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Engaging the Muslim World

*Public Diplomacy after 9/11 in the Arab Middle East,
Afghanistan, and Pakistan*

AUTHOR | Walter Douglas *with* Jeanne Neal

NOVEMBER 2013

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| Executive Summary

Public diplomacy supports the interests of the United States by advancing American goals outside the traditional arena of government-to-government relations. Since 9/11, with the rise of al Qaeda and other violent organizations that virulently oppose the United States, public diplomacy in Muslim-majority countries has become an instrument to blunt or isolate popular support for these organizations. Efforts in this direction complement traditional public diplomacy that explains American policies and society to foreign publics.

Public diplomacy must take many paths to accomplish its goals in the Arab Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, the geographic focus of this study.¹ Their populations are not monolithic. In fact, they are extremely varied within states and across regions. The best public diplomacy is tailored to these differences, with multiple approaches to strategically important segments in each country.

This report identifies six areas of primary concern. The first item is a larger strategic issue. The other five are directed at the on-the-ground implementation of public diplomacy:

- *Define the goals.* The goal of the former U.S. Information Agency (USIA) of “telling America’s story” to inform and influence foreign audiences—especially opinion-leading elites—continues to be relevant. But in Muslim-majority countries, the United States also aims to influence broader attitudes and behavior in a way that reduces support for extremist organizations that use violence. In this effort, success can be defined at a minimum as turning murderous intent against Americans into inactive dislike. Finding the balance between the two goals in individual diplomatic posts—telling America’s story versus changing attitudes and behavior—needs to be widely understood among public diplomacy officers and to become part of public diplomacy planning.
- *Listen.* Muslim societies are extremely diverse, and even regional specialists with advanced degrees and language fluency are modest about professing an understanding of the region. Claims of anti-Americanism or religious differences are often a misreading of policy differences rather than a failure of public diplomacy. Grasping the vernacular is crucial. The real conversations among Muslim populations are in Arabic, Urdu, and other languages,² and using vernacular sources is vital to developing credibility, trust, and understanding.
- *Measure success.* Opinion-based metrics have yielded no consensus over the decades. Success in public diplomacy is a long-term investment not generally captured by short-term measurements. Action-based metrics can give the best sense of what is being accomplished (for example, retweeting, not the number of tweets sent, is an action that demonstrates measurable interest). At the same time, interested parties in the United States lack information on public diplomacy activity in Muslim-majority countries. Congress needs a clearer understanding, and well-structured narratives offer the best means of communicating the achievements of public diplomacy.
- *Reach the target audience.* Although the particulars vary by country, compelling programming, high illiteracy rates, and the high cost associated with reading printed materials or access to the

¹ For the purpose of clarity, the following sections of the report will refer to the Arab Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan as “the region.”

² As one Pakistani editor said of English-language media, “It is for you, the foreigners.” Author’s discussion with a Pakistani journalist, Islamabad, January 2011.

Internet make vernacular television the optimum medium for reaching both the elite and the broader audiences in the region. These audiences can range from at-risk youth and business owners in violent neighborhoods to religious communities that confuse policy differences with theology. In parallel to broadcasting, the social media, while unpredictable and narrowly based, are rapidly growing in popularity among educated young Muslims. They are a key demographic that needs more exposure to America. Together, these media reach many segments of the broader population, especially those who condone or are silent about violent extremism.

- *Exchange people and ideas.* Public diplomacy is not just messaging. Scholarships under the Fulbright program, International Visitors program, and other educational and professional exchange programs are at the core of public diplomacy. They demonstrate America's long-term commitment to an important and sustainable bilateral relationship. Alumni from these programs are one of America's most valuable resources. English teaching is also a powerful tool for reaching at-risk audiences. Messaging on the news of the day is important, but strategically employed exchanges and English-teaching offer powerful long-term results no matter what the short-term policy differences are.
- *Get outside the bubble.* Heightened security measures make public diplomacy harder. But the best public diplomacy officers overcome them by engaging their audiences outside of their embassies. Inside embassies, public diplomacy officers are extremely busy running exchange programs and handling foreign media. Creating a new unit for innovative outreach within embassies' public affairs sections has been successfully piloted and can be expanded.

There is no one path to success. Public diplomacy must be consistent, multifaceted, and localized to advance American goals in Muslim-majority countries. This report sketches a way forward to accomplish these goals.

| Introduction

Since 9/11, the United States has devoted significant resources to a wide range of public diplomacy efforts in strategically vital countries with Muslim-majority populations. The results have not been clear-cut. Anti-American sentiment continues to run high, and many of our policies are under regular public attack.

At the same time, there has been an outpouring of books, articles, and commissioned reports on how we should communicate with the Muslim world. Numerous conferences have been held on “strategic communications” and “messaging.” Foreign affairs journals have devoted attention to the topic. The 2008 elections led to a renewed flurry of public diplomacy proposals for the incoming administration.

A CSIS survey of post-9/11 literature on public diplomacy uncovered one consistent theme. Past studies were overwhelmingly interested in what could be done in Washington; very few addressed what happens overseas. The views of the people responsible for implementing public diplomacy overseas were largely absent.¹

To fill this gap, CSIS shifted the focus to the field. In a sense, this report is a primary resource. It reflects the views and opinions shared with the author from a number of official and nonofficial sources over the years. These were then used to develop practical recommendations to improve the execution of public diplomacy.

This report covers a defined geographic area. It is the region most affected by America’s response to 9/11 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The authors recognize that the Muslim world is much broader, including countries in Southeast Asia, Europe, and Africa, and that significant minority populations exist on every continent. Time and budget worked against expanding the report’s focus, however. The authors can only hope that future studies will be able to cover the broader territory.

This report deals primarily with the State Department. While the conduct of public diplomacy has steadily evolved into an interagency effort in the post-9/11 era, the State Department is recognized as the lead organization in public diplomacy. Currently, close to 250 overseas positions and over 100 domestic positions within the Foreign Service are dedicated to public diplomacy in or dealing with the region. The key State Department offices in Washington are the Office of the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, the Offices of Press and Public Diplomacy in the Near Eastern Affairs and South and Central Asia bureaus, the public affairs section of the Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan and the Educational and Cultural Affairs, International Information Programs, and Public Affairs bureaus.

One word is needed on resources. For the next few years, U.S. government budgets are not expected to grow significantly. Most of the previous studies called for additional resources for some aspect of public diplomacy, or even all of it. Counting on such resources, however, is unrealistic in the current environment.² The recommendations in this report are low- or no-cost solutions that fit within today’s context.

¹ William Rugh writes, “Although some books have deliberately included essays by practitioners, most of these practitioners have not been career officers with field experience; instead they have been Washington-based policymakers or short-term political appointees.” See William A. Rugh, *The Practice of Public Diplomacy: Confronting Challenges Abroad* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), ix–x.

² The cable blogger Josh Rogin wrote about a House of Representatives decision against funding a State Department response to the Arab Spring: “The episode is an example of the disconnect between State and Congress over how to respond to the Arab Spring as well as the difficulty of securing new money for diplomatic initiatives in this tight budget environment.” See Josh Rogin, “State Department’s New Middle East Fund in Trouble on Capitol Hill,”

Background

According to a 2009 Congressional Research Service Report, public diplomacy, while defined in different ways, is broadly “a term used to describe a government’s efforts to conduct foreign policy and promote national interests through direct outreach and communication with the population of a foreign country.”³

The practice of public diplomacy grew out of World War II, when the military had practiced it in direct support of the war effort. Immediately after that war, the Soviet Union began to attack the United States with powerful and pervasive propaganda that directly threatened American interests. The United States fought back with the creation of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) in 1953.

USIA’s mission was to combat Soviet propaganda and the spread of communism. Its primary tools were educational, professional, and cultural exchange programs—Fulbright scholarships and the International Visitors program are the two best known—and the use of the media to explain American policies and society and to underscore the importance of maintaining a liberal world order based on trade, the free movement of people and ideas, and support for open, democratic countries. Edward R. Murrow, the legendary newsman, was director of USIA from 1961 to 1964. He is still revered for greatly elevating the stature of public diplomacy.

USIA’s Cold War efforts were deemed successful. Although its contribution has never been measured accurately, there is a general consensus that the agency played a role in the demise of the Soviet Union.

With the Soviet threat vanquished, USIA was left without a clearly defined mission. In 1999, it was merged into the State Department to provide a more direct link between public diplomacy and policy. Former USIA offices were placed in bureaus under a newly created Office of the Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs or within the geographical bureaus in the State Department. Public diplomacy became a cone, or function, for foreign service officers, just like the political, consular, management, and economic cones.

Other countries employ public diplomacy, but the United States is unique in dedicating so many resources to it. In any embassy, public diplomacy is the primary responsibility of the public affairs section, with a public affairs officer at its head and information officers and cultural affairs officers handling press and the exchange and cultural programs, respectively. The public affairs officer is a member of the country team, an embassy’s core senior leadership that works directly with the ambassador.⁴ Public diplomacy officers do not have true counterparts in the embassies of other countries.

As the definition cited earlier indicates, public diplomacy is defined in different ways.⁵ The events of 9/11 inspired many discussions about redefining the goal of public diplomacy. The primary impetus was the need to turn Muslim populations away from supporting extremist organizations that use violence. That discussion continues.

Foreign Policy, May 18, 2012, http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/05/18/state_department_s_new_middle_east_fund_in_trouble_on_capitol_hill.

³ Kennon H. Nakamura and Matthew C. Weed, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and Current Issues* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, December 18, 2009), 1.

⁴ For a visual depiction of a U.S. diplomatic mission, see U.S. Institute of Peace, “Guide for Participants in Peace, Stability, and Relief Operations,” <http://www.usip.org/node/5690>.

⁵ Nakamura and Weed, *U.S. Public Diplomacy*, 1.

Recent Developments

In 2010, the Office of the Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs created a strategic framework to guide public diplomacy. Its primary objective was to ensure that Washington provide the best possible support for the field. It restructured the public diplomacy functions in numerous bureaus within the department, outlined five imperatives to guide operations, and crafted a mission statement:

To support the achievement of U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives, advance national interests, and enhance national security by informing and influencing foreign publics and by expanding and strengthening the relationship between the people and government of the United States and citizens of the rest of the world.⁶

The strategic framework continues to be an excellent outline for organizing public diplomacy. Public affairs officers can read it and understand how their function fits into the State Department and what imperatives they should weigh in outlining country-specific public diplomacy plans: shape the narrative, expand and strengthen people-to-people relationships, combat violent extremism, better inform policymaking, and deploy resources in line with current priorities.

What it was not designed to do is tell a public diplomacy officer how to implement public diplomacy in a specific country. It is this implementation—specifically in the Arab Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan—that this CSIS study aims to address.⁷

⁶ Office of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, *Public Diplomacy: Strengthening U.S. Engagement with the World: A Strategic Approach for the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of State, 2011), 3.

⁷ As a report from the Abu Dhabi Gallup Center recommends, “When engaging Muslims globally, focus the most effort in the area of greatest need and receptivity: the Middle East and North Africa.” See Gallup Inc., “Measuring the State of Muslim-West Relations: Assessing the ‘New Beginning,’” November 28, 2010, 15, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/144959/measuring-state-muslim-west-relations.aspx>.

| Findings

The report's findings are divided into six sections. The first is directed at the leading strategic question that remains unsettled today, 12 years after 9/11. The five subsequent sections address concerns with the implementation of public diplomacy in the Muslim world.

Define the Goals

America will defend itself.... And we will do so in partnership with Muslim communities which are also threatened. The sooner the extremists are isolated and unwelcome in Muslim communities, the sooner we will all be safer. —President Barack Obama, June 4, 2009, Speech at Cairo University

In the Cold War, USIA saw its role—“telling America’s story”—as the means of influencing perceptions about the United States and strengthening relationships with key countries. USIA wanted foreign audiences—especially opinion-leading elites in the media and academia—to contrast American and Soviet societies and decide which was better. For example, American law experts would explain how the rule of law works in the United States, with the unstated dare to the Soviets to explain their own legal system. Momentum, and the lack of an alternative, carried “telling America’s story” past the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is still a powerful theme today.

After 9/11, a new impetus arose in response to the threat from al Qaeda—that is, diminishing the appeal of violent terrorist organizations, even among people who might not admire or even like the United States. This goal is not a popularity contest. In some cases, success might be changing murderous intent against Americans to inactive dislike. This proposition became much more challenging because it dealt with much broader audiences—high school students, at-risk families, provincial elites, or business and religious communities—that were not necessarily disposed to come to Americans for information or inspiration.

Public diplomacy responded with a series of programs to accomplish this; two outstanding examples originating in Washington are low-cost English teaching for non-elites under the ACCESS program and the high school study programs in the United States for the disadvantaged under the YES program. In the field, public diplomacy officers have initiated programs based on local concerns and conditions. In Cairo, they helped an American artist set up a studio for local youths in an at-risk neighborhood. In Saudi Arabia, they organized a joint American-Saudi archeology excavation that added understanding to the complexity of pre-Islamic history. In Pakistan, they work with the government on a counter-IED (improvised explosive device) media campaign to raise awareness about bombs that kill civilians.

Public diplomacy thus has two complementary goals as it attempts to engage the broad middle of a society. First, the United States needs to tell America’s story to educated elites and other opinion leaders in such dynamic centers as Cairo, Beirut, Dubai, or Lahore. These opinion leaders are best suited to counter the prevalent belief captured by one Muslim journalist when he stated, “Americans will always associate the Muslim world with 9/11.”⁸ Second, programs on undermining support for violence are important for religious, communal, sectarian, or ethnic communities that are vulnerable to terrorist violence, as are found in such countries as Afghanistan, Yemen, or Pakistan.

⁸ Roundtable discussion, CSIS, Washington, D.C., March 19, 2012.

The role of the public diplomacy officer, working with his or her embassy and regional bureau colleagues, is to determine the proper blend of these two goals based on strategic interests. Some countries might emphasize one goal over the other, while others might place nearly equal weight on them. Many public diplomacy officers understand getting the balance right in a particular country, but some do not. The divide can be generational or even inspirational. Some officers promote their programs simply for the sake of culture or goodwill, priorities that are best left to the nongovernmental organizations or the arts community.

It is important for the long-term viability of public diplomacy that the State Department get the balance between these two goals right. One think-tank specialist with strong contacts in Congress noted, “The number of people who are willing to put money on the line for this sort of activity is drying up. Few people are talking about putting their votes behind it. I worry if five years from now we will even be able to have this discussion. There is nothing that is driving it. If anything is, it is simple CVE [countering violent extremism].”⁹

Listen

Diversity

Islam is the thread that ties the Arab Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan together and gives them a shared identity, the *ummah* that helps explain why Muslims in one part of the world are interested in American policies that affect Muslims elsewhere. As one think-tank specialist noted about the countries of the Middle East, “Islam defines them as insiders and all of us as outsiders. They are more like each other than they are like us.”¹⁰

At the same time, under this umbrella, significant differences persist. They can be along communal, tribal, religious, and linguistic lines (see figure 1) both inside and between countries. For instance, music that works in public service announcements in one part of Pakistan does not work in other parts. In addition, most of the countries in this region allow different degrees of personal freedom. These variations reinforce the diverse ways these populations react to their variously inspired governments. Within these countries, it also means different segments of the population have different relations with their government. For example, Sunnis and Shi’ites typically have distinct relationships with the ruling authorities depending on their Sunni or Shi’ite orientation.

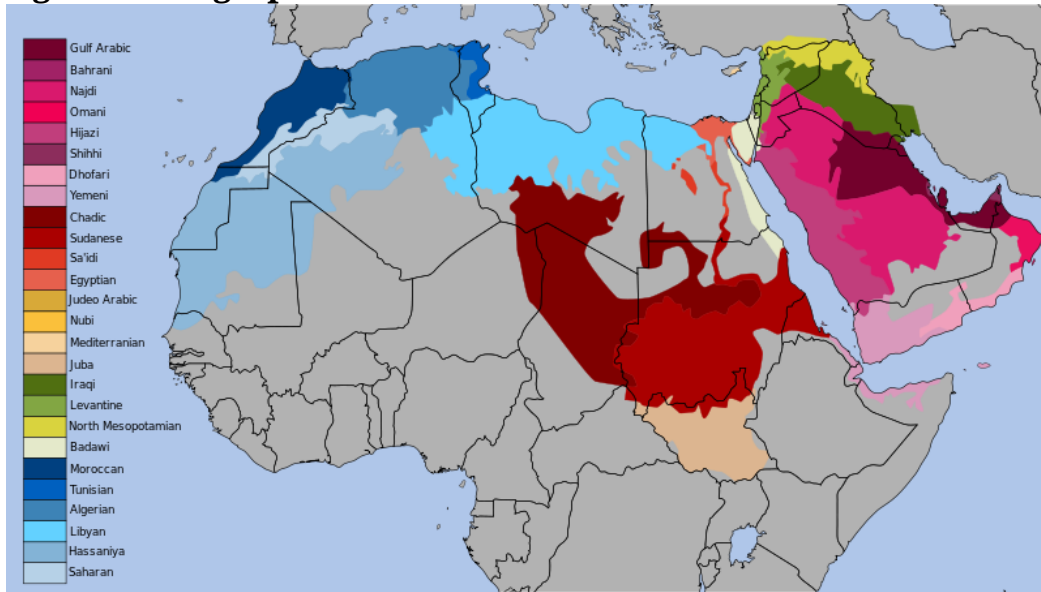
Right after 9/11, public diplomacy put itself into a straightjacket: by pursuing a homogeneous approach that focused on America’s violent adversaries. But they were not the ones public diplomacy was going to have an impact on; it was the Muslim societies in which the violent adversaries operated—not the violent adversaries themselves—that needed to be the focus. And these Muslim societies differ greatly from country to country, as well as within each country. Public diplomacy must be attuned to the diversity of its audiences.

The field also cannot operate independently. It needs strategic direction and support from Washington. One of the greatest public diplomacy programs ever devised—the Fulbright—was not invented overseas. Nonetheless, public diplomacy officers serving on the ground are still the best placed to understand and target the right audiences.

⁹ Ibid., April 17, 2012.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Figure 1: Geographic Distribution of Arabic Dialects



Many Arabs have trouble understanding other Arabs. A lot of it is accent more than vocabulary—the same way that Americans have trouble understanding some Scots

Source: Rafy/Wikimedia Commons, December 12, 2011, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arabic_Dialects.svg.

The Muslim Conversation

Understanding the region is difficult. During the Cold War, studying Russia was different, because Russian culture is part of the West and reading Tolstoy and Dostoevsky or listening to Rimsky-Korsakov was accessible. The equivalent in the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan is less familiar to Western audiences, including most prominently the Qur'an.

It can take up to 15 years to produce an Arabist—that is, one fluent in Arabic, with a deep understanding of Arab culture and its most significant regional differences. A Ph.D. in one area of Islamic studies is not necessarily a passport to understanding different Muslim populations. Experience in the Middle East does not translate into understanding Afghanistan or Pakistan. Arabic speaking skills are hard to acquire, and even strong Arabic can still leave gaps in understanding Arabs and their culture. For example, the discourse in Afghanistan between imams and mullahs or Shi'a and Sunni is often difficult to penetrate.

That said, public diplomacy officers use what they have. The State Department has been actively recruiting native speakers of Arabic, Urdu, and other regional languages, language training is expanding dramatically, and the State Department's policy of recruiting officers with critical languages is making a noticeable difference at the lower levels. The results can be stunning. Pashto statements rapidly go viral when Pashto speakers are used. American statements are quoted on the front page of anti-American newspapers when officers speak in Urdu. In the Middle East, the State Department's Arabic-speaking officers in the Dubai hub are working 24/7 giving interviews and information to a wide range of Arabic-language media.

Given the demand, the United States will never have as many officers as it would like who are fluent in vernacular languages.¹¹ Although only a handful of those who study these languages will ever be completely comfortable using it, other skills can be as valuable for effective communication. As one think-tank specialist noted, “Somebody with a good sense for people and less Arabic would run circles around people who can read and talk but cannot listen. You want people who can listen 4/4 [the State Department’s ranking on a one-to-five scale for a strong language ability].”¹² Good communication is often less about language capability and more about being able to demonstrate empathy.

Muslim populations are vocal about what is important to them. But most of their conversations play out in their own languages.¹³ In Pakistan, for example, the national debate takes place in Urdu. The English-language media, most of which is in print, reaches only .01 percent of the media-consuming population. In a country of 180 million with high rates of illiteracy and limited English fluency,¹⁴ English-language sources offer only limited insights into what is important to the broader society.

Yet most Western material written about Pakistan does not capture this aspect. Diplomats and foreign experts rarely use vernacular sources. The English-language media are regularly quoted, while the Urdu media remains largely unexamined.¹⁵ At one point, the United States wondered why its civilian assistance was not more widely appreciated in Pakistan. Research in the vernacular showed that Pakistanis were confusing civilian aid and commercial goods: they thought the Chinese were giving the most civilian aid because they could buy Chinese TVs and electronic goods in the market.

The United States, however, should not focus unduly on creating language capacity in its American officers. For that reason, public diplomacy officers can and do rely heavily on the talents of the locally engaged staff for a fuller understanding of the vernacular. In Pakistan, for example, the public diplomacy section reconfigured and hired locally engaged staff to monitor the broadcast news and talk shows in Urdu as well as the Urdu newspapers. Local staff and embassy officers used this information to create a media analysis—rather than just a translation—that appears in Washington each morning. It is now one of the U.S. government’s leading sources of information about Pakistan.

Perception of the United States

The term *anti-Americanism* is overused and misleading. While it is fashionable to be anti-American in many countries, the foreign perception of the United States is actually more complex. It is not a simple public diplomacy problem. On one side is a widespread disagreement with U.S. policy, including military intervention in a number of areas, as well as different views on social

¹¹ Joe Davidson, “Government Has Foreign Language Deficit,” *Washington Post*, May 21, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/government-has-foreign-language-deficit/2012/05/21/gIQAzjgVgU_story.html.

¹² Roundtable discussion, CSIS, Washington, D.C., April 17, 2012.

¹³ According to Stephen Helfont, “Saudi Arabia has remained a persistent blind spot in studies of Islamism”; yet “through close study of rare sources and a wealth of interviews, he [Stephane Lacroix, the author] sheds light on people and organizations that were completely unknown in the West.” See “Review of *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*,” *New Republic*, December 14, 2011, <http://www.tnr.com/book/review/awakening-islam-St%C3%A9phane-Lacroix>. Saudi Arabia is not secretive and impenetrable to an expert like Stephane Lacroix, who uses Arabic sources.

¹⁴ The CIA *World Factbook* puts the national literacy rate in Pakistan at 49.9 percent. The proportion of literate Pakistani men over the age of 15 is 63.3 percent. The literacy rate for female Pakistanis in the same age range is 36 percent. See “Pakistan” in CIA *World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html>. The World Bank sets the national figure at 58 percent. See World Bank, “World Bank Literacy Rates,” http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS?order=wbapi_data_value_2010+wbapi_data_value+wbapi_data_value-last&sort=asc.

¹⁵ Hijab Shah, “The Insider Pages: An Analysis of the Pakistani Press,” *CSIS South Asia Monitor* 148 (December 9, 2010), 1, http://csis.org/files/publication/sam_148.pdf.

norms. This is the side most widely discussed in the media. Less often discussed is the positive perception linked to values such as freedom, liberty, and technological and educational excellence.¹⁶ For that reason, almost every Muslim in the region—even when opposed to American policies—will engage public affairs officers with traditional courtesy and hospitality. In fact, in a recent Gallup poll of 48 countries, in only one—Afghanistan—did a majority see increased contact with outsiders as a threat.¹⁷ Clearly, the positive perception is a powerful one.

Policy disagreements underlie a lot of the negative perception of the United States, and the best public diplomacy in the world cannot reverse this. The U.S. relationship with India, for example, is not popular in Pakistan, nor is its relationship with Israel popular in the Arab Middle East. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are disliked. Polls find that American popularity in the Middle East correlates negatively with perceptions of support for autocratic governments.¹⁸ In addition, a country's domestic agenda can be at odds with American policies. A Pakistani think-tank specialist noted that when she first arrived to study in the United States, based on what she had seen on television reporting from Iraq and Afghanistan, she would tense up whenever she saw an American soldier in uniform.¹⁹

Many statements by American officials in Washington are made for domestic consumption but have a marked effect overseas. As Craig Cohen, editor of *Capacity and Resolve: Foreign Assessments of U.S. Power*, has noted, “Perceptions matter. When Washington acts...the stakes are high.”²⁰ For example, when critical remarks by one senior U.S. official before a closed congressional briefing on Pakistan and Osama bin Laden were leaked,²¹ no amount of public diplomacy could overcome the widespread anger these comments inspired in Pakistan. Statements and actions by private citizens can also be inflammatory; for example, a Qur'an-burning incident in Florida sparked an outcry all over the region, and intense public diplomacy was needed to counter its negative effect.²²

Overall, the positive side of the ledger weighs heavily against the negative. The American embrace of freedom, liberty, and justice is widely admired.²³ Educational excellence stands out as another high-impact asset. In the middle of the fierce Pakistani reaction to events surrounding the killing of bin Laden, one of America's harshest television critics surprised his viewers by praising

¹⁶ According to an Abu Dhabi Gallup Center report, “When Gallup asked Muslims worldwide what they admired most about the West, the two most frequent responses to an open-ended question were technology and freedom/liberty.” See Gallup Inc., “Measuring the State of Muslim-West Relations, 40.

¹⁷ Ibid., 31.

¹⁸ According to Dalia Mogahed, the executive director of the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, “A November 2010 Gallup Poll demonstrated that the attitudes of Egyptians towards the U.S. in particular showed a ‘precipitous decline’ due to a series of policy disagreements including a perceived lack of American support for ‘supporting the rights of Muslims to elect their own governments.’” See “Some Arab Countries Make U-Turn on U.S. Leadership in 2010,” Gallup, May 27, 2010, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/137759/Arab-Countries-Turn-Leadership-2010.aspx>. Gallup analysts Ahmed Younis and Mohamed Younis cite a February 2012 Gallup poll that underscores the fact that the majority of Egyptians oppose U.S. aid (71 percent), as well as a March 2012 Gallup poll that found that “the majority of Egyptians (56 percent) now see closer relations with the U.S. as a bad thing for their country, up sharply from 40 percent in December 2011.” See “Most Egyptians Oppose U.S. Economic Aid,” Gallup, February 6, 2012, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/152471/Egyptians-Oppose-Economic-Aid.aspx>. See also Ahmed Younis and Mohamed Younis, “Egyptians Sour on U.S., Eye Closer Ties to Turkey, Iran,” Gallup, March 23, 2012, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/153401/Egyptians-Sour-Eye-Closer-Ties-Turkey-Iran.aspx?ref=more>.

¹⁹ Author's interview with Pakistani think tank researcher, May 4, 2012.

²⁰ Craig Cohen, ed., *Capacity and Resolve: Foreign Assessments of U.S. Power* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, 2011), xii, http://csis.org/files/publication/110613_Cohen_CapacityResolve_Web.pdf.

²¹ Dana Bush, “Sources: Panetta to Congress—Pakistan Either Incompetent or Involved,” CNN, May 3, 2011, <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2011/05/03/sources-panetta-to-congress-pakistan-either-incompetent-or-involved/>.

²² Enayat Najafzada and Rod Nordland, “Afghans Avenue Florida Koran Burning, Killing 12,” *New York Times*, April 1, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/02/world/asia/02afghanistan.html>.

²³ Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, *Changing Minds, Winning Peace* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, October 1, 2003), 24, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/24882.pdf>. “Surveys show that Arabs and Muslims admire the universal values for which the United States stands.”

the United States for funding scholarships and urging Pakistani students to apply for them.²⁴ As one American think-tank expert summarized the role of public diplomacy, “Staying engaged [through public diplomacy] in Pakistan has allowed us to keep a foothold in Pakistan.”²⁵

Communicating

Credible voices are local opinion leaders who include American views when they engage with their own communities. They can be powerful tools for public diplomacy. Most important, they are easy to find. They might come from one of the Department of State’s educational or professional exchanges, be beneficiaries of U.S. aid programs, or be local journalists or academics. It rapidly becomes clear after monitoring broadcast media that the number of these local experts is not large and is therefore manageable. If exposed to Americans or given information about the United States, these people are more likely to explain American policy accurately.

Another powerful source of advocacy in Pakistan comes from placing Urdu-speaking Americans on satellite television. A young Pakistani-American, whose brother was injured on 9/11 and whose best friend was killed by extremist violence, debunked conspiracy theories about 9/11 and misperceptions about Muslims in America, one of the key drivers of mistrust. There are 40 or 50 other Americans of similar background who could do the same.

The Private Sector

The private sector uses a number of tools to communicate with its audience. Polling organizations, public relations firms, advertising agencies, and marketing companies all have unique strengths that can be leveraged. For example, their executives know a lot about the local environment and are knowledgeable about the research done for hundreds of past campaigns. In Pakistan, an advertising agency put mothers—the most trusted figures in South Asian culture—at the core of an awareness campaign to counter improvised explosive devices. These sorts of organizations are full of market-proven perspectives. In Jordan, an ad agency used its many insights to appeal to the audience to celebrate the 60th anniversary of U.S.-Jordanian relations. The one difficulty that cannot be overcome is cost. If public diplomacy cannot get help pro bono, it does not usually have the resources in the field to hire reputable ad agencies. A free conversation with private-sector executives might be an inexpensive alternative.

Trust

Lack of trust can be a barrier to effective communication. Part of what makes the environment in the Muslim world so challenging is the fundamental mistrust of U.S. objectives in the region. The narrative of an American bias against Muslims has not been countered. Gallup found that “fewer than 3 in 10 Muslims surveyed believed the West respects Muslims.”²⁶ America needs to do more than speak about itself. A think-tank specialist pointed out, for example, that Muslims have a strong, religiously based sense of justice that is woven into many of their comments on American policies and that addressing it is essential for establishing trust.²⁷ The private sector also identifies trust as a key issue. Ogilvy Noor, the Middle East office of the advertising giant Ogilvy and Mather, found that

origin matters less than sincerity. Despite popular misconception, in the consumer’s eyes an Islamic brand does not have to originate in a Muslim country, as the highest scoring

²⁴ Talk show host Kamran Khan: “I visited the U.S. embassy’s website where I learnt that, in academic year 2010–2011, the United States is funding 386 Pakistani students in American universities under Fulbright scholarships. These students will return to Pakistan with incredible insights and teaching skills to contribute to Pakistan’s institutions of higher education.” See Kamran Khan, “Aaj Kamran Khan Kay Saath,” Geo News, May 16, 2011.

²⁵ Roundtable discussion, CSIS, Washington, D.C., April 17, 2012.

²⁶ Gallup Inc., “Measuring the State of Muslim-West Relations.”

²⁷ Author’s conversation with Middle East specialist at CSIS, May 23, 2012.

brands like Nestle and Lipton go to show. Genuine empathy and understanding, demonstrated through all aspects of the brand's behavior, are much more important than place of origin to today's Muslim consumers.²⁸

It is important to connect at the right level. As one think-tank specialist emphasized, "The previous administration spent a lot of time inspiring people while ignoring personal aspirations. We should clarify how the United States is relevant for the aspirations people already have, highlighting where we can play a constructive role."²⁹ Jobs diplomacy, entrepreneurship, women's empowerment—all these programs are creating citizens' networks that address the relationship with the United States. Connecting at the right level can also help counter policy disagreements. Many of the issues that really shape people's opinions about the United States are local concerns. As these examples point out, trust must be maintained at the institutional level, which is as important for the long-term relationship as trust on the personal level.

Religion

American diplomats are not comfortable speaking publicly about the mix of foreign policy and religion.³⁰ Many are concerned that the Establishment Clause in the Constitution means that they cannot engage with or discuss religion. Yet in this region, religion is everywhere.³¹ A prayer is often offered at the opening of a conference, and another is given over the intercom on many regional airlines before an airplane takes off. Public diplomacy officers need to stay with the original intent of the Establishment Clause—that the American government does not favor or establish one religion over another—and engage on religion.

America is uniquely suited to do so. Figure 2 demonstrates the importance of religion in the United States. As one Arab journalist remarked, "In truth, Muslim populations are fascinated by the religious aspects of modern American life. On the street where I lived in Boston, there were 10 churches. That was a revelation to me."³² An Al Jazeera program in 2009 certainly surprised Arab audiences with its positive view of Islam in America.³³

A 2009 report by the University of North Carolina demonstrates that, since 9/11, "scholarly interest in Islamic studies has mushroomed."³⁴ However, religion must be handled sensitively.³⁵

²⁸ Ogilvy and Mather, "Ogilvy Publishes Index of Muslim Friendly Brands," news release, October 30, 2010, <http://www.ogilvy.com/News/Press-Releases/October-2010-Muslim-Friendly-Brand-Index.aspx>.

²⁹ Roundtable discussion, CSIS, Washington, D.C., April 17, 2012.

³⁰ Douglas Johnston refers to a reluctance by the State Department to address religious issues directly following 9/11. He cites a 2007 CSIS report stating "that outreach efforts should 'limit direct engagement with religious issues.'" He notes that this strategy was reiterated in the 2007 U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication, which "urged government officials to be 'extremely cautious and if possible, avoid using religious language, because it can mean different things and is easily misconstrued.'" See Douglas M. Johnston Jr., *Religion, Terror, and Error: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Challenge of Spiritual Engagement* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2011), 100.

³¹ *Ibid.*, xiv–xv. Johnston also observes that "[We visited] a major madrasa outside of Karachi. It became immediately apparent that there was a great deal of rage in the audience... We attempted to provide a balanced view of U.S. involvements around the world, including the Middle East and then said, 'But that's not why we are here today. We are here to discuss religious values that we share in common.' Then I quoted several passages from the Qur'an that I had committed to memory.... By the time the ensuing discussion played out over the course of the next hour and segued into a social exchange, the earlier rage had been converted to a genuine feeling of acceptance, bordering on fellowship."

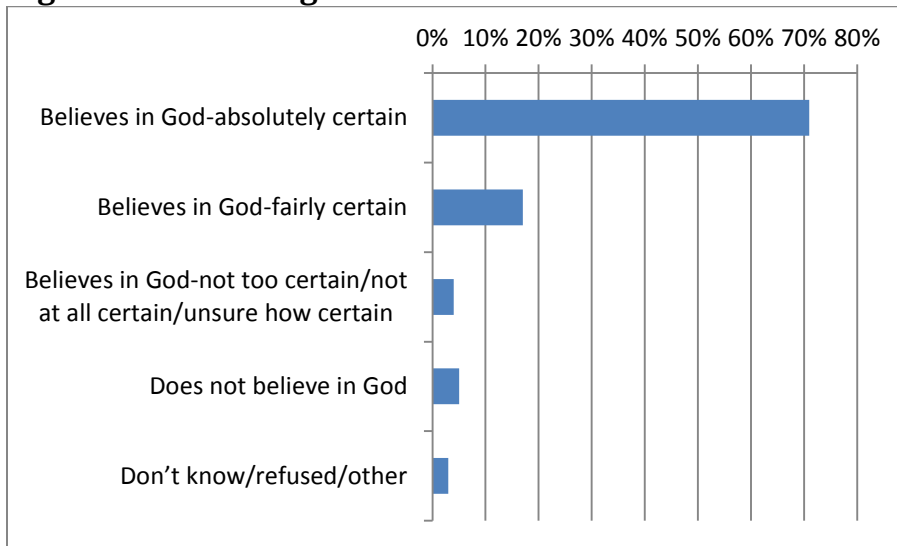
³² Roundtable discussion, CSIS, Washington, D.C., March 19, 2012.

³³ Rageh Omaar, "Islam in America," Al Jazeera English, June 2009, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/general/2008/10/200810179817753730.html>.

³⁴ Charles Kurzman and Carl Ernst, "Islamic Studies in U.S. Universities," paper for Social Sciences Research Council workshop "The Production of Knowledge on World Regions: The Middle East," University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, September 30, 2009, 2, http://www.unc.edu/~cernst/pdf/Kurzman_Ernst_Islamic_Studies.pdf.

³⁵ See Liora Danan and Alice Hunt, "How Does the U.S. Government Look at Islam since 9/11?" in *The Impact of 9/11 on Religion and Philosophy: The Day That Changed Everything?* ed. Matthew Morgan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Knox Thames, director of policy and research at the U.S. Commission on International Religious

Figure 2: Percentage of Americans Who Believe in God



Source: Pew Forum on Religion on Public Life, “US Religious Landscape Survey,” May 8–August 13, 2007, <http://religions.pewforum.org/maps#>.

One Muslim journalist interviewed for this study warned against favoritism: “There is a misperception that some sects of Islam are more moderate than others,” he said. “Visits by U.S. officials to shrines come off as favoring one sect over another. Using religion for that purpose is completely wrong.”³⁶

Concurrently, the public diplomacy community must also recognize that populations maintain multiple identities—religious, nationalist, family, educational, and so on. Engaging people through one identity should not lead to ignoring the others. Another religious country, the Philippines, for example, comes to mind. That country is overwhelmingly Catholic, and being a Catholic is a large part of being a Filipino. However, in this country, public diplomacy does not engage Catholics: it engages Filipinos.

Summary

The region is complex, and the United States must do a better job of listening to what the people say and do and then use this information to craft public diplomacy relevant to Muslim societies. Public diplomacy officers recognize the real state of the linguistic and cultural divide, negative public opinion, the role of religion, anti-Americanism, and other real or perceived barriers. Public diplomacy in the region certainly faces challenges, but listening is the first step in overcoming them.

Freedom, notes: “U.S. government personnel also need to increase their ‘religious IQ’ on the role of Islam in Afghan society, as well as understand how religious freedom can promote stability and security.” See Knox Thames, “Afghanistan: Mind the God Gap,” *Foreign Policy* (May 30, 2012), http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/05/30/afghanistan_mind_the_god_gap.

³⁶ Roundtable discussion, CSIS, Washington, D.C., March 19, 2012.

Measure Success

Metrics and Success

For decades, going back to USIA, public diplomacy professionals have sought a way to determine success. But over the decades, repeated demands for metrics have failed to produce commonly accepted measurements. The problem is that the investment in people takes time to pay dividends, and even the most successful metrics can accurately measure only inputs, such as the number of people who attended an event. Outputs are long-range goals that cannot be measured in the short term.

The State Department sees this situation play out every time a foreign government announces a new cabinet. Diplomatic posts proudly tally up the number of new cabinet members who participated in one of the educational or professional exchange programs. Generally, 15 to 25 years elapse between the public diplomacy program and an accession to a cabinet. The decision that public diplomacy officers made back then to send a potential leader to the United States was important, but it cannot be measured in the short term by a satisfying metric.

It is not just the State Department that cannot devise satisfying metrics. As the *Harvard Business Review* wrote about social media, “It is hard to define value when we are still trying to measure it. We will get it eventually, but right now we are stabbing in the dark for measurement criteria.”³⁷ A recent article points to the difficulty the military has with measuring its own information operations programs, noting that “Pentagon officials have little proof the programs work.”³⁸

In a more historical example, the definitive study of the contribution of public diplomacy—especially the role of USIA—to ending the Cold War has yet to be written. Even a clear success like the Marshall Plan defies measurement by today’s metrics. Americans commonly accept that public diplomacy was an important factor in the Cold War, but there is simply no measurement of how much.

The historical anomaly of the total defeat of Japan and Germany in World War II and then rebuilding them as allies leads many people to think a similar about-face can be engineered in the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The defeat of Serb ambitions in the 1990s in the Balkans lends credence to this view. However, the values and way of life in the Arab Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan are centuries if not millennia old, and there is little indication of a desire to use the West as a model. Success in the region must be defined differently, without transposing America’s experience in Europe and East Asia to the region.

While previous attempts at metrics focused primarily on opinions in the Muslim world, an alternative approach in the private sector centers on action, rather than opinion, as a yardstick. In social media, for example, one would look not at how many people receive a tweet but at how many people take action to retweet a message because they find it meaningful.

Actions offer one window into understanding what motivates people. An examination of the recent protests in Pakistan finds a trend toward fewer demonstrations against the United States and more on economic and social issues. Although an observer would not sense this shift from following the media, such studies give a qualitative sense of where the country is going. When other such measurements of actions are added in, a sense of direction begins to develop.³⁹

³⁷ SAS, “The New Conversation: Taking Social Media from Talk to Action,” Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, 2010, 14, http://www.sas.com/resources/whitepaper/wp_23348.pdf.

³⁸ Tom Vanden Brook and Ray Locker, “U.S. ‘Info Ops’ Programs Dubious, Costly,” *USA Today*, February 29, 2012, <http://www.usatoday.com/news/military/story/2012-02-29/afghanistan-iraq-military-information-operations-usa-today-investigation/53295472/1>.

³⁹ Author’s interview with Washington, D.C.–based polling professional, April 23, 2012.

With these sorts of metrics, we see success when we achieve only some of what we aim for. These successes will not be transformational, and a lot of what we see will continue to disturb us. Success, for example, might simply be fewer attacks.

Narratives

The State Department needs to better inform interested parties in Washington about the practice of public diplomacy in the region. As one commentator has noted, “It is amazing how un-public public diplomacy is.”⁴⁰ Most important, Congress needs to know what it is appropriating money for.⁴¹ As one congressional staffer observed about what her representative needs, “I think we recognize the difficulties of metrics. This means the case study method is valuable. It would help the Hill a lot.”⁴²

While today’s computerized reporting systems quantify what public affairs officers choose to report, they rarely offer a story, just individual pieces of data. Thematic reports could better capture the strategic nature of the activities of public diplomacy. These narratives can be delivered powerfully in person. The Foreign Language Teaching Associates Program, which brings in teachers from the Middle East to teach Arabic across the United States, offers just such an opportunity. The students love the teachers. When these students from the program come to Washington for a yearly conference, a few visit Capitol Hill. But that is not enough: These students should be in the offices of every representative and senator that has students in his or her state studying Arabic and learning more about the Middle East. Powerful stories like this need to be publicized.

Summary

Public diplomacy officers experience challenges in explaining their successes to Washington. New definitions and measurements are needed that better capture their activities, including the use of narratives to explain public diplomacy to Congress and other interested parties.

Reach the Target Audience

Broadcast Media

Both public diplomacy officers and experts with regional experience emphasized the importance of broadcast media. As a Pakistani journalist noted, “Even the remotest areas will have access to TV in some way.”⁴³

Because illiteracy can run as high as 60 percent in some countries,⁴⁴ television and radio are the main sources of information in general as well as about the United States. The State Department Advisory Group underscored this observation with its experience: “We saw one of our worst nightmares in the *bidonvilles* [shanty towns] of Casablanca, where homes lacked plumbing but had hand-wired satellite TV dishes.”⁴⁵ One of the most dramatic developments in recent years is the explosion in the number of television channels—over 600 Arabic and 80 Pakistani.⁴⁶ As one Arab journalist noted, “Every group of investors is launching a TV project.”⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Roundtable discussion, CSIS, Washington, D.C., April 17, 2012.

⁴¹ Roundtable discussion with Capitol Hill staff, Washington, D.C., March 9, 2012.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Roundtable discussion, CSIS, Washington, D.C., March 19, 2012.

⁴⁴ CIA, “Pakistan,” *World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html>.

⁴⁵ Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, *Changing Minds, Winning Peace*, 21.

⁴⁶ See “Battle of the Box: Religious and Political Conflicts Are Played Out on Screen,” *Economist*, August 13, 2011, <http://www.economist.com/node/21525926>; Mahreen Aziz Khan, “Mindless Media-ocracy,” *Express Tribune*, July 8, 2010, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/26526/mindless-media-ocracy/>; Jon Alterman, “The Revolution Will Not Be

The United States needs to actively engage the broad middle of a society. The extremists will not change, but the people who simply condone violent extremism or stand silent can. Broadcast is the only way to reach this huge audience; the question is how. In most cases, an appearance on one station now reaches only a small percentage of the target audience. While exceptions like Al Jazeera or Pakistan's GEO do reach much larger audiences, the problem is that these large networks are less interested in speaking to lower-level officers, whether they are fluent in Arabic or Urdu or not. These channels want high-level officials, either the ambassador or at least someone at the assistant secretary level, and often seek voices from Washington.

Vernacular-speaking officers, however, are especially popular with smaller or provincial stations. The numerous TV crews surrounding events like an interfaith dialogue in Egypt will all ask for interviews with public diplomacy officers. One commentator underscored this conclusion by noting that "in Cairo there are now local channels. MBC, father of Al Arabiya, is opening local channels all over the region. Local news should be built into any public diplomacy strategy."⁴⁸

Establishing a bureau for Arab, Afghan, and Pakistani broadcast networks in the United States is a powerful option for informing Muslim audiences. As one Arab journalist explained, "You need to connect with satellite TV in a way that tells people about America. Satellite TV needs to be on the ground in the U.S. to be visually engaging."⁴⁹ The large regional channels are already here. In the 2008 elections, the number of staff at the Al Jazeera English bureau in Washington rocketed to over 150 to help meet the tremendous demand for increased coverage on Al Jazeera's Arabic and English channels.⁵⁰ Smaller networks also need to be encouraged, and here the State Department's Foreign Press Centers that reach out to foreign journalists based in the United States could play a role.

Another strategy may be to step away from news-centered shows. Entertainment is much more widely followed, and American images and ideas can play a role, especially in reaching out to women and youth. Talk shows, cooking shows, student roundtables, and other non-news programs are all excellent venues. In Pakistan, for example, young public diplomacy officers appeared on a top-rated cooking show during Ramadan to show Americans as appreciative of Pakistani culture. In Saudi Arabia, Muslim-American medical researchers appeared on a talk show filmed in Mecca. As demonstrated, communication can easily expand beyond the news.

Social Media

Expanding the U.S. presence in social media is both a high priority and a challenge. Young, educated Muslims are increasing their presence on these media, and America needs to be there too. In Egypt, for example, university students began moving onto Facebook three or four years ago. Prominent American universities are beginning to teach courses online that are accessible to English-speakers around the world.⁵¹ In Pakistan, an embassy advertisement on Facebook recently garnered 50,000 views while its Facebook page attracts 100,000 friends.

Tweeted," *Washington Quarterly* 34 (Fall 2011): 103–16, <http://csis.org/files/publication/twq11autumnalterman.pdf>. According to Fatma El-Zanaty and Ann Way, "Ninety-five percent of EDHS households owned a television (color or black and white), and more than seven in ten households owned a radio. Seventy percent of households were connected to a satellite dish; 47 percent owned the dish and 24 percent were connected to but did not own a dish. Eight percent of households had a video or DVD player. Around two-thirds of households had a telephone, with 41 percent having a mobile phone. Fourteen percent of households owned a computer." *Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2008* (Cairo: Ministry of Health, El-Zanaty and Associates, and Macro International, 2009, 23), <http://www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR220/FR220.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Roundtable discussion, CSIS, Washington, D.C., March 19, 2012.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, April 17, 2012.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, March 19, 2012.

⁵⁰ Author visit to Al Jazeera, 2008.

⁵¹ American universities are offering an expanding array of free classes online, including most recently a Harvard-MIT partnership called edX, as well as a Stanford, Princeton, University of Pennsylvania, and University of Michigan joint initiative called Coursera. These online platforms could become a useful public diplomacy tool in

Social media and its associated metrics are unpredictable, however. The challenge is how to leverage them. The private sector is not replete with success stories that can be copied. For instance, McDonald's suffered a setback when a social media campaign that emphasized its "authentic" and "down home" qualities backfired.⁵² A recent study by the *Harvard Business Review* noted that "only a small group—12 percent—of the companies in [its] survey said they felt they were currently effective users of social media."⁵³ Most companies that use social media admit they do not understand the right metrics for analyzing their target audiences or the effectiveness of their campaigns.⁵⁴ When a think-tank specialist looked at efforts of American social media to reach the Arab world, he noted that "we have projected patterns of use on audiences that don't share them . . . people who are writing this stuff are not necessarily reflective of the societies which they are from . . . it systematically blinds you to where the center really is."⁵⁵ One study showed that social media played a notably less-than-advertised role in the Arab Spring,⁵⁶ while another concluded that conservative clerics, rather than liberal youth, are most adept at using social media in Saudi Arabia.⁵⁷

In the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, social media usage varies by country.⁵⁸ It costs money that many countries do not have, and many areas do not even have the necessary infrastructure, such as consistent electricity.⁵⁹ Internet cafes flourish in some countries, while internal security forces discourage them in others.⁶⁰ As noted earlier, high rates of illiteracy are inhibiting in some areas. English-language social media is much better developed; however, the number of English speakers in Muslim countries is tiny.

Public diplomacy officers confront challenges with social media. Engagement requires a high degree of ability in the vernacular language and the capacity for rapid response. Moreover, because Twitter is meant to be spontaneous and snarky, it is the absolute opposite of diplomatic communication; and because of the Twitter platform, it is also easy to lose control over a topic. The case of Twitter in the Gulf provides an example. Given the limited reporting of the Arab networks on the events in Bahrain, young Arabs switched to social media to connect and express their opinions. Bahrainis, however, totally hijacked the social media in the Gulf, by shifting any discussion to political issues in their country.

Social media can also overwhelm the relatively small staffs at American embassies. If even a large multinational corporation like McDonald's struggles to predict the results of social media engagement, it will be no easier for the public diplomacy officers in the field. Public diplomacy officers can, of course, ask alumni of exchange programs to help, and these credible voices can

the near future. See Tamara Lewin, "Harvard and M.I.T. Team Up to Offer Free Online Courses," *New York Times*, May 2, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/03/education/harvard-and-mit-team-up-to-offer-free-online-courses.html>.

⁵² According to a *New York Times* article, "In a matter of minutes, a public relations success had become yet another public relations crisis for the company. See Keith O'Brien, "How McDonald's Came Back Bigger Than Ever," *New York Times*, May 4, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/06/magazine/how-mcdonalds-came-back-bigger-than-eve..?_r=1.

⁵³ SAS, *The New Conversation: Taking Social Media from Talk to Action*, Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, 2010, 1, http://www.sas.com/resources/whitepaper/wp_23348.pdf.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 14. The study also notes that "even among this group [of surveyed companies] much experimentation and uncertainty exist around measurement of social media. 'It's hard to define value when we are still trying to measure it,' said an executive at a global education publishing and training company."

⁵⁵ Roundtable discussion, CSIS, Washington, D.C., April 17, 2012.

⁵⁶ CSIS Middle East Program director Jon Alterman argues that "it was not Twitter and Facebook, but television that was absolutely fundamental to the unfolding of the [Arab Spring]." See Alterman, "The Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted," 103–04.

⁵⁷ Glen Carey, "Saudi Clerics Out-Tweet Liberals Forcing King to Balance," Bloomberg, April 26, 2012.

⁵⁸ Pew Global Attitudes Project, "Usage Differs by Age and Education: Global Digital Communications: Texting, Social Networking Popular Worldwide," last modified February 29, 2012, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/12/20/global-digital-communications-texting-social-networking-popular-worldwide/>.

⁵⁹ UN Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Arab States, *Arab Human Development Report 2009: Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries* (New York: United Nations, 2009), 116. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/regional/arabstates/ahdr2009e.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Roundtable discussion, CSIS, Washington, D.C., February 23, 2012.

inject an alternative narrative about the United States into the public forum. In another approach, two Internet-savvy officers used America's convening power to create Pakistan's first-ever bloggers conference in Karachi in 2011. The wildly popular event had to turn away requests to participate when the numbers hit 200 bloggers and the hotel conference room maxed out. The conference certainly put America on the right side of social media.

But another use for social media should be given more prominence in the short term—monitoring as a way to understand issues before they become widespread. Monitoring Twitter and Facebook, for example, was crucial to understanding some of the events during the Arab Spring.

The Rigged Environment

Anti-Americanism can stem partially from the search for a scapegoat for those dissatisfied with the current situation. Governments, even those friendly to us, can use it to distract a population from other issues. The average anti-American European does not blame America for his or her lot in life. In this region, however, people often do. Where does this tendency come from? The media, often noted for its virulent anti-Americanism, provides an example.⁶¹ One Pakistani author noted that “retired [Pakistani] intelligence officers spread conspiracy theories and blame America on a plethora of high-octane chat shows.”⁶² In this region, anti-Americanism often mirrors the lack of press of freedom. The trends are not encouraging (see table 1).⁶³

It is not just governments that restrict press freedoms: some newspapers are political party instruments, run by people with a particular agenda. The issue is not always the United States versus a foreign government.

Summary

The regional media environment is demanding. It is not a blank tableau that passively awaits American input. The key is to start with broadcast media and then use social media to target specific audiences such as youth. Social media and its associated metrics will become more useful tools as their audience expands.

⁶¹ See Hijab Shah, “The Insider Pages: An Analysis of the Pakistani Press,” *CSIS South Asia Monitor* 148 (December 9, 2010), 4, http://csis.org/files/publication/sam_148.pdf.

⁶² Duncan Gargham, book review, “Pakistan on the Brink by Ahmed Rashid,” *Daily Telegraph*, April 24, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/9214669/Pakistan-on-the-Brink-by-Ahmed-Rashid-review.html>.

⁶³ See Marco Mezzera and Safdar Sial, “Media and Governance in Pakistan: A Controversial Yet Essential Relationship,” country case study, Initiative for Peacebuilding, Democratisation and Transitional Justice Cluster, Brussels, October 2010, <http://www.initiativeforpeacebuilding.eu/pdf/pakistanOct.pdf>.

Table 1: Selected Countries Ranked according to Freedom of the Press, 2012

Country	Ranking ^a
Finland	1
United States	22
United Kingdom	31
Senegal	117
Egypt	123
Libya	132
Algeria	139
Cambodia	144
Pakistan	144
Morocco	153
Iraq	155
Oman	160
United Arab Emirates	161
Afghanistan	164
Kazakhstan	175
Rwanda	178
Yemen	179
Bahrain	182
Somalia	182
Saudi Arabia	182
China	187
Burma	187
Syria	189

a. Out of 197 countries.

Source: Data derived from Freedom House’s worldwide rankings of press freedom. See Karin Deutsch Karlekar and Jennifer Dunham, *Freedom of the Press Report 2012* (Washington, D.C.: Freedom House, 2012), 13–18, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Booklet%20for%20Website.pdf>.

Exchange People and Ideas

Fulbright Scholarships and Educational and Professional Exchanges

Nothing is more basic to public diplomacy than the Fulbright and the International Visitors programs. Without these, the United States does not have public diplomacy. The educational and professional exchange programs represent a long-term American commitment to a bilateral relationship and are the crown jewels of public diplomacy. People in the region admire them, too, as one Pakistani journalist noted: “The best thing in Pakistan is the Fulbright program.”⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Roundtable discussion, CSIS, Washington, D.C., March 19, 2012.

Washington sometimes overlooks the importance of such programs. Public diplomacy is often equated with press handling, but that is only part of it. While messaging is important, most money spent on public diplomacy goes to professional and educational programs. Despite variations across the region, these programs account for well over half the spending at each diplomatic post.

Public diplomacy officers must use their exchanges strategically based on available resources and the target audience. These exchanges are especially valuable for reaching opinion leaders among key audiences such as women or youth. When one post saw that 90 percent of the participants in its International Visitors program were using English-language programs and therefore represented only an elite sliver of their society, the post began to increase the percentage of non-English-speaking participants who would be accompanied by interpretation. Some programs must make educated guesses based on local knowledge. As Robert Banks writes in his “Resource Guide to Public Diplomacy,” “Selecting youth as a primary audience for our public diplomacy is something of a gamble. Sending a 15-year old student on an exchange program offers much less certainty that the return on investment will justify the expense.”⁶⁵ It is always important to guard against choosing participants solely because they speak English and run in the elite circles that hover around the diplomatic community.

Alumni

Exchange programs have over one million alumni worldwide. No group anywhere on this planet wants to improve relations between the United States and their country more than the alumni. With strong growth in funding, over 18 percent of them are now in the Arab Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, up from 10 percent before 9/11.⁶⁶ Approximately 75,000 alumni who participated in programs from 1970 to 2012 are still active in the region.⁶⁷ Today, the largest Fulbright and International Visitors programs are in Pakistan, with Afghanistan and Iraq close behind. Over time, the percentage of alumni in the region will continue to increase dramatically.

The key is to harness this tremendous force, and many public diplomacy officers already are. Responding to the field, the Office of Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, for example, increased funding for alumni affairs last year, allowing more posts to bring on alumni coordinators from locally engaged staff who are devoted full time to developing alumni networks.

Innovative public affairs officers have created job networks to help alumni find better opportunities in their country. In one poverty-stricken country, a public diplomacy officer helps alumni look for jobs. Some foreign government officials now call the embassy to ask about alumni when they are looking to fill a position. One post promotes its midcareer alumni professionals among the international agencies, recommending them as consultants in their fields of expertise.

In another country, when the government forced a local cosponsor to drop an American cultural program in a protest over policy, a group of alumni stepped in and made the event a success. Finally, having recently returned alumni along to answer questions like “Why does America hate Islam?” is much more effective than an American trying to explain why America does not hate Islam.

English Teaching

An important adjunct to the exchange programs is English teaching. People in the region seek it out to improve their employment outlook, and public diplomacy officers use it to expose youth to a wider world, develop critical thinking, and provide them with prospects in life that may prevent

⁶⁵ Roberts Banks, “A Resource Guide for Public Diplomacy,” Perspectives on Public Diplomacy paper 9, Center on Public Diplomacy, University of Southern California, 2011, 34, http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/publications/perspectives/CPD_Perspectives_Paper%209_2011.pdf.

⁶⁶ Statistics provided by the Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau, U.S. Department of State.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

them from turning to violence. This confluence of interests allows the programs to cut through everything, including policy disagreements. Before the current bloodshed in Syria, the only thing the government could not shut down was English teaching: when the teaching was briefly down, it provoked such a reaction that the teaching was resumed.

The ACCESS program brings low-cost English teaching to large groups of students in many countries of the region. Disadvantaged families that do not like America see their children participate, and soon the students and their families talk about its value and begin to encourage their friends and relatives to participate. In Pakistan, for example, one of the largest ACCESS programs teaches over 6,000 impoverished students in at-risk neighborhoods in cities like Karachi, Quetta, and Peshawar.

English-teaching officers, an entrepreneurial breed who spend a lot of their time interacting directly with local citizens, are driving English teaching into madrassas, schools, and other neighborhood institutions. Few other programs on the ground are more popular, more openly welcomed, or reflect better on the United States.

Summary

Professional and educational programs are the core of any public diplomacy program in any country and underscore the intent of sustaining a positive bilateral relationship. The priority is to ensure that these programs, small in scope but high in impact, are leveraged to influence wider audiences over time.

Get Outside the Bubble

A Third Office

Past reports on public diplomacy agreed that public diplomacy officers are extremely busy, with budgets and personnel having dramatically increased in the region since 9/11. Washington also frequently requests initiatives, reports, and visitor support. As a result, public diplomacy officers spend a lot of time managing immediate business rather than searching out new public diplomacy opportunities.

The answer to this problem will vary from post to post. In Pakistan, for example, the large budget for public diplomacy allowed the development of one innovative approach. When handling the media threatened to overwhelm the press office in Islamabad and administering the huge exchange and cultural programs nearly swamped the cultural affairs office, the embassy created a third office within the public affairs section to concentrate on outreach to new audiences. Called the Community Engagement Office, it has been an outstanding success and could serve as a model for other posts when resources are available.

Security

In response to terrorist threats, in 1986 the State Department began to build new overseas facilities that met more rigorous security standards. This early program was called the Inman program, after the admiral who headed a study on the subject. The effort received a new impetus following the bombings of American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998. The events of 9/11 added even greater emphasis and funding.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Building secure and modern facilities for U.S. government employees working overseas is extremely important and will require a significant investment." See U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Embassy Construction-Process for Determining Staffing Requirements Needs*

During the Cold War, embassies were often built to compare the United States with the Soviet Union. America liked open structures, contrasting U.S. transparency with the bunker embassies of the Soviets. Beginning with embassies guided by the Inman guidelines, the United States began to build high-security facilities that were no longer as open and welcoming.

At the same time, concern arose about what these new facilities meant for the American image and in particular their impact on public diplomacy. In 2003, *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman addressed this issue following al Qaeda attacks in Istanbul. Referring to the high-security American consulate there, he quoted one U.S. diplomat as saying, “You lose human contact, and it makes it harder to have interactions with people who are not part of the elite.”⁶⁹ Friedman noted that American embassies are “increasing American isolation” and that in 20 years “the only Americans foreigners will meet will be those wearing U.S. Army uniforms and body armor.”⁷⁰ To some, getting in and out of our embassies has a chilling effect.

Public diplomacy officers see the issue a bit differently. The less-secure buildings of a bygone era, which were wonderful for inviting people over, are missed. But for today’s public diplomacy purposes, the picture is more complicated. While high security does reflect negatively on the United States in a symbolic sense, on a more practical level most programming takes place outside an embassy.

In fact, most of the people we wish to influence would never come to an American facility anyway. Only the elites do that. An Islam-oriented think tank, for example, brought together over 200 professors in the organization’s auditorium to hear an embassy-sponsored speaker discuss religion in America. None of the professors was known to the Americans, and most would never have stepped foot in an American facility on principle.

High-security facilities are even less of a concern when one takes into account the goal of changing behavior within a country. The United States reaches these people in their communities through television, English-teaching programs like ACCESS, exchange programs like YES, or multifaith events at mosques. The appearance of an embassy is irrelevant.

There is also a generational split. An officer who joined the Foreign Service in 1999, whose first day of Arabic training was on September 11, would not remember libraries where people hung out. He or she would not remember multipurpose rooms and constant programs. Because many senior officials have memories of a different time, they see the less-welcoming facilities as a problem. But this view is not necessarily shared by many of the newer generation of officers.

Abbreviated rotations also fall into the security debate. Three-year rotations are the norm in most parts of the world. In the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, tours of one or two years are frequent. Although these tours are certainly short and detrimental to the State Department’s efforts to establish meaningful relationships among foreign audiences, lengthening these no- or limited-family tours in such hardship posts is not the answer. Most officers would be reluctant to serve more than one year without their families, and it would be unfair to increase the burden on single officers. Nonetheless, one fact must be kept in mind: no matter the length of a tour, officers have a date of departure the moment they land in a country. The key to any successful tour, whether it is for one year or three, is to develop personal connections that can be transformed into institutional links that survive an officer’s departure. A good public diplomacy officer does this no matter how short his or her tour.

Improvement, Building Secure and Modern Facilities for U.S., April 2003, 3–4, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d03411.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Thomas Friedman, “Where Birds Don’t Fly,” *New York Times*, December 21, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/21/opinion/where-birds-don-t-fly.html>.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Summary

Public diplomacy faces structural challenges. Budgets will continue to be tight, and officers will remain busy. Security considerations will not go away anytime soon. Therefore, it is imperative that the effects of these challenges be understood and that steps be taken to mitigate them.

| Recommendations

When research for this report began, the authors never expected to have such numerous and diverse areas of interest. This variety underscores the point that public diplomacy is the sum of a lot of parts.

The recommendations are divided under six sections, matching the six areas of the findings. The first section offers a recommendation on one overriding strategic idea: defining the goals of public diplomacy. The subsequent five sections deal with implementation. Although the six sections below are in priority order, this does not mean that only the first few are important: all these recommendations would contribute to improving American public diplomacy.

Define the Goals

- The State Department should articulate a strategy to make changing attitudes toward violence and violent behavior a priority.
- The department should also examine how to create a training course at the Foreign Service Institute that outlines strategies and tactics for changing attitudes and behavior.

Listen

- The State Department should articulate a strategy to ensure not just accurate reporting on vernacular media but also analysis of those media.
- The department should ensure that each post develop reliable local vernacular voices and a network of vernacular-speaking Americans.
- The department should form a working group to investigate how public diplomacy can use the tools available in the private sector, such as polling organizations, public relations firms, advertising agencies, or marketing companies.
- The department should articulate a strategy for integrating religion into public diplomacy.

Measure Success

- The State Department should bring together a working group, including staff from the Intelligence and Research Bureau and representatives from the private sector, to develop a strategy on metrics. This effort would include focus-group research on motivations and recommendations for action-based metrics.
- The department should devise a strategy for increasing the flow of thematic narratives to Congress and other interested parties.
- When hosting participants from Muslim-majority countries in exchange programs, the department should ensure that Congress is aware of their experiences.

Reach the Target Audience

- The State Department should articulate a strategy to help more networks in the Arab Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan set up bureaus in the United States to broadcast back to the region.
- The department should bring together working groups in the region to articulate a strategy that makes maximum use of social media in Muslim-majority countries. Included in its agenda should be outlining how to use social media to monitor trends, assessing the usefulness of metrics, and creating guidelines for public diplomacy officers to determine the role of social media country by country.

Exchange People and Ideas

- The State Department should articulate a strategy for ensuring that a significant percentage of non-English speakers participate in its exchange programs in Muslim-majority countries.
- The department should create a strategy for helping small diplomatic posts establish local alumni coordinators and for outlining how these posts can support their alumni in finding more prominent roles in their countries.

Get Outside the Bubble

- The State Department should bring together a working group to articulate a strategy for creating a third office in public diplomacy sections that would focus on innovative outreach to new communities.

Conclusion

One theme unified the participants in this CSIS study: there is no single path to improving public diplomacy in the Muslim world. It is not just about changing attitudes or messaging or the Fulbright program or engagement with social media or any other single activity but a combination of all of them. If the United States is to increase the effectiveness of its public diplomacy, it must do so across the board.

The aim of the authors of this report was to offer a fresh perspective on public diplomacy based on an examination of operations in the field. We now hope that this study will be used as a road map for improving American public diplomacy in the Arab Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan and even beyond.

| Methodology

This report is the result of a six-month study at CSIS. CSIS convened seven roundtable discussions and supplemented them with personal interviews with public diplomacy and regional experts within and outside of government. Complementing this effort, CSIS conducted a review of post-9/11 studies on U.S. public diplomacy. While many of these reports covered the whole world, their overriding concern was public diplomacy in the Muslim world.

Literature Review

Three themes emerged from a survey of earlier reports, observations, and studies:

1. The literature reflected an ongoing struggle to define the mission and strategic direction of U.S. public diplomacy.
2. The literature focused on bureaucratic issues. Through a quantitative analysis, CSIS determined that up to 88 percent of the recommendations in the reports, observations, and studies initially surveyed were Washington-centric.
3. The most common recommendation was to increase funding.

Surveyed Reports, Observations, and Studies

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*An asterisk indicates that the source was included in the initial quantitative analysis. In the process of researching this report, a number of other studies, articles, and reports were also reviewed in addition to the above list.

| About the Authors

Walter Douglas was a senior visiting State Department fellow at CSIS from November 2011 to July 2012. He is currently the public affairs officer at the U.S. embassy in New Delhi. Before coming to CSIS, Mr. Douglas had been responsible for all public communications at the U.S. embassy in Islamabad. He served in Washington, D.C., as executive assistant to Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Judith McHale and as director of the Office of Press and Public Diplomacy in the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau from 2007 to 2010. He has also served in public affairs positions at U.S. missions in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Cyprus, Iceland, South Korea, and Côte d'Ivoire. He was deputy to the spokesman at the U.S. mission to the United Nations under Ambassador Madeleine Albright. Before joining the Foreign Service, Mr. Douglas worked as an advertising executive in New York and as a legislative assistant to a member of Congress in the U.S. House of Representatives. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a B.A. in history in 1977.

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