this study is not to project the success of U.S. public diplomacy programs. That is to say, this study will not attempt to demonstrate best practices for message content or target audience response to U.S. public diplomacy programs. Despite the surge in interest among contemporary scientists regarding these very topics, this thesis is concerned with analyzing the administrative and organizational structures of public diplomacy itself—historical analysis will demonstrate the historical limitations and actual capabilities of U.S. public diplomacy. Therefore, while internal conditions of the public diplomacy practitioner’s host country are considered throughout the historical analysis, the above model demonstrates that the capabilities of any public diplomacy operation begin with the state’s foreign policy option and institutional structure. Therefore, both a state’s foreign policy and public diplomacy institution design can either support or limit the capabilities of public diplomacy. As such, these elements are the central focus of the historical analysis. This analysis will explore each conceptual layer of the public diplomacy model to provide a fuller picture of public diplomacy across three observable periods of prevalent U.S. foreign policy options in the Middle East: 1) Peaceful engagement, 1900-1945; 2) Containment of adversaries, 1946-2000; and, 3) Armed intervention, 2001-present. In order to support the argument that the profile of opinion has become increasingly negative over time, a brief explanation of America’s early peaceful engagement policy before the 21st century provides a fuller context. Observing and analyzing these elements of U.S. public diplomacy within these foreign policy contexts over time is essential to
understanding why contemporary public diplomacy is the way it is, and what administrative and organizational conditions drive its implementation in the Middle East. This analysis will help identify trends and relationships between these concepts, providing the basis for public diplomacy recommendations.
CHAPTER THREE: 
U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST: 1776-1946

The American people—having no political ambitions in Europe or the Near East; preferring, if that were possible, to keep clear of all European, Asian, or African entanglements but nevertheless sincerely desiring that the most permanent peace and the largest results for humanity shall come out of this war—recognize that they cannot altogether avoid responsibility for just settlements among the nations following the war, and under the League of Nations. In that spirit they approach the problems of the Near East.

King-Crane Commission Report 1919

Foreign Policy

American diplomacy across the Atlantic first formalized within the Maghreb—the North African area of the Middle East region stretching from Morocco in the West to Egypt in the East. On December 20, 1777, less than a year after the Continental Congress declared America’s independence from Great Britain, the Kingdom of Morocco became the first nation to officially recognize the sovereignty of the United States. The subsequent Moroccan-American Treaty of Friendship was signed by then Ambassador to France Thomas Jefferson and King Mohammad III in 1786. After two hundred twenty-six years, this agreement stands as the longest unbroken treaty in U.S. history. It remains a symbol of U.S. foreign policy and has kept relations between Morocco and the United States strong since the document’s signing. Today, the U.S. embassy in Tangiers is the oldest of its kind, and Morocco is a committed ally in the Global War on Terror.

Nevertheless, spurts of armed intervention would soon overshadow diplomatic engagement. The United States inaugurated its Naval Forces to counter threats in the

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50 http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/bar1786t.asp
same region. From 1785 until 1815 American merchant vessels faced considerable threats from Barbary pirates off the North African coast.\textsuperscript{51} When Algerian pirates began enslaving American sailors, the United States constructed its Naval Forces in 1794 to resist such aggression.

From the late 1850s on, modest numbers of internationalist Americans living and traveling in the region focused their interests and greenbacks on the health, education, and welfare institutions in the Holy Land and throughout the Gulf region. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire prompted the liberal-minded President Woodrow Wilson to send a delegation to investigate the prospect for self-determination among the populace within partitioned territories of Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Anatolia.\textsuperscript{52} Wilson’s attempt to move away from the alliances and secret agreements “that were thought to have triggered World War I” were overruled by the King-Crane Commission of 1919, the findings of which ultimately supported European powers’ mandates in the region—including the British Mandate of Palestine.

While the European colonial powers were eager to carve up the former Ottoman lands, President Wilson insisted the United States cast its involvement in the region in liberal terms:

\[\text{[Wilson] argued for a new post-war world order to be based not on power and balance-of-power concepts and alliance understandings, but rather on peace through applying international law against aggression, supported by collective-security enforcement mechanism.}\textsuperscript{53}\]


\textsuperscript{52} Gelvin 1999, 13-16

\textsuperscript{53} Viotti 2010, 141
Wilson promoted self-determination and called for adjustment of colonial powers in favor of their subjects. Wilson’s policy of self-determination and his Fourteen Points were well received in the Middle East as another great power’s alternative ideology to Western European imperialist control.

The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire (1908-1922) took place during and after World War I. The territories formerly under Ottoman control gave rise to the geographic area of the modern Middle East: Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, and the Arabian Peninsula. During the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Britain and France literally drew the lines of these new territories. The region was mostly insulated from World War II and at the onset of an era of independence. The newly formed Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomed American oilmen to search for evidence of oil in 1933. The Saudis viewed the American presence as a counter balance to the imperialist tendencies of Britain and France.\(^5\) The United States would soon enter World War II and become increasingly reliant upon oil to sustain its defense efforts and stabilize the economy.

Relations with Saudi Arabia reached a new high when President Roosevelt met privately with King Ibn Saud, the founding leader of Saudi Arabia, aboard the USS Quincy in 1945. In exchange for military assistance and a base at Dhrahran, Ibn Saud promised secure access to the Kingdom’s vast oil supplies. In the same meeting King Saud was troubled by the divisiveness among Arab leaders at the start of their independence. He also raised concerns over the Jewish colonization of the British

\(^5\) During this time, Britain and France controlled all Arab lands except Saudi Arabia and parts of Yemen. This context, coupled with the inspiration of Wilson’s Fourteen Points, welcomed American private interests.
mandate of Palestine. “Roosevelt promised not to act on the Palestine question without consulting both Arabs and Jews.” However, his death six weeks later meant this promise was never realized. Given the military and economic support America was providing the new kingdom, King Ibn Saud found it problematic to persuade the President Truman to alter support for the Jewish State. America’s reliance on Middle Eastern sources of energy and allegiance to Israel signified a lock on U.S. interests in the region. The former validated its need to protect and sustain its access, while the provided an additional foothold in ensuring that Soviet expansion did not envelop the Middle East would become a crucial policy of the United States during the Cold War.

Institutions

Concomitant with its increasing global presence during the two World Wars, U.S. public diplomacy institutions and activities began formalizing during this time period. The creation of these institutions was in fact driven by private interests of the social elite. American entrepreneur and philanthropist Nelson Rockefeller made significant contributions to America’s initial public diplomacy institutionalization. During the early years of WWII, Rockefeller’s concerns over Nazi attempts to gain leverage in Latin America—where he had a lucrative stake in the Venezuelan subsidiary of New Jersey Standard Oil—drove him to lobby President Roosevelt for the creation of an independent agency that incorporated political information and cultural programming into diplomatic missions abroad. Thus, the Office of the Coordinator of Interamerican Affairs (CIAA) was created and housed within the State Department and headed by Rockefeller himself.

Meanwhile, a colleague of Rockefeller’s, William Donovan, shared similar concerns. Having witnessed British successes in so-called ‘black operations,’ Donovan set out to strengthen U.S. intelligence operations. Donovan became head of the Office of the Coordinator of Information (COI) and responsible for collecting and analyzing “all information which might bear on national security.” While the covert, psychological operations of Donovan’s office constituted the precursor to the CIA, a small unit within COI named the Foreign Information Service (FIS) took a global approach to America’s WWII propagandist efforts. Using shortwave radio programs to reach audiences abroad, this unit was effectively renamed the Voice of America in 1942 and removed itself from the umbrella of COI’s covert operations.

Still a relatively recent concept to the U.S. Government, ideological warfare was institutionalized through the creation of a separate federal agency. The Office of War Information (OWI) was created under presidential directive in June 1942 to carry out both domestic and international information programs. Naturally, propagandizing American citizens was not well-received and domestic programs were quickly phased out. Bureaucratic integration proved difficult, and the State Department—stretched thin from its operations during and between two world wars—was unable to manage propaganda operations on their own. This period also marks the beginning of America’s internal political debate over the necessity and proper functions of public diplomacy programs. Seen as another one of Roosevelt’s New Deal projects, OWI was attacked in

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57 http://us-code.vlex.com/source/us-code-foreign-relations-icterous-1021/toc/19
conservative publications for its use of private marketing techniques and contracting of advertising specialists to “sell” U.S foreign policy.\textsuperscript{58}

But these operations were rapidly expanding their global reach as part of the war effort. By 1944, OWI established posts abroad in Baghdad, Beirut, and Cairo.\textsuperscript{59} For foreign audiences, these posts were called United States Information Service (USIS), and were designed to provide honest accounts of information to populations abroad. Since 1942, VOA broadcast news in Arabic to counter Hitler’s racist propaganda. However, this expansion in public diplomacy efforts proved hard to swallow for America’s more powerful European allies. America’s promotion of the Atlantic Charter and the Wilsonian clause of self-determination conflicted with the imperialist efforts of British and French mandates in the region. In accordance with allied concerns, America shifted its public diplomacy priorities: winning the war first, then focusing on the damages wrought by colonialism.\textsuperscript{60} This resulted in strengthened military oversight of COI and OWI, and a focus on psy-ops against the Axis powers.

Throughout WWII, OWI faced considerable scrutiny from Republicans and Southern Democrats in Congress as one of Roosevelt’s New Deal leftovers. Viewed in less political terms, OWI’s potential as large-scale domestic propaganda machine similar to Nazi institutions during the war was seen as threatening to American values such as freedom of speech and expression. Thus, following the surrender of Japanese forces in August 1945, the institution was abolished under President Harry Truman and its

\textsuperscript{58} Dizard, 18-19
\textsuperscript{60} Dizard, 30
international operations were transferred to the Department of State. This move marked the first occasion in which public diplomacy was a considered part of the State Department’s official operations, and laid the foundation for federal agencies charged with managing public diplomacy in the post-WWII era.

**Strategy**

Early twentieth century U.S. public diplomacy strategies in the Middle East were characterized largely by war-time propaganda through various media channels and a symbiotic relationship with private newspapers and media agencies, including the Associated Press, United Press, and International News Service.\(^{61}\) This reactionary strategy was meant to counter Nazi propaganda efforts and deter potential Axis powers’ influence in the Middle East where newly independent states were embarking on a new phase of nationalism and reorganization.\(^{62}\) Of course, proactive public diplomacy strategies had been ongoing since the late nineteenth century and driven by America’s private, religious interests and manifest through lasting educational institutions such as the American University in Beirut.

The proactive efforts of American citizens, however, were not guided by U.S. foreign policy, and therefore not considered an essential strategy of early U.S. public diplomacy. Keeping within the framework of public diplomacy as federal directive, the aforementioned King-Crane Commission of 1919 is one of the earliest examples of

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\(^{61}\) Ibid

America’s executive authority attempting to incorporate the opinions of foreign publics into its foreign policy:

The method of the Commission…was to meet in conference individuals and delegations who should represent all the significant groups in the various communities, and so to obtain as far as possible the opinions and desires of the whole people.\(^{63}\)

The collection of opinion constituted a proactive strategy born out of President Wilson’s liberal commitment to self-determination as laid down in his Fourteen Points. In his view, Wilson understood that the peoples of the Middle East were on the verge of a long-term development project in the wake of Ottoman withdrawal and ahead of further European encroachment.\(^{64}\) The aim of King-Crane, therefore, was to determine which of these newly independent states were capable of self-determination and in need of assistance from the international community. Furthermore, adding to the mix of foreign ambitions in the Middle East was the advancing Zionist Organization (ZO).\(^{65}\) The ZO comprised mainly of Ashkenazi Jews who desired to establish a Jewish state in Palestine to provide a safe haven from increasingly calculated anti-Semitic culture in Europe.\(^{66}\) This goal was essentially negated by the findings of the commission:

…nor can the erection of such a Jewish State be accomplished without the gravest trespass upon the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.\(^{67}\)

\(^{63}\) [http://www.hri.org/docs/king-crane/syria.html](http://www.hri.org/docs/king-crane/syria.html)

\(^{64}\) Ironically, American encroachment would dominate the region less than a century after Wilson’s presidency.

\(^{65}\) Renamed the World Zionist Organization in 1960.

\(^{66}\) The Ashkenazim are the Jewish peoples descended from medieval Jewish communities along the Rhineland.

\(^{67}\) Gelvin, 1922
This early attempt at proactive public diplomacy was genuine: President Wilson sought to inform America’s post-war policy in the Middle East by taking into account the aspirations and opinions of the peoples of the region. However, Wilson’s promotion of self-determination in this context was also naïve and perhaps a bit tardy. Its publication in 1922 took place three years after the European powers and Zionist Organization put forth draft resolutions during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 to divide the region into British and French controlled mandates—including Palestine.\(^{68}\) This move continued to exacerbate tensions created by collective decisions that conflicted with public interests in the Middle East. The new element, however, was America’s new and increasingly powerful presence in the global decision making process.

**Tools**

The tools of public diplomacy during this period included several political visits to the Middle East. In 1943, President Roosevelt attended conferences in Casablanca, Cairo, and Tehran, and discussed future tourism with King Farouk of Egypt prior to his historic meeting with King Ibn Saud in 1945 aboard the *USS Quincy* in the Suez Canal.\(^{69}\) In preparation for the president’s international travels, Secretary of State and later co-creator of the United Nations Cordell Hull (1933-44) and his successor Reilly Stettinius (1944-1945) visited briefly with foreign heads of state to little fanfare or publicity,


respectively. The purpose of these strategy meetings, however, were largely reserved for resolving the War with America’s European and Asian allies.

Federally-funded cultural and professional exchanges would not be signed into law until August 1, 1946. William J. Fulbright proposed a bill that would utilize proceeds surplus war property to fund international exchange as a human effort to prevent a third great war. In 1953, Fulbright would reflect on the intention of the program:

I do not think educational exchange is certain to produce affection between peoples, nor indeed is that one of its essential purposes; it is quite enough if it contributes to the feeling of common humanity, to an emotional awareness that other countries are populated not by doctrines that we fear but by individual people.

International broadcasting was limited to the technological capabilities of the day. OWI’s international broadcasting utilized print, shortwave broadcasts, and purchase advertising in local periodicals to promote democratic ideas and hemispheric unity in Latin America. By 1945, OWI had thirty-nine radio transmitters in place worldwide, broadcasting in forty languages including Arabic. Despite its inevitable closure, Dizard points out the successes of OWI: “physical presence in over forty countries, along with a global Voice of America radio network.” These propagandistic international broadcasting would become shunned by later policymakers, but they were the precursors to the tools and programs that are still in use today.

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70 http://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/secretary

71 Rugh 2006, 18


73 Dizard, 34
Conclusion

Tracing this period of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East reveals the purpose and capabilities of America’s initial experiment with public diplomacy. The profile thus far suggests that the United States enjoyed a positive reputation within the Middle East at this time. Closer examination reveals the beginnings of a public diplomacy institution and process within U.S. Government agencies. This new concept—proactively informing publics abroad and incorporating the opinions of foreign publics into foreign policy—was borne out of Woodrow Wilson’s liberal institutionalist ideals. But this proactive strategy was soon smacked with a dose of realism when European allies continued their imperialist pursuits. Furthermore, powerful entrepreneurs like Rockefeller and Donovan steered reactionary propagandist functions to counter Nazi operations during WWII. Thus, Wilson’s approach to foreign policy design was contradicted by the prevailing belief among policymakers that foreign public opinion ought not determine the foreign policies of the United States. This analysis demonstrates that both perceived global threats and idealistic intentions drive the expansion and strategy of U.S. public diplomacy operations during the early twentieth century.

This early period of U.S. public diplomacy’s fits and starts is set against a relatively calm relationship with Middle Eastern populations in newly forming states. America’s longstanding treaty with Morocco and isolationist approach to foreign policy prior to WWI instilled an image of an America as peaceful guarantor of self-determination. This may be the most positive act of U.S. public diplomacy—and it
required virtually no long-term American presence in the region other than instances of citizen diplomacy through mission work.

As shown above, the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia and America’s backhanded support of the initial steps toward a Jewish State in the Levant occurred within a turbulent period of world affairs. As we shall see in the next chapter, protecting access to Middle Eastern sources of energy and ensuring the security of Israel were cause for a continuous American presence in the region. The King-Crane Commission Report stands out as a unique and early attempt at the realization of one the chief functions of contemporary public diplomacy: to inform. The direction of the King-Crane information flow was intended to be inward—the United States was prepared to take foreign public opinion into account. Despite these idealistic intentions, the report was only capable of providing firsthand understanding of the aspirations of the developing Arab communities of post-Ottoman Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Anatolia. British and French imperialist intentions and Zionist sympathies overshadowed Wilson’s concern for public opinion in the Middle East mandates. And despite America’s WWII ascendance, Roosevelt and Truman continued the realist practice of focusing on the aspirations of America’s more powerful allies at the expense of the popular opinion in the Middle East.
CHAPTER FOUR:
U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST: 1946-2000

Public diplomacy, the international communications, cultural, and educational activities in which the public is involved, has become a principal instrument of foreign policy for the United States and other nations. - 1979 Report to Congress

Foreign Policy

During the second half of the twentieth century, ten different administrations occupied the Office of the President of the United States: five Democrats—Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, Carter, and Clinton—and five Republicans—Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Bush. Despite these divergent political party alignments, all share a strikingly similar foreign policy toward the Middle East characterized by four common themes: (1) confronting the Soviet Union and containing the spread of communism vis-à-vis the Gulf powers during the Cold War; (2) securing American access to Middle Eastern sources of natural energy; (3) providing diplomatic, economic, and military support to the state of Israel; (4) maintaining peaceful engagement with ‘moderate’ Arab states. A fifth theme includes the development and implementation of U.S. public diplomacy within the region and shall be explored in the following section.

Direct involvement in World War II marked a dramatic shift in U.S. foreign policy from the isolationism practiced during the interwar period. In the aftermath of World War II, the United Nations would replace Wilson’s League of Nations and include collective

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74 Bechtold, Peter K. “U.S. Foreign Policy Toward the Middle East: From GW to GW”, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, June 2, 2008.
defense “as a supplement to a sovereign state’s right to self-defense under international law.” Simultaneously, from the realist perspective, the world’s balance of power had shifted and the United States and Soviet Union emerged as the world’s two greatest state powers. Under UN auspices, the United States could justify deterrence of Soviet expansion vis-à-vis regional blocs—including the Middle East. Harry Truman was the first president to promote such policy. The 1947 Truman Doctrine urged Congress to send foreign aid to Greece and Turkey in order to strengthen noncommunist regimes—natural targets of Soviet Expansion: “Should we fail to aid Greece and Turkey in this fateful hour, the effect will be far reaching to the West as well as the East.”

Turkey would eventually enter into a complementary agreement with other Middle Eastern states in order to counter the Soviet threat; Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey and the United Kingdom collectively adopted the Central Treaty Organization in 1955. Two years prior, President Dwight D. Eisenhower successfully changed regimes in Iran by restoring the Shah through covert actions. Eisenhower’s Republican administration saw the Western educated Shah as a strategic partner in a region vulnerable to communism. However, this particular intrusion by the United States into Iran’s internal affairs remains a point of contention between the two states to this day.

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76 Viotti 2005, 198


78 Goldschmidt, 241

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Another highly contentious and enduring issue between the United States and the nations of the Middle East is continued U.S. support for Israel. In the wake of the Holocaust, the United States was inclined to sympathize with the world’s Jewish population and quickly took up the role of guardianship over the nascent Jewish State. The United States was the first country to recognize Israel’s statehood in 1948. Israel remains the largest recipient of foreign aid from the United States to this day. This relationship is seen as a threat to the status of the Palestinian people, Arabs who were living in the lands currently occupied by Israeli citizens. Consequently, conflict over Israel’s territorial acquisition of Palestine snowballed dramatically and contributed to regional instability. Maintaining diplomatic relations with Arab states hostile to Israel, however, was vital to U.S. prevention of communist spread to the Middle East.

On January 5, 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower addressed Congress on the communist threat to the Middle East:

The area has been often troubled . . . All this instability has been heightened and, at times, manipulated by International Communism . . . The action which I propose would . . . first . . . authorize the United States to cooperate with or assist any nation or group of nations in the general area of the Middle East in the development of economic strength . . . second . . . undertake . . . programs of military assistance and cooperation . . . third . . . authorize such assistance and cooperation to include the employment of the armed forces of the United States to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations . . .

The Eisenhower Doctrine demonstrates America’s shift toward “balance of power” politics as it continued on the major world power trajectory in the post-World War context. The offer of military assistance upon request strategically positioned the Middle East as a barrier against overt and covert Soviet threats to U.S. interests. Indeed, shortly after its pronouncement, the Eisenhower Doctrine was enacted to justify American
intervention in the Lebanese Civil War in 1958.\textsuperscript{79} Also, access to natural energy resources underscored the battle of political ideology over the region: should the vulnerable states of the Middle East have fallen to communism, oil resources might have been under Soviet control.

The subsequent Nixon Doctrine was put forth in a 1969 address to the nation on the war in Vietnam. Following the model of past presidential doctrines during this period, President Nixon reiterated the mission to counter communism, emphasizing three points:

First, the United States will keep all of its treaty commitments; Second, we shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us or for a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security; Third . . . we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested . . . But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume primary responsibility for providing the manpower for its defense.\textsuperscript{80}

Nixon kept true to his word on the third point, providing weapons to the states whose leaders claimed to be anti-communist. The beneficiaries included the governments of Shah Reza Pahlavi of Iran and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. These alliances ensured that communism would not prevail in the region and guaranteed sustained American access to vast oil resources. But the Nixon Administration’s interest in the Middle East did not rest solely on access to oil resources and deterrence of Soviet influence. The results of the 1973 Yom Kippur War were largely influenced by the Nixon Administration supplying Israel with weapons as a counter to Soviet support for Egypt. This action demonstrated U.S. commitment to the security of the Israel, while indirectly striking a blow to the Soviet Union vis-à-vis Egypt’s defeat. Consequently, Nixon dealt with “the oil-import crisis provoked when Arab petroleum-producing countries working within OPEC cut

\textsuperscript{79} Viotti 2005, 218-220

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid, 231
production, doubled the price, and imposed an embargo on crude oil exports to the West” due to U.S. support for Israel.\textsuperscript{81}

The next presidential doctrine would not arrive for over a decade. Within this interlude, the Middle East experienced dramatic political change. In 1979 the Iranian Revolution overthrew the Shah and introduced an Islamic Republic. This theocratic government, spearheaded by Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, subsequently ended diplomatic relations with the United States. The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December of the same year. Given this context, it is not surprising that more than in any previous presidency, the Carter Administration’s foreign policy focused on stability in the Middle East. One year prior to the Iranian Revolution and Soviet invasion, President Carter negotiated a peace agreement between Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. The subsequent Camp David Accords returned lands taken by Israel in the Six Days’ War (1967) in exchange for Egypt’s recognition of the Israeli state, thus normalizing relations between the two former adversaries and ensuring America’s commitment to ensuring Israel’s security. The Camp David Accords remain a major diplomatic achievement and a prime example of peaceful engagement in America’s foreign policy record with the Middle East. However, the Iranian Revolution effectively removed a vital ally for the United States in the Gulf. Iran posed a further challenge when fifty Americans were taken hostage inside the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. This crisis, combined with the presence of Soviet forces in the region, intensified concerns that vital American interests—access to natural resources and Israeli security—

\textsuperscript{81} Viotti 2010, 190
were increasingly threatened. In response, Carter sent a strong reminder of the U.S.
commitment to protect the Persian Gulf region from outside forces in his 1980 State of
the Union Address:

> Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of
the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United
States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including
military force.\(^\text{82}\)

In the same speech Carter addresses the “the overwhelming dependence of Western
democracies on oil supply from the Middle East.” This “vital interest” was a crucial
factor to the sustainability of any potential military campaign against Soviet aggression in
the Middle East. In the context of turbulent events, the Carter Doctrine further
legitimized deterrence of Soviet expansion into a region essential to America’s national
interests. Carter upheld the strong rhetoric of his doctrine by initiating Rapid Deployment
Forces to the region, a form of military deterrence which would evolve into U.S. Central
Command (CENTCOM) under President Reagan.\(^\text{83}\) Central Command provided the base
necessary for U.S. armed intervention in the Persian Gulf War (1990-1991), War in
Afghanistan (2001-2012), and the Iraq War (2003-2010).

Ronald Reagan and each of his presidential successors would pursue containment
of the Islamic Republic. The hostage crisis notwithstanding, occurrences of terrorist
aggression against the United States throughout the Middle East is often linked to Tehran.
In 1982 multiple nations, including the United States, were working toward stabilizing
Lebanon when a truck bomb killed 241 U.S. marines in their barracks. President Reagan

\(^{82}\) Viotti 2005, 237

promptly ordered withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Beirut. The Iranian-backed 
terrorist organization Hezbollah claimed responsibility for the attack. Non-state terrorist 
actors were a growing concern during the Reagan Administration. Libyan-backed 
bombings against American soldiers in West Berlin resulted in U.S. airstrikes in 1986.

The obstacles posed by Iran during the Reagan Administration were ultimately 
overshadowed by the collapse of the Soviet Union, effectively ending the Cold War. 
Thus, a new chapter began with the United States as the world’s sole superpower and 
George H. W. Bush as president. Given the country’s new global standing, foreign 
policy dominated his agenda. The most significant foreign policy decision of his 
presidency led to armed intervention in the Persian Gulf. In August 1990, Saddam 
Hussein ordered Iraqi forces to invade neighboring Kuwait. President Bush initially 
responded by sending troops to protect Saudi Arabia from invasion—an act justified by 
the Carter Doctrine. Bush then shifted strategy from deterrence to armed intervention 
with the goal of removing Hussein’s forces from Kuwait entirely. Under UN Security 
Council auspices, a coalition of more than forty countries led by the United States 
countered the Iraqi invasion and liberated Kuwait in 1991. The Bush Administration did 
not pursue regime change, however, and:

Disapproved of any plans to extend the war beyond the agreed mission to liberate Kuwait 
and to deter any thoughts of Iraqi aggression against Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. 
Leaving the Iraqi Army intact was also seen by administration officials as essential to 
maintaining a regional power balance vis-à-vis Iran lest the latter seize an opportunity to 
extend its sphere at a time of Iraqi weakness. 

84 Though the Russian Federation did not officially establish until 1991, the significant economic decline 
and concepts of perestroika and glasnost—clear signs that the Soviet days were waning—arrived during 
Reagan’s tenure.

85 Viotti 2010, 196
Indeed, President Bush designated the South of Iraq as a no-fly zone, leaving the Shia uprising vulnerable to Hussein’s punitive forces, and aggravating Iran’s already deep resentment for the United States.

Serving as the final U.S. president during this period, Bill Clinton witnessed the rise of terrorist threats against the United States, particularly the radical Islamist organization named al-Qa’ida. The group claimed responsibility for first bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993 and the bombing of the navy destroyer, *USS Cole* while harbored at Aden off the coast of Yemen in 2000. With regard to supporting the state of Israel, President Clinton promoted peaceful engagement between Israel and Palestine, despite enormous frustrations in the peace process.\(^{86}\)

From 1946 to 2001, U.S. foreign policy was dominated by containment of the Soviet Union. American relations with states in the Middle East were strategically designed to deter Soviet expansion and protect access to sources of natural energy. I noted earlier that another common theme of post-World War II foreign policy included peaceful engagement with ‘moderate’ Arab states. The United States has historically enjoyed diplomatic relations with Morocco, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Jordan, and Egypt.\(^{87}\) Each of these states supplied military aid as part of the coalition forces against Iraq in the Gulf War. Many of these states remain recipients of U.S. military aid and export natural energy to the United States. The

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\(^{87}\) Egypt enjoyed stronger relations with the United States upon rejection of communism and peace with Israel.
economic stability and defense provided by the United States allows for significant level of American political influence in the region. Among these ‘moderate’ Arab states, only Egypt and Jordan have normalized relations with Israel. As stated previously, Israel relies heavily upon the United States for economic support and defense capabilities—an issue that remains a point of contention throughout the Arab world, Iran, and among non-state actors such as al-Qa’ida and Hezbollah.88

**Institutions**

A fifth theme during this period is the development and implementation of U.S. public diplomacy programming in the Middle East. Clearly, the above foreign policy analysis reflects America’s twentieth century ascension to global superpower. Concomitant with the expansion of America’s global presence was the further institutionalization of public diplomacy in Washington and posts throughout the world. Public diplomacy becomes institutionalized and takes a more honest approach following the end of WWII and in response to skepticism from private media and policymakers in Congress. From the creation of the U.S. Information Agency in 1953 to its consolidation within the State Department in 2000, one might consider the activities during this forty-seven year period the “Golden Age” of U.S. public diplomacy activity. However, the Cold War development of public diplomacy institutions did not reach its zenith until the 1980s. Prior to that decade, a series of bureaucratic fits and starts prevented the full incorporation of public diplomacy into policy formation.

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88 The Zogby Arab Opinion polls historically reflect that most Arabs in the region believe that “the continuing occupation of Palestinian lands and U.S. interference in the Arab world are held to be the greatest obstacles to peace and stability in the Middle East.”
Despite the abolishment of OWI in 1945, the Truman Doctrine elevated propaganda on the list of tools under Congressional consideration to counter Soviet expansion into the Middle East. Following the Representative Karl Mundt (R-SD) teamed up with Senator Alexander Smith (R-NJ) to sponsor legislation that would make political advocacy and cultural programs a permanent part of U.S. foreign policy. In 1947, Mundt and Smith organized a “congressional study tour” to survey information programs at posts in Europe and the Middle East in order to win over congressmen still skeptical over the validity of information in the foreign policy process. Consequently, the Smith-Mundt bill was approved by both houses and signed by President Truman on January 30, 1948.

Within the Eisenhower administration (1953-1961), Secretary of State John Foster Dulles held a “general disdain for international public opinion as a factor in foreign policy.” But practitioners who saw the long-term value of public diplomacy initiatives wanted foreign public opinion included in the formulation of foreign policy. Thus, the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) was created in 1953 to oversee information and political advocacy, while cultural programming was to be maintained under the State Department’s Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs (CU). Eisenhower’s latter years as President reflected his understanding of the importance of public diplomacy in an increasingly interconnected world. In December 1959, the president embarked on a world tour that brought him to eleven countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, Tunisia, and Morocco. Before he left office, Eisenhower also appointed the Sprague Commission to

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89 Dizard, 46
90 Ibid, 55
evaluate USIA. The commission ultimately found the program to be an effective tool of America’s international relations, but pointed to its lack of institutional involvement in policy formation. Therefore, the report recommended that USIA gain some advisory capacity within the National Security Council. It was not until the Reagan administration, however, that this recommendation was realized. Along the way, it seems, appropriating public diplomacy became buried under bureaucratic spitfire, and senior foreign policy officials did not grasp its relevance.91

In 1974, the Stanton Panel put forth recommendations to resolve the political advocacy/cultural communications debate.92 The report’s findings ultimately fell on deaf ears—rather, it fell on the global meliorist ears of Jimmy Carter. As evidenced from the above analysis, the Carter administration’s foreign policy objectives prioritized human rights and trust building among nations. This approach translated into Carter’s new mission for public diplomacy: “to reduce the degree to which misperceptions and misunderstandings complicate relations between the United States and other nations.”93 Whereas Kennedy had narrowed USIA’s focus to political advocacy, Carter attempted to consolidate the political information and cultural communications under the new U.S. International Communication Agency (USICA) in order to counter the perception of

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91 Kennedy abolished the Operations Coordinating Board which had been created under Eisenhower to report information activities to the NSC and was to include the Director of USIA.

92 The Stanton Panel recommended that cultural communications be conducted by a separate agency, while advocacy be managed entirely by state in order to “link policy formulation to articulation and take public opinion into account as policy developed.” During the subsequent Fascell hearings on public diplomacy, then Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher “emphasized that in his view public diplomacy was too distant from the foreign policy process, both in terms of policy formulation and of operations.

93 Rugh, 84
public diplomacy’s one-way advocacy with two-way information and cultural exchange.94 Carter’s presidential directive:

Emphasized that Americans too needed to gain in the kind of quality understanding of other countries that would contribute to the capacity of both the U.S. people and government to manage foreign affairs with sensitivity, effectiveness, and responsibility.95

Thus, USICA’s mission focused on understanding, rather than persuasion, of foreign publics. The Carter administration complemented this change by boosting funds for the Fulbright program. While these initiatives reflected the human rights movements of Carter’s era, they overlooked the need to build support for U.S. policies—especially in the Middle East where increasingly turbulent affairs were a direct result of perceptions regarding U.S. policies. Furthermore, spending on these cultural programs began to decline by 1980.96

In the wake of the Iranian Revolution and hostage crisis, the Reagan administration’s more realist approach to foreign affairs shortchanged the public diplomacy missions of Carter and USICA. But realism does not disregard “soft power” tools. In fact, the Reagan administration breathed new life into America’s public diplomacy commitments and revived the original motto of USIA: “Telling America’s Story to the World.” The Great Communicator’s skills went well beyond the Oval Office; the administration understood the importance of communicating policy and the critical

94 Kennedy reasserted the role of the Ambassador—“the excellent and plenipotentiary” representative of the President at posts abroad. The “country team” model used at embassies in the Middle East meant that the role of the USIS officer was left to the discretion of the ambassador, who may have favored traditional diplomacy over the incorporation of public opinion. Despite the ambassador’s control over the flow of information from embassies to Washington, he or she did not effectively hinder the abilities of USIS officers in the field. For specific examples of individual ambassadors’ roles in managing public diplomacy during the Cold War, see Dizard p. 155-171.

95 Malone, 49-59

role of public affairs in the process. Across the administration’s hierarchy, meetings with foreign outlets became routine, a public diplomacy unit reported directly to the NSC, USIA officers were assigned to the White House and the undersecretary for policy at the Department of Defense, and the State Department began incorporating regional and ad-hoc assignments for public diplomacy officers.97

The most significant institutional amendment during the Reagan administration was Nation Security Decision Directive-77 (NSDD-77) which established committees to ensure focus and coordination of U.S. public diplomacy programming at USIA and the State Department. This synergistic approach would allow for specific policy advocacy and long-term cultural programming to align with national security objectives. However, Reagan’s approach to public diplomacy is not without its critics: Fisher suggests that the “naïve mandate is [sic] simply to refight the propaganda war of several decades past.”98 Furthermore, the text of NSDD-77 reflects another open-ended quick-fix to public diplomacy institutionalization. The increase in committees and ad-hoc working groups would ultimately amount to a minor advisory role for public diplomacy officials in the formulation of policy during Reagan’s tenure.

Following Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait, President George H.W. Bush elevated USIA’s role. Bush held regular briefings on public opinion in the Arab world, even inviting USIA officers to the Oval Office. These contributed to his decision to withdraw forces from the Iraq. Bush knew that further aggression would result in a public

97 Malone, 71-75.

diplomacy disaster that involved a lengthy entanglement in a “bitterly hostile land.”

Thus, his decision not to attempt regime change in Iraq was viewed favorably throughout the Middle East. Furthermore, the administration leveraged this new prestige to respond to Arab opinion that Bush had ignored the Israel-Palestine conflict. The Madrid Conference was a landmark opportunity for the President to reassert the U.S. role as mediator and included Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat, as well as representatives from key Arab governments. While the Madrid Conference did not produce a peace treaty, it was meant to open dialogue among nations and demonstrate the possibility for future negotiations and reconciliation. It was a public diplomacy success that left a relatively positive perception of the United States for the short-term.

The end of the Cold War and the perception of a unipolar international system with the United States as global hegemon ushered USIA into its twilight. Having already suffered serious cutbacks in funds and personnel, USIA was abolished under the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998. The act consolidated public diplomacy operations, including both information and cultural communications programs, under the new position of Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs at the Department of State. Additionally, the Broadcasting Board of Governors was created as an independent agency managed by presidentially appointed chairpersons to oversee the

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99 President Bush as quoted in Rugh, p. 125


Voice of America and all international broadcasting tools. Pragmatically considering the functions of public diplomacy, these changes brought public diplomacy personnel closer to the policy formulation process. In actuality, the transition occurred in the lame duck months of President Clinton’s second term and was consequently deprioritized amidst the hubbub of the 2000 election of George W. Bush. Thus, effective public diplomacy institutions were all but erased at the start of the new millennium. The Golden Age was over.

**Strategies**

During the Cold War, U.S. public diplomacy strategies were largely in competition with the Soviet Union. Thus, as the United States attempted to build allies and support its policies and democracy promotion, the U.S. public diplomacy strategy during this time was overwhelmingly proactive in most regions in the world. In the Middle East, however, reactionary strategies were applied to win support for U.S. policies that were broadly opposed.

A surge in nationalism followed the region’s era of independence, and the region became a central theater for ideological warfare between the United States and Soviet Union. Noting these strong nationalist tendencies, Soviet leaders shrewdly aligned with Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Gamal Abdel in Egypt. Despite the authoritarian nature of the monarchies in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iran, the United States strengthened relationships with these regimes to counter and contain the spread of communism and Soviet influence vis-à-vis control over the region’s oil production and trade.
The Cold War effectively ended during the Reagan administration, thus the bi-polar worldview put forth in proactive public diplomacy efforts during this time became less effective. Of course, proactive strategies in the post-Cold War context include Bush’s consideration of Arab public opinion during the Gulf War. With the information provided by USIA and public diplomacy officers in the Middle East, the Bush administration identified key stakeholders and voices of support for the U.S.-led coalition of several Middle Eastern states against Saddam Hussein’s forces.

However, the public diplomacy strategy in the Middle East shifted to predominantly reactionary as the region became increasingly hostile to U.S. interests. The decline of the Soviet Union and retreat of communism resulted in the rise of Israel’s political and military dominance in the region—with considerable U.S. backing of the democratic state. Iran, now under a regime hostile to American interests, severed ties with the United States entirely. Arab-Israeli conflicts furthered U.S. entanglement into the region. Iraq, formerly backed by the second greatest power on the planet, was now politically and economically isolated. Resurgence in Arab nationalism led by Hussein paved the way to his belligerent offensives against neighboring Iran and Kuwait and ended diplomatic engagement with the United States. All the while, radical Islamist violence was on the rise in response to the failures of the theocratic monarchies and their dependence upon the West for trade and security, including the approval of US CENTCOM. Islamists were “committed to implementation of their ideological vision of Islam and the state.”

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There are numerous accounts of U.S. public diplomacy officers utilizing reactionary strategies to respond to increasing acts of violence against USIA operations. These incidents reflected the region’s broad animosity toward America’s short-term priorities in the Middle East—diplomatic expansion—and long-term interests—protecting Israel’s security and access to sources of natural energy. Public diplomacy officers during this time were committed to proactively communicating the American ideals of democracy, human rights, and free market economy. This advocacy, led by President Reagan, is often pointed to as contributing to the “bloodless dissolution” of the Soviet Union. But this broad approach did not effectively target audiences in the Middle East, where popular opinion was increasingly hostile to U.S. policies. These threats were a direct response against U.S. foreign policy, and beyond of the immediate capabilities of Cold War institutions. Thus, as the twentieth century closed the grand-strategy of Cold War public diplomacy would inevitably give way to targeted operational strategies that both proactively engage and react to the opinions of Middle Eastern publics.

Tools

The Cold War period witnessed a surge in public diplomacy tools. Many USIA print and media publications, cultural exhibitions, and English language training programs were exported to the Middle East to influence and inform publics in an environment increasingly hostile to U.S. interests. Comparatively, international broadcasting and exchange programs gained the greatest funding and advancement. International broadcasting to the Middle East began in 1942 as a counter to German and Japanese propaganda. The Arabic Service, regarded for its “professionalism, variety of
programming, and breadth of audience,”103 went on a brief hiatus immediately following the closure of OWI, but resumed in 1950 and “reflected Cold War concerns.”104 VOA established Arabic Service Centers in Cairo and Beirut. During the early years of the Cold War, VOA was the Middle East’s only exposure to American news services and perspectives on politics, society, and culture. As such, international broadcasting is largely part of a proactive public diplomacy strategy, but is designed to react quickly to the region’s critical developments. For example, when conflict began to intensify between Israel and its neighbors during the 1950s—particularly during the Suez Crisis in 1953—the Arabic Service increased programming from thirty minutes to almost fifteen hours daily. following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Iran hostage crisis, a Farsi station was launched to reach a Persian audience. Additionally, as part of the National Endowment for Democracy agenda that initiated under the Reagan administration, VOA promoted democratic ideals through its programming in the Middle East. Radio Free Iraq, for example, was a directly aimed at Iraqis, and added service in Kurdish. Having no embassies in Tehran or Baghdad at the time, RFI and Radio Farsi connected the U.S. Government with the Iranian and Iraqi peoples. With the abolishment of USIA in 1999, VOA operations moved under the BBG umbrella.

With the global proliferation of television, the international broadcasting medium extended to film and TV programming. “Worldnet” television programs began in the 1980s and featured live two-way dialogues and interviews of American officials by Arab

103 Rugh 2006, 12-13
104 Fisher, 9
journalists—similar to the talk-show concept. Public diplomacy television delved into long-range cultural programming as well. *Uncle Awad’s Friends Club* was a USIA-funded series broadcast in Morocco. It featured Uncle Awad, an Arab-American living in Rabat, and was similar in content to *Sesame Street*. Interestingly, it drew the largest adult viewership on its Saturday night timeslot.\(^{105}\)

Aside from international broadcasting, cultural and professional exchanges between the Middle East and United States flourished during this period. Founded in 1946 by Senator William J. Fulbright, the Fulbright international exchange program was awarded over 6,000 grants to academics and professionals from the Middle East to visit, study, and reside within the United States. This number is significant given the great number of diplomatic closures between the United States and Soviet-backed states in the region during the Cold War (Syria, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, and Iraq). Data derived from participant’s evaluations of these exchanges reveals a largely positive viewpoint of American society, culture, and government—despite criticism of U.S. foreign policies.\(^{106}\)

In addition to Fulbright grants, the State Department’s International Visitor Leadership grants are awarded to mid-level professionals from a variety of fields to customized tours of the United States. In researching for this thesis, I interned with the IVLP program at the Institute of International Education in 2011. People from all Middle

\(^{105}\) Dizard, 171

\(^{106}\) Aside from annual Open Door reports issued by the Institute of International Education, analysis of participants’ perspectives of the United States can be found in Zogby International polls such as Impressions of America. James Zogby covers these and other opportunities to gauge Arab public opinion of the United States in Zogby, James J. *Arab Voices*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
Eastern countries, including those where the United States had no official diplomatic representation, are selected through peer review to visit U.S. cities in order learn and exchange best practices with American counterparts in their field. The response was overwhelmingly positive.

**Conclusion**

During the Cold War, the United States sought to protect its interests and maintain a balance of power against the Soviet Union and the spread of communism. The Middle East became a playground for hard power politics: reliance on oil and regional instability factored into increasing U.S. entanglement in the region’s affairs. Thus, it would seem that the United States sacrificed interdependence, albeit as the dominant participant, in the Middle East in order to contain the Soviet threat to America’s vision as the leader of a democratic world. These entanglements were not always in the favor of those involved, however. Acts of terrorism against the United States at the end of the twentieth century demonstrated its increasing unpopularity among Middle Eastern publics regarding U.S. policies in the region. References to America’s biased support for Israel and belligerent intervention in the region were the impetus for acts of violence against public diplomacy efforts in the region—and four USIA personnel were among those kidnapped in the Iranian hostage crisis.

Ironically, U.S. foreign policy’s overwhelming focus on the power of the state during this period—despite the flourishing of public diplomacy—resulted in an ignorance of the non-state actors that dominated the list of threats to America’s national security objectives in the twenty-first century. Of course, it is an academic luxury to trace the
trajectory of Middle Eastern public opinion from a post-9/11 perspective. During this period, however, relatively isolated instances of belligerence against U.S. interests in the Middle East were not unique to the region. The United States had become the most powerful state in the international system and had done what it believed necessary to protect its interests abroad and spare the globe from communist infection. In the view of American policymakers, it was a win-win. Given these positive-sum approaches, it seems only natural that the United States would continue to advance its own agenda despite negative opinion.

The further institutionalization, strategies, and tools of public diplomacy as explicated here, while a substantial investment, ultimately reflects the overarching foreign policy of the United States at the time: containment of the Soviet Union. Relationships with moderate Middle Eastern states were forged to prevent Soviet control. Even the special relationship with Israel during this period was used as leverage against those states supported by the Soviet Union. In this view, the Arab-Israeli wars were a proxy for extended U.S.-Soviet aggression. The role of public diplomacy being to inform and influence publics abroad so that they might understand and support U.S. policy, ultimately translated to doing just enough to counter any potential support for the Soviet Union.

Public diplomacy officers were no doubt building rapport with key stakeholders in the Middle East, and there are numerous accounts of lasting relationships and trust building conducted by USIA officers. But the minimal incorporation of Middle Eastern interests into the U.S. foreign policy equation limited public diplomacy’s capability to
“win the hearts and minds” of the region’s populace. If the policy could not reflect the interests of the Middle East, how could public diplomacy? With the Soviet Union and the United States as the two superpowers for most of this era, the publics of the Middle East begrudgingly accepted the dominance of what they may have perceived as the lesser of two evils. After all, the United States provided substantial military and financial aid, and continues to be the largest trading partner to the two most powerful countries in the region: Israel and Saudi Arabia.

One can only speculate that public opinion was genuinely being incorporated into foreign policy formulation and not just considered by senior U.S. policymakers. Based on the above case analysis, however, one can argue that opinion was not completely ignored. The greatest evidence of this is President Bush’s acknowledgment of public opinion information into his Gulf War strategy. Reagan also institutionalized public diplomacy into an advisory capacity—but this was ultimately to gauge what resources were necessary to further the anti-Soviet cause and promote democracy among the region’s newly independent and developing nations.

Ultimately, despite the flurry of institutional shifts for public diplomacy during this period, in practice the ability to influence Middle Eastern public opinion was always limited to the level that U.S. policy incorporated the region’s popular interests. Originally, the purpose of the post-war information activities was to counter distorted images of the United States abroad. That practice was consistent throughout the Cold War as a counter to Soviet propaganda. Following the creation of Israel in 1948, there were repeated instances of public diplomacy implementing reactionary strategies to
conduct damage control. Furthermore, the logic of the public diplomacy mission changes as administrations change. Nowhere is this more dramatic than in the final year of the Clinton administration with the downplaying of public diplomacy in the post-Cold War era. Economic supremacy replaced the ideological battle with the former Soviet Union, thus the role of an independent public diplomacy agency may have seemed nonessential to a 21st century U.S. foreign policy.

During this era of transition for both the Middle East and the United States, what was the impact of U.S. public diplomacy efforts? It presented America to the Middle East and created awareness that the United States was not just populated by doctrines, but by individuals who shared at most a common interest, and at least a common humanity. This suggests that public diplomacy is a successful endeavor when promoting broad interests—such as effectively containing the Soviet ideology—but it needs practice when dealing with tougher, regional issues. Despite the loss of an independent public diplomacy agency, the practice continued quietly within the larger bureaucracy of the State Department. The importance of public diplomacy, and by extension, the incorporation of public opinion into foreign policy would be seriously tested in the post-Cold War era. Non-state actors, the very target of public diplomacy efforts, would pose the greatest perceived threat to U.S. national security at the start of the twenty-first century.
CHAPTER FIVE:
U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST: 2001-PRESENT

Unlike in the 1940’s and the 1950’s when the U.S. expended significant resources on non-military means of engagement through Truman’s international institutions and Eisenhower’s more direct “psychological struggle”, today our public diplomacy wears combat boots. This is a fact with consequences.

- Matt Armstrong, former Chairman of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy

**Foreign Policy: Armed Intervention & Renewed Engagement Rhetoric**

Less than one year into his presidency, George W. Bush would lead the United States through the worst national security disaster in its history. The Islamist terrorist network al-Qaeda attacked the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia on September 11, 2001. In context of this discussion, a Middle Eastern non-state actor with deep resentment for U.S. policies in the region was responsible. President Bush ambitiously set the defeat of terrorism at the top of his agenda, targeting the terrorist networks themselves and the states that harbored them. In October 2001, American forces invaded Afghanistan and toppled the Taliban government. With the War on Terror underway, President Bush addressed students at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in June 2002, delivering what would come to be known as the Bush Doctrine:

... New threats also require new thinking. Deterrence, the promise of massive retaliation against nations, means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend ... the war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge ... And our security will require all Americans to be forward looking and resolute, to be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives ... 107

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107 Viotti 2005, 244-245
The president reiterated the strategy of preemptive strike against inherent threats in his 2002 National Security Strategy: “. . . we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right to self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists . . .”

The United States would indeed act preemptively in the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. The Bush Administration justified the preemptive attack as a response to the imminent threat posed by Saddam Hussein’s alleged stockpile of weapons of mass destruction and their inevitable use against the United States. Though the Bush Administration did gain allies in both the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, it was through a unilateral lens: “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”

Ostensibly, nations were coerced into becoming allies in American efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq and the broader Global War on Terror.

Despite domestic and international controversy over the moral and legal essence of the Bush Doctrine, the response from Middle Eastern leaders for U.S. counterterrorism efforts in the region represented cautious support. Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Syria, and Libya all provided the United States with unprecedented access to intelligence on suspected terrorists residing in these lands. However, this support was not publicized domestically. Fouad Ajami’s 2002 testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee illuminates this point, suggesting that:

The United States should leave the issue of Arab public opinion to Arab governments, adding that ‘they don’t know how to develop their populations . . . but they know how to stay in power—that’s what the game is all about.’

108 Ibid, 245
109 Viotti 2010, 244
110 Telhami, 68
Middle Eastern public opinion toward the United States was rapidly decreasing. For a vast majority of Middle Easterners, 9/11 had no immediate effect on their daily lives. To be sure, there was sympathy for the American people; but the Middle Eastern perspective also saw the tragedy as a radical response to detrimental U.S. policies—especially the superpower’s biased support for Israeli leadership and a perceived dismissal of the Arab-Israeli peace process.\textsuperscript{111} Osama bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaeda, claimed that the presence of American military forces in Saudi Arabia and support for the state of Israel were motives for his organization’s attacks against the United States and its interests. Months after the 9/11 attacks, bin Laden released a video explaining his rationale:

\begin{quote}
Terrorism against America deserves to be praised because it was a response to injustice, aimed at forcing America to stop its support for Israel, which kills our people.\textsuperscript{112}
\end{quote}

In addition to this anti-Israeli sentiment, al-Qa’ida rejected U.S. support for Muslim authoritarian regimes that competed with bin Laden’s radically conservative form of fundamentalist Islam, believing that restoration of Sharia law will end the influence of the immoral behaviors of Western societies on the world. This warped vision was widely rejected throughout the Muslim world and in the Middle East. Yet, popular discontent over these specific U.S. policies was palpable and would only intensify as the U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continued to rock the stability of the Middle East.


Beyond President Bush’s containment of terrorism, his Middle East policy took a more proactive shift when former National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice was appointed as Secretary of State. While continuing with GWOT and the democratization agenda, a sharper focus was given to reopening diplomatic ties with the states in Libya and Syria. Libya had previously been a state subject to coercive diplomacy due to its dealings with terrorist organizations and regional altercations. Following the invasion of Iraq, the Libyan president, Moammar Ghadafi, ceased his country’s weapons programs to gain leverage with the United States and other Western powers. The United States normalized diplomatic relations with Libya in 2006, gaining a new ally in the Middle Eastern theater of the Global War on Terror. In fact the Middle East was the only theater.

The regional repercussions of the fall of Saddam Hussein included political and societal instability within Iraq, and an emboldened Iran. The Islamic Republic had previously been checked by the threat of Saddam Hussein. As noted earlier, Arab concerns that Iran might become a more dominant power in the region contributed to George H.W. Bush’s rationale for not pursuing regime change in the Gulf War. The United States was now aggressively overthrowing regimes in Kabul and Baghdad. The former was exemplary of the initial vision of the Global War Terror—coercive action against terrorists and regimes that harbored them; whereas post-occupation Iraq became the Bush Administration’s prototype for future democratization in the Middle East.

Barack Obama came to the presidency while the United States was deeply entrenched in two wars in the Middle East, and with a more vocal Iran in pursuit of nuclear capabilities. Despite these more prominent threats to American interests and
national security, the Obama Administration’s foreign policy objectives deviated sharply from the previous administration. Barack Obama approached the presidency with the promise to return to intervention within an international framework and use of diplomatic engagement and containment as the first approaches to adversaries, setting aside the use of force as a last resort. In his inaugural address, Obama stated his desire for peaceful relations with the Muslim world based on mutual understanding and respect. Among the first acts of his presidency, Barack Obama called Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority, signaling his commitment to the ongoing peace process and the creation of a Palestinian state—a contrasting with the initial lack of concerted effort put forth by the Bush administration. Furthermore, the Obama Administration has verbally pressured Israel to cease settlement growth in the Palestinian Territories, generating notable tension with the rightwing Benjamin Netanyahu administration.

In June 2009, President Obama delivered his “New Beginning” speech at Cairo University—perhaps the peak of U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East:

We meet at a time a time of tension between the United States and the Muslims around the world—tension rooted in historical forces that go beyond any current policy debate . . . [T]ension has been fed by colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims, and a Cold War in which Muslim-majority countries were too often treated as proxies without regard to their own aspirations.\(^\text{113}\)

The President engaged directly with the Middle East to repair relations damaged by the policies of previous administrations. While attempts were made at peaceful engagement with Iran, the Obama Administration has maintained coercive action through trade embargoes put in place by the Bush administration to counter Tehran’s pursuit of nuclear

\(^{113}\) “Text of President Obama’s Speech in Cairo”, June 4, 2009.
capabilities. The administration continues to increase economic sanctions and cyberattacks to contain Iran’s nuclear ambitions. The sanctions, however, have not achieved their goals.

In December 2011, President Obama ended combat operations in Iraq, though a sizeable force of government employees remains for restructuring and counterinsurgency efforts. President Obama announced the end of operations in the War in Afghanistan following the shift of U.S. foreign policy toward Asia. Ultimately, the foreign policy objectives of the Obama Administration represent a stark departure from its predecessor. The return to conducting U.S. foreign policy within a multilateral framework and opening diplomatic relations with traditional adversaries—such as Syria—was demonstrative of the Obama administration’s commitment to peaceful engagement in an attempt to improve the U.S. image in the Middle East while politically distancing himself from the previous administration.

In practice, however, the Obama administration has stayed on par with the overwhelming trends of the latter half of the twentieth century. Despite initial attempts at opening dialogue with the Arab states of the Middle East, the President continues to keep Israel’s security a top priority. As for the War on Terror, the administration has been careful to cut down the rhetoric and has sent few detainees to Guantanamo Bay. But its authorization of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), or drones, to kill suspected terrorists in Yemen and Pakistan has raised additional controversy due to civilian deaths and

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violations of sovereignty. For many in the region, this does not represent a shift in policy.
But President Obama’s biggest challenge for Middle East policy has been crafting an appropriate response to the Arab Spring. Beginning in 2011, a series of political upheavals occurred throughout the region, overthrowing several key U.S. allies: Tunisia’s Ben Ali, Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak, Libya’s Muammar Ghadafi, and Yemen’s Ali Abdullah Saleh. In each case, the United States sought to demonstrate the peoples of the Middle East that it favored democratization over stability—in practice, however, it worked much harder to secure the latter.

The Obama Administration’s Israel policy has angered pro-Israeli politicos in the United States and abroad—including Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu. Although no overt measures have taken place, the President and his Cabinet have been publically critical of Israel’s continued settlement expansion into the Palestinian Territories, and its isolation from Egypt following the departure of Hosni Mubarak. President Obama has also rebuked Netanyahu’s warmongering against Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons program. Clearly, U.S.-Israeli relations are strained—albeit aid and protection remain.

Essentially, the post-9/11 U.S. Government has yet to drastically overhaul the five themes of the Cold War administrations outlined in the previous chapter. Indeed, from Eisenhower to present, U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East has achieved a high degree of consistency. However, the events of 9/11 and the period following prompted a national debate to answer a loaded question: How does the United States repair its relations with the Middle East? There are many positions on the issue, but its resolution has become a
critical component of America’s twenty-first century foreign policy agenda. Naturally, reparation requires engagement. Consequently, the reinstitutionalization of public diplomacy has become fundamental to U.S. Middle East policy.

**Institutions**

In 2000, the Bush administration inherited the exhausts of USIA. The decades-old agency was now in the process of acclimating to the bureaucracy of the State Department. Secretary of State Colin Powell was charged with appointing the first Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. According to the State Department’s website:

The Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs leads America’s public diplomacy outreach, which includes communications with international audiences, cultural programming, academic grants, educational exchanges, international visitor programs, and U.S. Government efforts to confront ideological support for terrorism. The Under Secretary oversees the bureaus of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Public Affairs, and International Information Programs, and participates in foreign policy development.

But it was not until the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks when Charlotte Beers was appointed. Subsequently, the position has been unfulfilled for over 30 percent of the time since it was established in 1999. The now disbanded U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy compared this vacancy rate with other Under Secretary offices in 2012:\(^{116}\)

**Figure 4: Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Under Secretary Office</th>
<th># Under Secretaries since 1999</th>
<th>Average Tenure (days)</th>
<th>Days not filled since 1999</th>
<th>% not filled since 1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Diplomacy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>1,375</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Affairs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,498</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Affairs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,246</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table reflects accurately the general lack of leadership in the post-9/11 public diplomacy institution and demonstrates public diplomacy continues to struggle in being properly incorporated into the Department’s senior policymaking.

Former career USIA officer Andrew Koss made the transition to the State Department as public diplomacy-track Foreign Service Officer in 1999. When speaking to the institutional shift of public diplomacy, Koss noted that many career USIA officers who transferred to State recognized immediately the bureaucratic limitations, differences in training between public diplomacy and traditional diplomacy officers, and inefficiencies in manpower—specifically, political officers often taking higher level public diplomacy positions.117

Clearly, restricting public diplomacy was not immediately prioritized at the turn of the century and the State Department and BBG were scrambling to find cohesion in order to respond. “The realization that foreign perceptions had domestic consequence quickly made public diplomacy a national security issue.”118 Members of Congress understood this, and conducted several studies that put forth recommendations to reboot as a means to improve to reform public diplomacy and America’s image abroad.119

Changing Minds Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab & Muslim World, a comprehensive study conducted by the Advisory Group


on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World and chaired by for Ambassador to Israel and Syria Edward P. Djerejian in 2003, complemented these efforts. The report recommends expansion of public diplomacy efforts in the Middle East and a restructuring of the State Department in order to better accommodate the input of public diplomacy officers at the onset of policymaking. Despite fits and starts from Congress, both the Bush and Obama administrations recognized the value of public opinion abroad—at the very least being aware of it when formulating foreign policy. However, both administrations differed in their approach.

The Bush administration took an approach similar to the Reagan administration by bringing public diplomacy advisors directly into the White House. A White House task force was created to manage overseas information efforts to counter terrorist propaganda. The New York Times commented that this move was an attempt “to create a 21st century version of the muscular propaganda war that the United States waged in the 1940s.”\footnote{Dizard, 222} Coalition Information Centers were established in London, Karachi, and Islamabad to counter Taliban information campaigns and provide the American perspective on U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan. “Watch committees” at these centers included staff from the Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, as well as the National Security Council, Defense Department, and CIA. Public diplomacy, therefore, was now assigned an essential role in national security planning.
In the months leading up to the invasion of the Iraq War, President Bush created the White House Office of Global Communications (OGC). A description of OCG’s mission and purpose is telling of the public diplomacy’s gradual prioritization.

The Office of Global Communications (OGC) was formed in 2002 to coordinate strategic communications overseas that integrate the President’s themes and truthfully depict America and Administration policies. Since better coordination of our international communications helps convey the truth about America and the goals we share with people everywhere, the President authorized OGC by Executive Order to communicate American policies and values – with greater clarity and through dialogue with emerging voices around the globe.

OGC advises the President and his key representatives on the strategic direction and themes that the United States Government uses to reach foreign audiences. The Office assists in the development of communications that disseminate truthful, accurate, and effective messages about the American people and their government. With State Department Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs remaining at the frontlines of international communications, Global Communications coordinates the work of many agencies and Americans to convey a few simple but powerful messages. These messages are intended to prevent misunderstanding and conflict, build support for and among United States coalition partners, and better inform international audiences.\(^{121}\)

While OGC was created to better coordinate public diplomacy operations, there is no mention in the lengthy mission statement or elsewhere on the office’s website regarding the impact of public opinion regardless of an honest portrayal of America’s foreign policy agenda. The logic is that if we are honest in presentation, then the audience will accept the policy. Certainly, this was not the case in the Middle East, where public opinion regarding U.S. policies was increasingly negative as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continued.\(^{122}\)

The reform and restructuring of public diplomacy continued under the Obama administration. With the transfer of USIA to State in 1999, public diplomacy became a Foreign Service cone—a focused career track chosen by U.S. diplomats. Despite internal

\(^{121}\) [http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/ogc/](http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/ogc/)

\(^{122}\) Zogby, Chapters 10 & 13.
debate over the relevance of public diplomacy within the State Department, the trend continued in favor of integrating USIA operations at Foggy Bottom. In the President’s National Strategic Communications Framework for 2012, public diplomacy is recognized as an essential component of U.S. national security instrument. Implicating the Arab Spring, “the events of the last two years have only reinforced the importance of public diplomacy . . . in advancing U.S. interests.” The framework responds to the aims put forth by acting Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy Judith McHale in the 2010 Public Diplomacy: Strengthening U.S. Engagement with the World Report:

1. Foreign audiences recognize areas of mutual interest with the United States;
2. Foreign audiences recognize believe the United States plays a constructive role in global affairs; and
3. Foreign audiences see the United States as a respectful partner in efforts to meet complex global challenges.

These are all important aims, but they again overlook an imperative objective that has been the crux of public diplomacy’s struggle since its inception. The President’s report adds that “we also see our efforts to engage foreign audiences as critical levers to strengthen target elements within societies to help advance U.S. foreign policy objectives, such as democratic transitions, economic opportunity, or mutual understanding” and that a priority for public diplomacy is to “better inform policymaking.” Six new Deputy Assistant Secretaries for Public Diplomacy have been assigned to regional bureau at the State Department. When filled, these positions will enhance senior leadership for public diplomacy activities across the State Department bureaucracy. Budget reform includes

123 Hillary Clinton’s confirmation
124 2012 Update to Congress on National Framework For Strategic Communication
125 Ibid, 2-3
realigning spending with policy priorities, implying that public diplomacy activities will be specialized and not broadly applied. While not mentioning the status of the BBG and specific training for public diplomacy officers, the President’s report was timed with the installation of Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy Tara Shonenshine. Shonenshine’s swearing in was conducted by Secretary Clinton—a role expected to be reserved for the Undersecretary of Management. While there is much work to be done, U.S. public diplomacy is regaining its footing in foreign policy.

Strategy

The reform of institutions in the wake of 9/11 signaled the U.S. Government’s reinvestment in public diplomacy as a means to alleviate the preponderance of Middle Eastern populations’ negative attitudes toward the United States. President Barack Obama’s Cairo speech in June 2009 was meant to rebuild American credibility in the region. However, Gallup’s 2010 poll “Measuring the State of Muslim-West Relations: Assessing the New Beginning,” reported that the U.S. Government’s approval rating in Egypt dropped from 38 percent in 2009 (post-Cairo speech) to 18 percent the following year.\textsuperscript{126}

If using public opinion data when planning strategy, public diplomacy in the post-9/11 period was characteristically reactionary. There are two reasons for this: 1) damage control in response to negative action toward U.S. policy and presence in the region, and 2) regional events beyond U.S. influence. First, for more than half a century public diplomacy officers had to defend U.S. Israel policy to the Middle East. Now they took on

\textsuperscript{126} Esposito 2011
the additional burden of responding to negative reactions surrounding two U.S.-led wars in the region—and with fewer resources to support them.\textsuperscript{127} They had to explain that heightened security measures, limitations on visas, and the GWOT focus on the region was not intentional segmentation or intentional measures against Islam. Whatever the view of the Bush administration’s Middle East policies, the President and his cabinet were quite clear on several high profile occasions that the United States was not waging war against the Muslim world.\textsuperscript{128} Despite these efforts, malicious anti-U.S. propaganda pervaded throughout the region and targeted vulnerable youth.\textsuperscript{129} Of course, Middle Eastern leaders and publics widely rejected these violent appeals. But the President was addressing a region still angry over a stalled peace process, the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, and continued U.S. support for the region’s repressive regimes. The Middle East was simply not prepared to regard the President of the United States as credible.

Public diplomacy successes in the Middle East were too few under the Bush administration due to a focus on fighting a one-way information battle to support U.S. policies:

\begin{quote}
Given the mandate to “get the U.S. message out,” U.S. public diplomacy was essentially a one-way, message-driven information assault on the Arab and Islamic world. The public were passive pawns in a war of ideas, as U.S. public diplomacy sought to “out-communicate” the opponent.\textsuperscript{130}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{127} Deputy Assistant Secretary Holtz Describes the Purpose of Public Diplomacy in Near Eastern Affairs, 2010. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCYtRtXud2I&feature=youtube_gdata_player.


\textsuperscript{130} Zaharna, 3
For example, Charlotte Beers focused on “rebranding” America’s image abroad. But the core of public diplomacy is not about communicating a brand. It’s about communicating policy with a public. Furthermore, in 2003 former Ambassador to Algeria Christopher Ross was appointed as the U.S. State Department Senior Adviser for Arab World Diplomacy. Ross reiterated that public diplomacy’s primary function was policy advocacy “designed to support US national interests and meet its international duties. Above all else, the first responsibility must always be to ensure that foreign audiences understand U.S. policies for what they are, not what others say they are.”

Ross’ statement emphasizes a major point of this thesis: the institutions supporting U.S. public diplomacy strategies in the Middle East are ultimately a product of the administration’s foreign policy; but it also represents the disconnect between foreign policy and public diplomacy during this period. Public diplomacy prioritized countering propaganda over engaging key stakeholders in conversations about U.S. foreign policy. Rather than communicate with the diverse segments of people living throughout the Middle East; this narrow focus targeted a monolithic audience—a Middle East susceptible to radical Islamist propaganda. Thus the aim of promoting America’s values and culture was interpreted as condescending rather than helpful. Put simply, the reactionary grand-strategy approach missed the point: the populations of the Middle East were not interested in discussing America’s values. They were interested in discussing America’s policies in their lands.

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131 Ross, 22
The next administration continued the reactionary approach, but softened the information battle. President Obama’s Cairo speech marked pivotal turning point in the broader public diplomacy strategy. The strategy of the speech itself—a U.S. President addressing the Middle East from the traditional epicenter of Arab nationalism—indicated a pause on reactionary measure to balance negative attitudes from afar. The President was sending a clear signal that the United States was ready for a conversation with the Middle East. He outlined U.S. policies rationally, acknowledging disagreement. As Public Diplomacy Officer in Chief, President Obama took a proactive measure to shift the tone of U.S.-Middle East conversation from advocacy to engagement.

In contrast, Obama’s follow-up speech in May 2011 was largely perceived as reactionary to the Arab Spring’s catching U.S. policymakers off guard. The President attempted to shift equating protection of national interests with stability and security of authoritarian regimes, to a new narrative and framework: the pursuit of our national interests within America’s principles of self-determination, democracy and human rights. But bold policies would need to turn this rhetoric into reality. As explained in the first section of this chapter, U.S. policy has yet to prioritize the region’s civil society development over its political stability.

**Tools**

In an era of unprecedented communications capabilities, public diplomacy has gained a broad array of technological tools to inform and influence audiences abroad. “Public Diplomacy 2.0” was introduced and aggressively pursued across government by

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132 Esposito 2011
Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy James K. Glassman (2008-2009). Online social media became a new platform for communicating and engaging with foreign publics. Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, and blogs were developed for the State Department and embassies all over the world. The measurable impact of these technological developments is uncertain, but the fact remains that information sharing between the Middle East and public diplomacy officers has never been easier or faster—if less informal.

These communications tools are no longer in the hands of networks and governments—they are in the hands of individuals. As the world has seen in Tahrir Square, Benghazi, Tripoli, and Sana’a, social media and mobile technology enabled individuals to mobilize against their governments.133 For the public diplomacy officer, these technologies are no substitute for direct contact, but they do provide a practical conduit for engagement amidst the barriers at U.S. Embassy Baghdad; fortress-like structures and heightened security measures make it difficult for Iraqis to visit the complex or for public diplomacy officers to go out leisurely and engage directly with locals.

As part of reactionary post-Arab Spring strategy, the BBG inaugurated the Middle East Voices network online to provide a platform for dialogue on regional issues:

Middle East Voices is a new social journalism project powered by the BBG and Voice of America. Designed as a collaborative journalism and engagement platform, it seeks to combine investigative journalism, crowdsourcing, participatory writing and social media technology to redefine how stories in and about the Middle East should be told.134

134 Read more at Middle East Voices: http://www.middleeastvoices.com/our-mission/#ixzz1xdE71f2N
Prior to the advent of social media at State, the BBG inaugurated the Middle East Broadcasting Network (MBN) in 2002. MBN operates Radio Sawa and al-Hurra Satellite Television in order to:

Provide America an undistorted line of communication with the people of the Middle East. They deliver accurate and objective information about America, American policies and people with a broad range of perspectives and an open exchange of ideas on issues of importance to the audience.135

Based on the VOA concept of the Cold War, MBN is part of the reactionary strategy to counter anti-American perceptions in the Middle East.

Ostensibly designed to compete with Al-Jazeera, al-Hurra is an Arabic news station that presents America’s view to Arab audiences. But viewership of al-Hurra is significantly lower when compared to Al-Jazeera for a simple reason: Al-Jazeera presents Arab news with an Arab view—something that did not exist in the region until Al-Jazeera was established in 2000.136 Speaking before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary Clinton spoke to the failure of U.S. Government efforts to penetrate the Middle East through news broadcasts: “Al Jazeera has been the leader in literally changing people's minds and attitudes. And like it or hate it, it is really effective.”137 This revealing anecdote aside, why would the average Middle Eastern viewer tune in to the American presentation of the Arab-Israeli peace process given the U.S. bias toward Israel? It’s not a matter of objective international broadcasting, therefore, but a matter of established

135 http://www.bbg.gov/broadcasters/mbn/

136 http://kimelli.nfshost.com/?id=11640

137 Hillary Clinton: “Viewership Of Al Jazeera Is Going Up In The United States Because It’s Real News”, 2011. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zW4AKrOlak&feature=youtube_gdata_player. Secretary Clinton continued: “In fact viewership of al Jazeera is going up in the United States because it's real news. You may not agree with it, but you feel like you're getting real news around the clock instead of a million commercials and, you know, arguments between talking heads and the kind of stuff that we do on our news which, you know, is not particularly informative to us, let alone foreigners.”
credibility behind their use. These local sources succeed over U.S. sources in large part because they are “responsive to public attitudes.” The White House understood this when it delivered President Obama’s prerecorded 2012 Nowruz address to Iranians vis-à-vis several media outlets rather than just through BBG’s Radio Farda. The President’s words were heard because they were aired on a credible information source, rather than a U.S. Government-funded outlet.

While new international broadcasting tools brought into use during the post-9/11 era, the overwhelming information battle undermined their effectiveness. Furthermore, due to reduced funding since the abolishment of USIA, BBG did not have the adequate resources to target individual countries and distributed its message to a monolithic Middle Eastern public. The same quick-fix thinking was applied to Karen Hughes’ listening tours throughout the Middle East and the failed Shared Values Initiatives under Charlotte Beers. If the United States wanted to gather Middle Eastern views on policy, then they could turn to opinion polls and content analysis of media sources. Focusing on shared values is important and has long-term effects on relationship building; but if policy disagreements are ignored, then overt “listening” tools will be regarded as publicity stunts.

Funding for cultural and professional exchanges continued to expand under both the Bush and Obama administrations. While post-9/11 heightened security measures

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138 Telhami, 77
140 RFI was rebooted and was seen as effective in explaining and updating Iraqis during the initial stages of the war. However, RFI ceased operations following the capture of Saddam Hussein.
hampered U.S.-Middle East exchanges, the annual Institute of International Education’s Open Doors Report has published steady increases over the past ten years. The 2011 report reflect that The number of students from the Middle East in the U.S. increased by 25.9% in 2010/11 to 42,543 students, while the number of students from North Africa increased by 9.7% to 5,420 students. While reports demonstrate annual increases, visa restrictions and fortress-like embassies do not bode well for American hospitality in region that values such a quality. American Corners were rebooted in 2004 as sections throughout the region’s university libraries, but heightened security measures on embassy personnel prevented placement of permanent American staff to facilitate contact and dialogue as practiced during the Cold War. Other post-9/11 exchange venues include the region-wide centers AMIDEAST and Middle East Peace Initiative (MEPI), and America House based in East Jerusalem opened its doors to the public in June 2010. “The mission of America House is to encourage a dialogue between the United States and Jerusalemites in order to foster mutual understanding and emphasize shared values.”

Although a recent project, America House is a major step forward in America’s direct engagement with Palestinians—key stakeholders in U.S. Arab-Israeli policies.

Given the U.S. foreign policy context, political visits during this period were relatively high. Ease of travel, and foreign policy directives drove increased visits, and since 2000, the U.S. President and/or Secretary of State visited the region on 200 occasions. Furthermore, diplomatic posts reopened in Syria after the United States

142 http://jerusalem.usconsulate.gov/americahouse2.html
recalled its ambassador in 2005 after the assassination of Lebanon’s anti-Syrian opposition leader Rafic Hariri. Violent threats amidst current uprisings against the Assad regime forced a downgrade to an interest section in Poland in 2012.143

**Conclusion**

The first twelve years of the twenty-first century included dramatic events in U.S.-Middle East policies and the development of public diplomacy. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the ongoing GWOT brought unprecedented U.S. presence to the region. U.S. troops, high profile political visits, massive embassies, and increasing student and professional exchanges translate to a broader awareness of American policy, culture, and ideas over the past decade.

9/11 brought to light America’s public diplomacy vacuum. Since 2001, public diplomacy institutions have undergone a phoenix period—one agency abolished and a still-nascent structure has replaced it. But if budget trends continue, then public diplomacy will continue to gain the adequate resources necessary to expand and improve its current position in the U.S. government. Despite these limitations, public diplomacy officers continue to deal with their ongoing reformation, and have accomplished what they could with the available tools to promote U.S. interests and repair damaged relations resulting from those policies.

Indeed, the social media and online tools of this era have made listening to voices abroad and within the public diplomacy bureaucracy more accessible than ever before. Whether or not the State Department’s collection of foreign opinion is now being

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incorporated into the formulation of foreign policy remains unclear. To gain firsthand perspective of the contemporary role of foreign opinion in policy formulation, I interviewed recently retired U.S. Government employees across the State Department bureaucracy.

Andrew Koss, a retired career public diplomacy officer who made the transition from USIA to the State Department in 1999 believed that the consolidation’s opportunity cost of the USIA-State Department consolidation resulted in a loss of resources and access to senior policymakers. Many career USIA officers who transferred to the State Department recognized immediately the bureaucratic limitations, the differences in training between public diplomacy officers and traditional diplomats—specifically, political officers often taking higher level public diplomacy jobs. “While a new structure for public diplomacy was created, it has not been clear how it becomes incorporated into policymaking.” Although the public diplomacy cone provides a new pathway to ambassadorship, the career choice has been met with institution-wide skepticism. Having a “revolving door” on the Office of Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and only one career FSO serve in such position since its inception in 1999 does not provide promising statistics for junior officer selecting his or her career track.144

Ambassador Christopher R. Hill, who served as chief of mission to four embassies—his final post in Baghdad—views public diplomacy’s role from a managerial lens:

I think we’ve had difficulty getting through to the Arab Street as opposed to getting through to the Arab leaders. The problem is not how we’re doing it; rather, the problem is

what the message is [sic], and I think the United States has had a great deal of difficulty overcoming the presumption that we’re pro-Israeli and anti-Arab.

The State Department’s view has largely been to avoid talking to the press and the public to avoid potential anti-U.S. reaction.

This statement is revealing and emphasizes the great difficulty in engaging Arab street against the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict. Ambassador Hill’s observation of the State’s traditional stance toward public diplomacy is telling of the institutional barriers to public diplomacy. However, Ambassador Hill goes on to reference his personal appreciation for public diplomacy, pointing to his mentor Richard Holbrooke’s success during the Yugoslav war in turning public opinion in support of the U.S. involvement by engaging with the local press and public.

As Ambassador to Iraq, he explained that the security at the embassy prevented interaction with the Iraqi public—a critical missed opportunity for public diplomacy efforts. Hill explained that part of the public diplomacy problem is not the security impediments but a tremendous gulf between Iraqi and American understandings as to why the American presence is there. This has driven the use of social media to engage outside of the fortress, as well as focus on younger Iraqi audiences more prone to use online sources.

Finally, Hill believes that due to the USIA-State merger, public diplomacy is becoming “more integrated into the State Department . . . eventually taking the foreign policymaking process in a new direction.” However, in the same breath he suggested that the validity of the public diplomacy track is often in question. Furthermore, although there have been public diplomacy officers serving as Deputy Chiefs of Mission at various
posts—“the tried and true pathway to becoming an Ambassador”—these instances are the exception to the tradition of political and economic officers advancing to Ambassador.\textsuperscript{145}

Condoleezza Rice advocated transformational diplomacy during her tenure as 66\textsuperscript{th} Secretary of State under George W. Bush. Transformational diplomacy is a simple concept demonstrative of the State Department’s post-9/11 action plan to encourage programming in critical policy regions such as the Middle East. The objectives include expanding public diplomacy activities; however, Dr. Rice suggested that the consideration of public opinion aspect was nonessential to the success of policy.

U.S. Government is always going to be tarred with whatever policy is unpopular . . . I don’t think you spend that much time thinking about public opinion. It’s less that you want to be liked than you want to be effective. If you have difficulties in public opinion and that affects how other governments can support or not support our policy, then it has an impact.\textsuperscript{146}

This state-centric approach may be telling of Dr. Rice’s Cold War training; in fact, all three of the above individuals began their government careers serving in some foreign policy capacity within administrations during and shortly after the Cold War. More to the purpose of this thesis, these separate comments are reflective of the reality of public diplomacy’s role in the U.S. foreign policy process. While the opinions of the populations have been considered historically, public diplomacy largely remains an advocacy role rather than incorporating foreign opinion into the foreign policymaking equation in the twenty-first century.

\textsuperscript{145} Career USIA officer William A. Rugh served as Ambassador to Yemen (1984-1987) and the UAE (1992-1995) and former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Diplomacy in Near Eastern Affairs Greta Holtz has been appointed U.S. Ambassador to Oman.

\textsuperscript{146} “Thesis Interview”, April 2, 2012.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The preceding historical analysis demonstrates the capabilities and limitations of U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East. The conceptual model presents a clearer picture of the public diplomacy process, allowing for structured analysis. In recent years, there has been a great deal of concern over the amount of resources and, therefore, strength of the public diplomacy apparatus. Over the past one hundred years, the institutions of public diplomacy evolved across the administrations. Yet the interest in public diplomacy’s role in policy formulation appears cyclical, and of most import in times of conflict: the development of OWI during WWII, USIA during the Cold War, and the resurgence in public diplomacy activity in the wake of 9/11. Thus, it appears that the capabilities of public diplomacy institutions have been strengthened during periods of foreign policy damage control.

The research shows that public diplomacy strategy in the Middle East correlates to regional events and popular response to American interests. Historically, there has been no shortage of instruments. The previous chapters demonstrate that effective public diplomacy strategy has been aggressively proactive and supported by instruments capable of penetrating a broad audience. The instruments historically associated with proactive strategies include long-term projects; specifically cultural and professional exchanges such Fulbright, IVLP, or MEPI. Recently, online exchanges have manifest in public
diplomacy 2.0, such as Middle East Voices. These opportunities are the most promising for dialogue and collecting public opinion.

Focusing on these capabilities, however, more often than not public diplomacy scholars overlook the greatest limitation to U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East—U.S. foreign policy itself. The historical analysis of each level of proposed conceptual model of public diplomacy reveals a missing organizational component: the two-way exchange between public diplomacy practitioners and the formulation of foreign policy.

At the start of the twentieth century, President Woodrow Wilson took steps to include public diplomacy into his post-Ottoman Middle East policies. Sixty years later, another global meliorist president, Jimmy Carter, held a similar ambition for the peoples of the Middle East—as reflected in his new mission statement for public diplomacy institutions. However, their respective efforts and were ultimately discarded by the overarching foreign policies strategies associated with presidential doctrines: combating world wars, containing the Soviet Union, and fighting and ideological battle against terrorism. All throughout, the Middle East was a proxy for U.S. efforts to counter threats to U.S. national security. Tensions were increasing throughout the region’s populace. Sporadic and increasingly violent terrorist attacks targeting U.S. interests began under the Reagan administration and culminated in the attacks on 9/11.

While the Bush administration elevated public diplomacy position in the wake of the USIA-State merger, the process amounted to little more than an attempt to sell America’s values to non-state actors. President Obama’s speech in Cairo set the stage for a new beginning that demonstrated America’s willingness to publically discuss the
matters of U.S. policy in the region. The initial response was hopeful, but the momentous occasion proved to be little more than a moment of beautifully crafted rhetoric. In retrospect, this thesis has attempted to show if and when Middle Eastern public opinion has guided U.S. foreign policy in the region. Overwhelmingly, it has not.

The current situation in the Middle East presents a long-term issue for the United States. And public diplomacy has the potential to be an integral part of a long-term solution. During the twentieth century, the United States was able to financially coerce “moderate” Middle Eastern states—including Israel at times—to support its policies and maintain regional stability. And as Telhami points out, these states’ regimes took repressive measures to overrule negative public opinion regarding the state’s support of U.S. foreign policy. Specific instances from the analysis include supplying resources to support the U.S.-led War in Iraq, stifling latent Arab aggression against Israel and vice-versa, pursuing stable access to oil reserves, blocking Palestine’s bid for statehood at the UN General Assembly, and continued drone attacks in Yemen. Eventually, the degraded populace will in turn, as we have seen since 2010, mount aggression toward their oppressors.

No doubt, there is a long road ahead for liberalization in the Middle East, but the Arab Spring has demonstrated the people of the region are prepared to overcome repressive regimes that ignore their voices in favor of relations with the United States. A liberalized Middle East will eventually comprise of states that are more representative of their populace—by extension more prone to amend policy to domestic pressures. No longer will the U.S. approach to the region be wholly state-centric. To use the words of
Dr. Rice, public opinion that affects how other governments can support or not support U.S. policy, will have an impact on U.S. interests. Thus, the United States is at the start of losing reliance on a historically stable support base across the region’s regimes.

This new state-society dynamic raises another implication—and major limitation—of this study: a domestic constituency supportive of public diplomacy in the United States. The simple fact is, other than practitioners and the occasional commentator, public diplomacy remains an obscure concept to most of the American populace—albeit a small number are reasonably au fait with U.S. foreign affairs. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the passage of the Smith-Mundt Act in 1948 formalized public diplomacy as an institution of American foreign policy. It was also a preventative measure to avoid domestic propagandizing U.S. citizens.

At the time of concluding this thesis, the Smith-Mundt Modernization Act of 2012 has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives. This has enormous implications for the future of public diplomacy. According to Matt Armstrong, the current Smith-Mundt Act:

1) Prevents transparency, oversight, and accountability of U.S. international broadcasting and public diplomacy by the public and the Congress as it blocks access to what the BBG and one part of the State Department says and does with taxpayer dollars.
2) Portrays U.S. public diplomacy as bad and deceitful propaganda to both U.S. and foreign audiences.
3) Creates confusion in the government over how to engage global audiences, and which part of the government may do so.

It also hinders, by law, direct access to data on public diplomacy. Thus, Americans studying public diplomacy are unable to gather information from the U.S. Government concerning, for example, the percent-increase in number of applicants to Fulbright programs in the Middle East from 1945-2012, current officials in Middle Eastern
governments who once participated in such programs, and the content of materials
distributed by the BBG to the region. To be sure, scourging budget and IAWG reports are
helpful but tedious method to gather this information, and contain no analysis of figures.
Essentially, the Smith-Mundt Act prevents a full understanding of public diplomacy
activities in the Middle East, and therefore its value.

What does the Smith-Mundt Modernization Act of 2012 intend to do?

[It] creates transparency so the taxpayer, and the government, can know the details of U.S.
international broadcasting and public diplomacy to increase understanding, oversight,
accountability of U.S. policies and programs; [and] Increases awareness of both the
conduct and context of U.S. foreign affairs which increases understanding, oversight, and
accountability of U.S. policies and programs.147

This does not mean that if passed, the new act will permit the U.S. Government to
propagandize. Rather, it will permit domestic awareness and input on matters of public
diplomacy abroad. It will also readily provide considerable data to support future studies.

Ultimately, public diplomacy in the Middle East will be largely ineffective so
long as it is tied to policy inherently disagreeable to the region’s population. This
historical analysis of the policies, institutions, strategies, and instruments of public
diplomacy has demonstrated that public diplomacy is a rather undemocratic, top-down
process; but it has the increasing potential of being impactful on policy formulation.
When managed correctly, it engages publics and incorporates their voices into the
formulation of policy. But these voices are many, and until it becomes common practice
for public diplomacy to be at the onset of policy, then identifying its successes will
continue to be an anecdotal and retrospective process for the long-term.

http://mountainrunner.us/smith-mundt/faq/.
An updated conceptual model, therefore, suggests that a two-way impact between the foreign policy and public diplomacy institutions—as the gateway to the practitioners overseeing public diplomacy strategy and instruments—ensure that foreign public opinion is a thermostat for policy rather than a thermometer for damage control. The outcome of the Arab Spring remains to be seen; but U.S. policy in the region will change as the character of the region’s regimes shift. The capabilities of public diplomacy will continue to evolve.

Given these new challenges, this study does not suggest that the United States will no longer have the ability the influence or inform, nor does it imply that Arab states will break security arrangements to attack Israel and vice-versa—there is too much at stake for such conflict. But, there is a newly empowered populace that has suffered at length under repressive partners to the United States. Preparing for the impact of a stronger civil society—regardless of the outcome—must be a priority for public diplomacy institutions.

While these are speculations, it appears from the analysis and unfolding events that U.S. public diplomacy is headed towards a crossroads. On the one hand, the process will need to play a bigger role in the formulation of policy as Middle Eastern public continue to empower themselves in view of their states; on the other hand, how the U.S. conducts its public diplomacy will be susceptible to the opinion of the American voter should the Smith-Mundt Modernization Act pass. Preventing the clash between American interests and the interests of Middle Easter publics will require a more intricate public diplomacy process—one that considers foreign opinions at the onset, rather than in the aftermath.
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