

**DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE WAY FORWARD**  
**U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Thesis

**Submitted by Katherine T. Schaefer**

December 2006

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THE FLETCHER SCHOOL

TUFTS UNIVERSITY

# **Developing an Effective Way Forward**

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Under the Advisement of Professor Carolyn Gideon  
The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy  
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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Carolyn Gideon for her unwavering support and patience throughout this process. Her ability to motivate me and provide pertinent advice when I needed it most will not be forgotten.

I would also like to thank the Office of Strategic Communication (IIP) at the Department of State for their insight into the processes behind U.S. public diplomacy. They took the time to not only familiarize me with what they do, but also provided me with invaluable resources to complement my research. I thank them for the opportunity to spend a summer with them, without which I would not have developed a more clear understanding of their complex mission.

Finally, I thank both Jonathan and Emily for their time and effort in helping me make this a thesis to be proud of.

## Introduction

The Post-9/11 period has been a challenging one for U.S. public diplomacy. Not only does the current environment present U.S. officials with tough policies to sell, the U.S. image on the whole has steadily declined since that fateful day in September. It became apparent soon after 9/11 that the lagging public diplomacy programs in the Middle East needed to be reexamined and renewed. It also became evident that public diplomacy is linked to national security, and that it has an important part to play in devising a strategy to prevent another 9/11.

This paper begins by providing a brief history of public diplomacy to properly provide the reader with an idea of where public diplomacy stands today. Major reports on U.S. public diplomacy are then analyzed followed by a look at how public diplomacy is evaluated today. Many recommendations have been presented to improve the image problems faced by the United States since 9/11. From anecdotes and op-eds to official reports by government bodies and think tanks, a broad range of suggestions surfaced. There are some common threads throughout that coalesced into specific criteria for what makes public diplomacy effective. These criteria will be discussed in Chapter 4. Four case studies will then be examined to determine how they meet the criteria. Out of the case studies, three will be U.S. government initiatives, and the fourth will be a non-governmental program. Non-governmental programs are explored in this paper because many characteristics that make these private sector programs successful can and should be applied to government efforts going forward. While this paper looks specifically at

U.S. public diplomacy initiatives that target the Arab/Muslim world, many, if not all of the criteria could be applied to U.S. public diplomacy on the whole.

# CHAPTER 1: Public Diplomacy - Past and Present

## *Brief History of Public Diplomacy*

Public diplomacy, or government-to-people diplomacy, has been around since the time of Homer. Originally, this type of diplomacy was only approved for use during time of war, and was seen as meddling in other countries' affairs if used during peacetime.<sup>1</sup> This changed at the end of World War II. Public diplomacy continued to be used in the post-WWII period and became an acceptable form of diplomacy. Walter Roberts, former associate director of the now-defunct United States Information Agency (USIA), refers to the two most common reasons for this change. The first was that the war had "speeded up the information revolution, which now dominated practically the entire globe", and the second was that the new spheres of influence, the West and the Soviets, were constantly trying to influence the other.<sup>2</sup>

The role of U.S. public diplomacy has always been contingent on current perceived threats to the U.S. In the 1940s and 1950s, the International Information Agency (the former name of the USIA) engaged in "ideological operations" to counter Soviet propaganda. Part of this effort included using covert operations in Eastern Europe through radio broadcasts.<sup>3</sup> Today this would seem subversive and unethical, as can be

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<sup>1</sup> Walter R. Roberts, "The Evolution of Diplomacy," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Summer 2006. (accessed November 9, 2006); available at <http://www.publicdiplomacy.org/70.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 51.

seen in recent controversy over the U.S. Army using black propaganda in Iraqi newspapers to promote only good news of the war in Iraq.<sup>4</sup>

When the USIA was officially created in 1953, one of its roles was to give “input to National Security Council decision making in order to strengthen the role of ideological and public-opinion factors in foreign policy.”<sup>5</sup> Edward R. Murrow, as Director of USIA, was a strong proponent of the advisory role of the USIA. In fact, he attended meetings of the NSC, “with the CIA Director as with other top administration notables, called to the same interagency task forces pondering national security decisions...”<sup>6</sup> But there was a distinction drawn between how involved USIA personnel would get with CIA operations; the issue was always one of legitimacy. In addition, there was skepticism among various administrations as to USIA’s involvement in national security. Both of these issues come to light again in the post-9/11 world, in the form of strategic communication, as shall be discussed later.

Post-Cold War, public diplomacy was no longer seen as an important function of the government, especially as compared to the political or military functions. Funding was cut throughout the years, and USIA was eventually absorbed into the State Department in 1999. Today, however, the U.S. government has acknowledged the importance of public diplomacy, recognizing the role public diplomacy could play in preventing another 9/11. The current Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Karen Hughes, has

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<sup>4</sup> Eric Schmitt and David S. Cloud, “The Struggle for Iraq: Propaganda; Senate Summons Pentagon to Explain Effort to Plant Reports in Iraqi News Media,” *The New York Times*, December 2, 2005. (accessed December 20, 2005); available from Lexus Nexus.

<sup>5</sup> Dizard, 59.

<sup>6</sup> A.M. Sperber, *Murrow: His Life and Times*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 636.

once again created a seat for public diplomacy at the policy table, due, in part, to her closeness with the President.<sup>7</sup> In particular, Hughes highlights a different aspect of U.S. public diplomacy: the emphasis on mutual understanding and cultural awareness, something that, while present in the formation of the Fulbright Program, has only recently been given more attention.

The importance of public diplomacy is reflected in its growing budget. In fiscal year 2005, \$1.2 billion was spent on public diplomacy initiatives.<sup>8</sup> This amount is the aggregate of all spending on public diplomacy by the Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG). The Department of Defense and USAID also have small public diplomacy budgets, although these numbers are not reflected in the above number.

Not only has the importance of public diplomacy shifted over the years, some contend that the underlying goals of public diplomacy have, in fact, changed. Alan Henrikson proposes that public diplomacy today is much different than what it was during even the Cold War period. He suggests that governments today are using public diplomacy as a tool of regime change, rather than as a way to simply influence foreign publics.<sup>9</sup>

Secretary Rice's "transformational diplomacy" initiative supports Henrikson's supposition. According to Rice, transformational diplomacy means:

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<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey Cowan, "Hughes offers steps, not spin," *USA Today*, September 29, 2005, available from Lexis Nexus.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Efforts to Engage Muslim Audiences Lack Certain Communication Elements and Face Significant Challenges*, May 2006, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Alan Henrikson, "What Can Public Diplomacy Achieve?", *Discussion Papers in Diplomacy*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', 2006, pg. 10.

*to work with our many partners around the world, to build and sustain democratic, well-governed states that will respond to the needs of their people and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system. Let me be clear, transformational diplomacy is rooted in partnership; not in paternalism. In doing things with people, not for them; we seek to use America's diplomatic power to help foreign citizens better their own lives and to build their own nations and to transform their own futures.<sup>10</sup>*

While the reasons behind public diplomacy initiatives remain a contentious debate, there is no doubt that the methods of producing those goals have changed. With advancements in technology, such as the ever-growing prevalence of the Internet, have come new methods for conveying America's message abroad, but to analyze the effectiveness of these methods, there is a need to determine the criteria by which public diplomacy initiatives are measured.

The fact that public diplomacy is no longer overseen by the USIA, and is being influenced partly by the Department of Defense, leads one to re-visit the definition of public diplomacy, especially in light of the 1999 integration of USIA into the State Department. Below we will look at various definitions of public diplomacy, and discuss its relationship with strategic communication. Are they one and the same?

### ***Public Diplomacy Defined***

The term public diplomacy, originally coined in 1966 by Edmund A. Gullion, was understood to be “the means by which governments, private groups and individuals

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<sup>10</sup> Condoleeza Rice, Remarks at Georgetown University, January 18, 2006. (accessed on October 19, 2006); available from <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/59306.htm>.

influence the attitudes and opinions of other peoples and governments in such a way as to exercise an influence on their foreign policy decisions.”<sup>11</sup>

Hans Tuch defined it as “a government’s process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies.”<sup>12</sup>

Karen Hughes expresses these same objectives, and yet gives additional methods for how to make public diplomacy successful. She states that “the mission of public diplomacy is to engage, inform, and help others understand our policies, actions and values – but I am mindful that before we seek to be understood, we must first work to understand.”<sup>13</sup>

Hughes sets out four “strategic pillars”<sup>14</sup> which guide her public diplomacy initiatives.

They are:

1. *Engage*: “We cannot expect people to give a fair hearing to our ideas if we don’t advocate them. And research shows, when people know that America is partnering with their governments to improve their lives, it makes a difference in how they think about us.”
2. *Exchanges*: “People who have the opportunity to come here learn for themselves that Americans are generous, hard-working people who value faith and family. Our exchange programs are responding to the new realities of the post-9/11 world, reaching out to critical new participants such as clerics and community leaders... We want more American young people to study and travel abroad.”

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<sup>11</sup> The Edward R. Murrow Center for the Study and Advancement of Public Diplomacy, *What is Public Diplomacy*, (accessed December 21, 2005); available from <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/murrow/pd/definitions.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Hans Tuch, *Communicating with the World: US Public Diplomacy Overseas* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), p.3.

<sup>13</sup> Karen Hughes, *The Mission of Public Diplomacy*, Testimony at confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, (accessed December 21, 2005); available from <http://www.state.gov/r/us/2005/49967.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

3. *Education*: "...education is the path to upward mobility and greater opportunity – for boys and girls. Americans must educate ourselves to be better citizens of our world – learning different languages and learning more about other countries and cultures. And through English language training programs, we can give young people a valuable tool that helps them improve their own lives and learn more about our values."<sup>15</sup>
4. *Empowerment*: "People cannot give a fair hearing to our ideas if they are unable to consider them. We will take the side of those who advocate greater participation for all, including women. We will create relationships with those who share our values and we will help amplify the voices of those who speak up for them..."

The need for American understanding in order to meet the above objectives is underscored on the State Department website, expressing the need for public diplomacy, public affairs and traditional diplomacy to "practice in harmony to advance U.S. interests and security and to provide the moral basis for U.S. leadership in the world."<sup>16</sup>

Mutual understanding is being recognized more and more, especially under this present Under Secretary. It is this combination of public affairs, or American citizen outreach, and public diplomacy, that needs to be further developed and emphasized, and which belongs among the criteria for effective public diplomacy.

### ***Current U.S. Public Diplomacy Programs***

The official U.S. public diplomacy programs listed below are currently managed or overseen by the Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP), the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs or by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG). Of

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<sup>15</sup> English is indeed in demand, at least according to one evaluator of an American Corners program in Korea.

<sup>16</sup> The U.S. Department of State Website, *Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs* (accessed December 21, 2005); available from <http://www.state.gov/r/>.

the \$1.2 billion spent in fiscal year 2005 on public diplomacy, \$597 million was spent by the State Department with \$356 million going towards exchange programs including the Fulbright Program, International Visitors Program and English-language teaching. \$68 million was dedicated to information programs, such as electronic journals, American Corners and USINFO, and between 2004 and 2006, \$240 million is expected to be spent by the Broadcasting Board of Governors on the Middle East Broadcasting Network. And of these amounts, around \$115 million was spent on exchange and information programs in the 58 countries which make up the Middle East.<sup>17</sup> Official programs include, but are not limited to, the following:

#### International Information Programs Bureau

##### *American Corners*

The American Corners Program was set up to present a space for spreading America's message to the world. After the American Libraries Program was discontinued due to security reasons, it was necessary to carry on the basic mission of these libraries by partnering with institutions in the host country to create a "corner" where the U.S. could "build bridges of understanding."<sup>18</sup> These are spaces for dialogue, providing resources about American history, politics, and values. Most of the American Corners utilize various types of media such as computers, television, databases, books, magazines and music to convey America's ideas of democracy and civil society to foreign audiences. They also serve as a place to host speakers who specialize in topics such as HIV/AIDS and human trafficking to grantees of U.S. government programs sharing their experiences

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<sup>17</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, May 2006, 7-8.

<sup>18</sup> Bureau of International Information Programs Information Sheet, *American Corners: Bringing America's Message to the World*, December 14, 2004, available from the U.S. Department of State.

in the U.S. As of 2004, there are 180 American Corners around the world, including nine in the Middle East.<sup>19</sup> The first evaluation of the American Corners Program was carried out this year. At the time of this writing, the results from the evaluation were due out at the end of 2006.

### *USINFO*

IIP's USINFO website ([usinfo.state.gov](http://usinfo.state.gov)) was created to reach mass foreign audiences and to serve as a central site to find information about U.S. policies. Utilizing texts, transcripts, press releases and fact sheets from the Washington File, USINFO "advances America's interests by informing and influencing people on the Internet."<sup>20</sup> This website provides information in seven languages – English, Spanish, French, Persian, Russian, Chinese and Arabic.

One of the most effective aspects of this website is that information and articles from it are frequently linked to by international media.<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to note that while USINFO is a U.S. public diplomacy initiative, it can be viewed by Americans surfing the web (counter to the Smith-Mundt Act which prohibits domestic distribution of information intended for foreign audiences). This is another issue altogether and will not be discussed in this paper.

### *U.S. Speaker Program*

"Face-to-face dialogue between Americans and citizens of other countries is one of the most effective means for Public Diplomacy to promote a better understanding of U.S.

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<sup>19</sup> Bureau of International Information Programs Information Sheet, *American Corners: Bringing America's Message to the World*, December 14, 2004, available from the U.S. Department of State.

<sup>20</sup> Bureau of International Information Programs Information Sheet, *USINFO: Promoting America on the World Wide Web*, December 2004, available from the U.S. Department of State.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

policies, and ultimately, to create a climate of acceptance.”<sup>22</sup> The U.S. Speaker Program connects foreign audiences to American experts who either travel to different countries around the world or speak to foreign audiences via Digital Video Conferences. Speakers discuss U.S. policies regarding economics and trade, the media, the environment, the arts in America, U.S. values and much more.<sup>23</sup> By providing an American face to foreigners, the U.S. Speaker Program provides another source of information which in many ways can help offset preconceived notions about both Americans as a people, and U.S. policies.

#### *Publications*

IIP produces a number of publications including brochures, web-based publications, books and posters to highlight American policies, culture, history and values. Embassies buy the publications for distribution to host country citizens, or foreigners with internet access can download these same publications. One such publication was *Muslim Life in America*. In 2004, there were 400,000 copies of this publication in print in 27 languages.<sup>24</sup>

#### *Electronic Journals*

IIP’s electronic journals are aimed at opinion leaders and policymakers abroad, providing an in-depth look at foreign affairs issues deemed critical to the U.S.<sup>25</sup> Journals come out once a month and cover topics such as economics, foreign policy, the environment, science, democracy and society and values. The most recent issue, entitled “Sharing

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<sup>22</sup> Bureau of International Information Programs Information Sheet, *U.S. Speaker Program: Creating Understanding of U.S. Policies*, December 2004, available from the U.S. Department of State.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Bureau of International Information Programs Information Sheet, *Publications: Showcasing America in Print and on the Internet*, December 2004, available from the U.S. Department of State.

<sup>25</sup> Bureau of International Information Programs Information Sheet, *Electronic Journals: Explaining Policy Issues in Depth*, December 2004, available from the U.S. Department of State.

Science: Global Partnerships,” discusses the importance of international scientific collaboration in tackling health issues, energy efficiency and basic human understanding of the universe and our world.<sup>26</sup>

### *Hi Magazine*

Hi Magazine was one initiative carried out by the State Department, in conjunction with The Magazine Group, and was designed specifically for Arab youth. While the publication has been discontinued, it will be one of the programs analyzed to see why it was discontinued as well as if and how it meets the criteria set out in this paper despite its termination as a public diplomacy initiative.

### *InfoCentral*

While USINFO is a website created specifically for use by foreigners, InfoCentral was designed as an Intranet site for use by U.S. government personnel. Information posted on InfoCentral is used by embassy personnel when formulating succinct responses and explanations regarding U.S. policies. It offers:

- Public affairs guidance
- Generic op-eds for placement by U.S. embassies in foreign media outlets
- International media reaction
- Rapid Response section which highlights important talking points daily
- Other reference sources

InfoCentral provides a place where the State Department personnel can access brief and consistent messages allowing for a more uniform understanding and dissemination of U.S. policies.

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<sup>26</sup> “Sharing Science: Global Partnerships,” *Global Issues*, Volume 11, Number 3, October 2003, (accessed December 15, 2006); available from <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itgic/1006/ijge/welcome.htm>.

## Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

### *Fulbright Program*

The Fulbright Program was established in 1946 with the purpose of "[increasing] mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries..."<sup>27</sup> Participants in the program come from both the U.S. and abroad, making this a truly cross-cultural exchange. While most of the funding for the Fulbright Program comes from appropriations by the U.S. Congress, a substantial amount is provided by foreign governments and host institutions. In 2004, the total amount of funding for the Fulbright Program was \$255 million.<sup>28</sup>

The Fulbright programs service a large number of grantees each year. In 2004, the Fulbright Student Program grantees included 1,096 U.S. students and 2,125 foreign students that received the grant to study in the U.S. The Fulbright Scholar Program, aimed at U.S. and foreign scholars or professionals who lecture or conduct research, consisted of 1,075 Americans and 731 visiting scholars. There were also 520 participants in the Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program that year.<sup>29</sup> The U.S. Department of State, specifically the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, administered 5,936 scholarships to both foreign and U.S. nationals. Out of these, 334 went to foreign nationals of Near Eastern countries to study in the U.S. and 171 went to U.S. nationals to study in Near Eastern countries.<sup>30</sup> Evaluations are carried out for the Fulbright Program.

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<sup>27</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs* (accessed December 21, 2005); available from <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/fulbright/>.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Department of State, *About the Fulbright Program* (accessed December 21, 2005); available from <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/fulbright/about.htm>.

<sup>29</sup> J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board Annual Report 2004/2005, 45.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 53.

### *PLUS Undergraduate Studies Program*

The PLUS Undergraduate Studies Program is geared towards students in mainly Muslim countries. The purpose is to bring these students to study in the United States. The program provides language training and two years of university study which results in a degree from the U.S. university attended. This program has a four-stage evaluation process, including a pre-program survey, a mid-program review, focus groups and an end-of-program survey. Survey results are due out in October 2008 for the pilot program started in 2004.<sup>31</sup>

### Youth Exchange and Study Program

The Youth Exchange Program (YES) is designed to bring students from mainly Muslim countries to live with American families in the United States. The students attend high school for either half a year or a full year. This program, which began in August 2003, is also being evaluated. The four evaluation criteria support most of the proposed criteria set out in this paper. The YES evaluation criteria are:<sup>32</sup>

- 1) Providing the opportunity for young people in selected countries to learn more about American society, values, and culture
- 2) Fostering personal connections
- 3) Enhancing American understanding of the foreign students' countries and cultures
- 4) Supporting program alumni to put the knowledge and skills acquired to use in their home countries

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<sup>31</sup> PLUS evaluation information available at <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/evaluations/inprogress.htm>. (accessed November 9, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> YES evaluation information available at <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/evaluations/inprogress.htm> (accessed November 9, 2006).

Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG)<sup>33</sup>

*Voice of America (VOA)*

The Voice of America is one of the oldest U.S. public diplomacy tools still in use today.

First going on air in 1942, the VOA is a multimedia international broadcasting entity, funded by the U.S. government through the BBG. Funding for fiscal year 2006 is \$166 million.<sup>34</sup> VOA reaches 115 million people around the world and is broadcast in 44 languages.

*Radio Sawa*

Radio Sawa<sup>35</sup>, created to replace Voice of America Arabic Service, was launched in March 2002. Funded by the U.S. government and operated by the BBG, Radio Sawa is a 24-hour news and music station playing the latest Western and Arabic music along with news briefs twice an hour and public service announcements. Targeting listeners under 30, Radio Sawa seeks to sway the hearts and minds of young people in the Middle East in the hopes of steering them away from the ideologies of Bin Laden and anti-Americanism that are prevalent in the region. Radio Sawa will be one of the case studies discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

*Al Hurra*

Al-Hurra (“the Free One” in Arabic), initiated by the Broadcasting Board of Governors and operated by the Middle East Television Network, Inc., was launched on February 14, 2004. Al-Hurra broadcasts out of Springfield, Virginia, 24 hours a day, providing news and information in Arabic to 22 countries in the Arab world. There are two separate

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<sup>33</sup> The BBG is the independent federal agency responsible for all U.S. government and government-sponsored, non-military international broadcasting. Source: [www.bbg.gov](http://www.bbg.gov).

<sup>34</sup> Voice of America Website, (accessed December 11, 2006); available at <http://www.voanews.com/english/About/FastFacts.cfm>.

<sup>35</sup> Sawa means “together” or “togetherness” in Arabic.

channels – the primary Al Hurra station that broadcasts to the Middle East, and Al Hurra Iraq, which broadcasts only to Iraq. Al Hurra will be analyzed further in Chapter 5.

### Other Public Diplomacy Initiatives

Is public diplomacy something that can only be done by a government? This issue is debatable, but this paper argues that, in fact, it can be undertaken by non-governmental entities. Henrikson speaks of the importance of a coherent message when creating public diplomacy goals, and he emphasizes the importance of partnership. The concept of partnership, “if developed still further, could provide a way forward to an even more effective, and ‘achieving’, public diplomacy. It is a non-hierarchical idea, a respectful one, and one that invites others’ participation. Moreover, it crosses boundaries from the domestic sphere to the international sphere, and also from the public to the private sphere.”<sup>36</sup>

This idea of partnership is key in understanding how important America’s image is to everyone in the U.S., not just to our government. Henrikson explains that although public diplomacy is not directly targeting foreign governments, it uses unofficial routes to eventually influence the foreign government. Public diplomacy, therefore, is “differentiated from the rest of diplomacy only in that the influence to be exerted on other countries’ governments is *indirect*, i.e., exerted via channels other than the formal or ‘official’ ones—notable via the press and other such media of mass communication, today including the Internet, and also through more specialized networks of various kinds ranging from business connections, trade unions, scholarly associations, diasporic

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<sup>36</sup> Henrikson, 4.

relationships, and religious or other institutions or affiliations.”<sup>37</sup> This brings us to the topic of Citizen Diplomacy, and how it is gaining ground as an important tool in public diplomacy.

### ***Citizen Diplomacy***

The idea behind citizen diplomacy is that of diplomacy conducted on a people-to-people basis, rather than on a government-to-people basis. According to the Coalition on Citizen Diplomacy, “citizen diplomacy is based on the concept that, in a democracy, individuals have the right, even the responsibility, to help shape foreign relations.”<sup>38</sup> It has been increasingly important to acknowledge the influence that everyday American citizens can have on a foreigner’s image of the U.S., and vice versa. It is the idea that everyone can be a “citizen diplomat”, working towards mutual understanding of cultural values and beliefs among people around the world.

Organizations such as Business for Diplomatic Action, Sister Cities International, and the Coalition for Citizen Diplomacy are just a few examples of this push towards increased citizen diplomacy. A National Summit on Citizen Diplomacy was held in Washington, DC from July 12-14, 2006, and it brought together the three organizations above, in addition to people from all over the United States to discuss ways in which citizen diplomacy can be further promoted. The National Summit was only one such initiative that resulted from the so-called “Wingspread Summit” held in 2004 that convened to discuss community-driven initiatives to promote international engagement. The summit

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<sup>37</sup> Henrikson, 8.

<sup>38</sup> Coalition for Citizen Diplomacy Website, (accessed November 9, 2006); available from [http://www.citizen-diplomacy.org/citizen\\_diplomacy.html](http://www.citizen-diplomacy.org/citizen_diplomacy.html).

also resulted in the recent creation of the Center for Citizen Diplomacy, headquartered in Des Moines, IA. This center was designed to “help bring resources and expertise to bear for all [informal and formal citizen diplomacy] organizations in order to identify, recognize and support best practices in the field.”<sup>39</sup>

#### *Business for Diplomatic Action (BDA)*

Business for Diplomatic Action was created to enlist the U.S. business community to counter anti-American sentiment around the world. Because anti-Americanism can have negative effects on U.S. products and services around the world, BDA has recognized the need to take action. BDA has identified three reasons, aside from U.S. foreign policy, that has led some people around the world to have a negative image of the U.S. BDA believes that these three reasons can be effectively addressed by businesses. They are:

1. The effects of globalization (i.e. they cannot take part in globalization because they lack the necessary skills, education or language)
2. The pervasiveness of American culture (i.e. national and local cultures are threatened by American culture and values)
3. The perceived collective personality of the U.S. and its citizens (i.e. arrogant, ignorant, lacking in humility, loud, and unwilling to listen)<sup>40</sup>

One of BDA’s initiatives targets American citizens who go abroad, whether college students, business travelers, or tourists. BDA has produced a booklet called the “World Citizens Guide” that provides tips on how to be a good “citizen diplomat” while abroad. While many of these tips may seem obvious, the reality is that stereotypes of Americans are based on some sort of reality. Sample tips are:<sup>41</sup>

- Think big. Act small. Be humble.

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<sup>39</sup> Coalition for Citizen Diplomacy Website

<sup>40</sup> Business for Diplomatic Action Website, (accessed December 15, 2006); available from <http://www.businessfordiplomaticaction.org/>.

<sup>41</sup> Tips and other information about the World Citizens Guide can be found at <http://www.worldcitizensguide.org/>.

- Live, eat and play local.
- Try the language.
- Be proud, not arrogant.

### *Sister Cities International*

Sister Cities International is a non-profit organization dedicated to creating and supporting partnerships between U.S. and international communities. The mission of Sister Cities International is to “Promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, & cooperation - one individual, one community at a time.”<sup>42</sup> By empowering municipal governments, local businesses and private citizens in the U.S. and abroad to foment linkages, Sister Cities International encourages international cooperation, cultural understanding, and economic development.

### ***Government Role in Context***

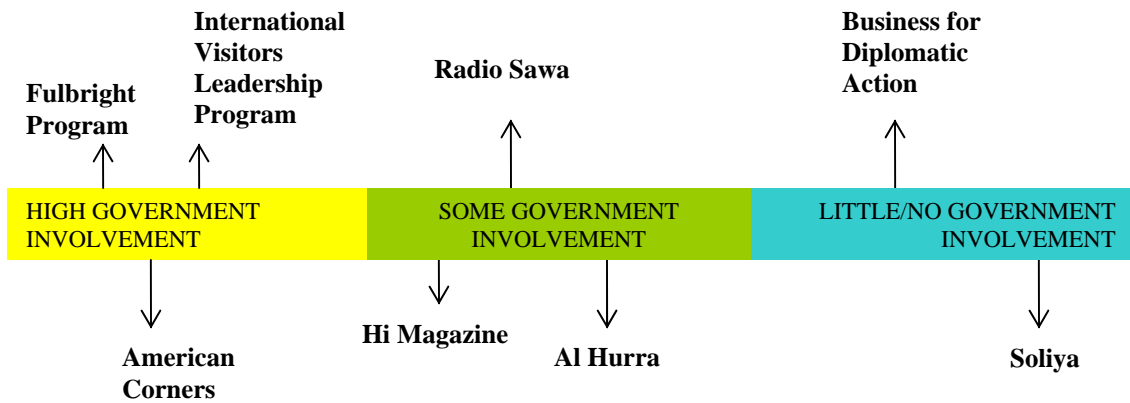
Definitions of public diplomacy vary considerably. The degree to which the government is involved in these initiatives also varies. In this study we will be analyzing programs that fall at different points on this spectrum. Although we will not analyze all the programs in the diagram below, they are placed there to provide a better comparison.

The spectrum looks something like this:

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<sup>42</sup> Sister Cities International Website, (accessed November 9, 2006); available from <http://www.sister-cities.org/sci/aboutsci/mission>.

**Figure 1: Spectrum of Government Role in Public Diplomacy**



In the following sections we will be looking at public diplomacy in all its roles: as propaganda, soft power, branding, and strategic communication.

### ***Public Diplomacy as Propaganda***

Edward Bernays argues that “the mechanism by which ideas are disseminated on a large scale is propaganda, in the broad sense of an organized effort to spread a particular belief or doctrine.” He continues by emphasizing that “whether, in any instance, propaganda is good or bad, depends upon the merit of the cause urged, and the correctness of the information published.”<sup>43</sup>

So is public diplomacy propaganda? If we take the above definition, then public diplomacy can safely be defined as a type of propaganda. The use of the term propaganda, while used in an increasingly negative way over the years, is actually a neutral tool when it is not used in a subversive way. When propaganda is based on truth

<sup>43</sup> Edward L. Bernays, *Propaganda*. (New York: IG Publishing, 2004), 48.

or fact, it can be called public diplomacy, and when it is based on false information it is referred to as disinformation.<sup>44</sup>

### ***Public Diplomacy as Soft Power***

Public diplomacy is, in effect, a tool used by governments to create soft power. Joseph Nye defines U.S. soft power as “the U.S. ability to attract others by the legitimacy of U.S. policies and the values that underlie them.”<sup>45</sup> While there are concrete programs and initiatives that make public diplomacy what it is, these programs create U.S. soft power, making the U.S. more attractive in the eyes of foreign audiences. Nye argues that many believe that soft power is difficult to use, namely because governments cannot control the outcome of its soft power. “Governments can control and change foreign policies. They can spend money on public diplomacy, broadcasting, and exchange programs. They can promote, but not control popular culture. In that sense, one of the key resources that produce soft power is largely independent of government control.”<sup>46</sup> Because it is hard to control all outcomes, it becomes much more important to bring other actors into the public diplomacy game. By getting private groups and individuals involved in the process, through initiatives such as Citizen Diplomacy, the U.S. image would not just hinge on government initiatives of sometimes dubious credibility.

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<sup>44</sup> Public Diplomacy Website, (accessed December 15, 2006); available from <http://www.publicdiplomacy.org/1.htm>.

<sup>45</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “The Decline of America’s Soft Power,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2004. (accessed December 3, 2006); available from Lexis Nexus,

<sup>46</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “Think Again: Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy*, March 1, 2006. (accessed December 15, 2006); available from <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=7059>.

## ***Public Diplomacy as Branding America***

One public diplomacy effort that was used to target Muslim audiences was the “Muslim Life in America” program which was initiated by former Under Secretary Charlotte Beers. Beers was a proponent of “branding” America, much like you would a toothpaste or soda. “Muslim Life in America” was a series of videos, along with a website, that portrayed how Muslims live in America, highlighting the commonalities shared between Muslims in America and Muslims everywhere. The problem was that it didn’t speak to the audiences the U.S. was targeting. According to Roger Cohen, its “main message was the extolling of American values and society. Our system is great, they seemed to say; you Muslims can live like us, too.” A basic marketing principle to “know your audience” was not adhered to. So to be effective in using marketing principles in public diplomacy you need to make sure your initiative is targeting the correct audience, therefore reflecting your audience’s central values and cultures.

Anna Tiedeman argues that marketing principles could be applied to public diplomacy if done correctly. However, she highlights two reasons why Beers’ branding strategy did not work. The first reason centers around Beers’ lack of credibility in Washington due to her use of marketing terminology when referring to public diplomacy, as well as her lack of experience working in government. The second reason Tiedeman cites is that the ways to measure the effectiveness of public diplomacy initiatives are very different than the measurements used in marketing strategies. “In branding, sales are the bottom line while the measurement of public diplomacy lies in public opinion.”<sup>47</sup> While it is true that

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<sup>47</sup>Anna Tiedeman, *Branding America: An Examination of U.S. Public Diplomacy Efforts After September 11, 2001*, The Fletcher School, 2005, 48.

measurement indicators are different for each, we will discuss below why public opinion is not necessarily the only measurement standard employed today to measure public diplomacy.

It is interesting to note that advertising agents were brought in to try and sell the image of America in the 1950s,<sup>48</sup> a harbinger to Beers branding efforts. There was little success as a result of this method both times it was used.

### ***Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy***

Bruce Gregory has delved into the complex world of strategic communication and public diplomacy in proclaiming that “this is not your grandparents’ public diplomacy.”<sup>49</sup> What Gregory is referring to is the expansion of what is deemed “public diplomacy” to include initiatives by entities other than the former USIA, State Department, and VOA. Today, the CIA, Department of Defense, and even USAID are involved in the overarching strategy of public diplomacy and how it relates to U.S. security.

Strategic communication and public diplomacy were linked together based on the need for a solid, coherent and consistent goal to protect America’s security post-9/11. It became apparent that not enough was being done to counter the effects of anti-American propaganda in the world. Gregory questions the terminology and asks whether public

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<sup>48</sup> Dizard, 51.

<sup>49</sup> Bruce Gregory, *Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication: Cultures, Firewalls, and Imported Norms*, Prepared for presentation at the American Political Science Association Conference on International Communication and Conflict, George Washington University and Georgetown University, August 31, 2005, 4. (accessed December 15, 2006); available from <http://www8.georgetown.edu/cct/apsa/papers/gregory.pdf>.

diplomacy and strategic communication should be used interchangeably. For example, he asks: if the military is involved in psychological warfare, is this considered public diplomacy because it is a branch of the government carrying this out? Rugh would argue that psychological warfare is not public diplomacy.<sup>50</sup>

Gregory concludes that “public diplomacy and strategic communication can be used analogously to describe a blend of activities by which governments, groups, and individuals *comprehend* attitudes, cultures, and mediated environments; *engage* in dialogue between people and institutions, *advise* political leaders on the public opinion implications of policy choices, and *influence* attitudes and behavior through strategies and means intended to persuade.”<sup>51</sup>

Gregory is correct to contend that the world has changed and public diplomacy must adapt to the current environment. However, in order to label the actions and programs carried out by the different agencies of the government as public diplomacy, transparency, accuracy and truthfulness must be adhered to. Thom Shanker captures this thought accurately when referring to the Pentagon’s work to promote America’s security interests. He says “the question for the Pentagon is its proper role in shaping perceptions abroad. Particularly in a modern world connected by satellite television and the Internet, misleading information and lies could easily migrate into American news outlets, as

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<sup>50</sup> William A. Rugh, *American Encounters with Arabs: The “Soft Power” of U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Middle East*, (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 150.

<sup>51</sup>Gregory , 39.

could the perception that false information is being spread by the Pentagon.”<sup>52</sup> This issue will be discussed further as part of the proposed criteria below.

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<sup>52</sup> Thom Shanker, “No Breach Seen in Work in Iraq on Propaganda,” *The New York Times*, March 22, 2006.

## CHAPTER 2: Existing Recommendations for U.S. Public Diplomacy Post 9/11

Three reports recently conducted to analyze U.S. public diplomacy strategy in the wake of 9/11 provide evidence of the need to promote and improve upon U.S. public diplomacy efforts. The first report was commissioned by the House Appropriations Committee, the second by the Council on Foreign Relations, and the third is a report by the General Accounting Office (GAO), released in May 2006. Each report outlines recommendations that are pertinent to having future success in the improvement of America's image abroad.

### *House Appropriations Committee Report*

The first report, commissioned by the House Appropriations Committee, was conducted by the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World. Chaired by Edward P. Djerejian, the report, issued in 2003, was entitled "Changing Minds, Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab & Muslim World." The recommendations of this report focus primarily on structural changes within the institutions of the U.S. government, financial and economic improvements, and programmatic changes.

Specific structural recommendations include:

- Increased cooperation between the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Department of Defense as the operations of both contain a strong public diplomacy element
- The creation of a permanent facility that would encourage the "study of Arab and Muslim societies and their relations with the United States and for enhancing intercultural and interfaith dialogue,"

- The creation of a Corporation for Public Diplomacy which would “facilitate funding for private and non-profit broadcasting and Internet applications.”<sup>53</sup>

Of special interest was the mention of the “Shared Values” initiative which sought to “bring the United States into the broad ‘conversation’ about America that was raging in the Arab and Muslim world.”<sup>54</sup> This initiative consisted of TV spots or mini-documentaries that highlighted the shared values among Arabs/Muslims and Americans. The report explains that many countries would not air these documentaries. The only conclusion given as to why this was the case was that the speed and timing of the whole process took longer than necessary.

Another improvement suggested by this report is the need for increased funding in all aspects of U.S. public diplomacy efforts. The committee argued for additional funding for staff who specialize in public diplomacy in the Middle East as current levels are “absurdly and dangerously inadequate.”<sup>55</sup> This funding would go towards language and cultural awareness improvements and information technology enhancements. Increased funding for AID scholarships and other opportunities for Arabs and Muslims to gain access to U.S. education is another goal mentioned. Even Secretary Rice acknowledged this lack of funding, further strengthening the importance of this issue in the quest to improve the U.S. image abroad.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Edward P. Djerejian, et al. “Changing Minds, Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab & Muslim World,” (2003), 69. (accessed December 15, 2006); available from <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/24882.pdf>.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>55</sup> Peter G. Peterson, et al. “Changing Minds, Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab & Muslim World,” (2003), 70. (accessed December 15, 2006); available from [http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/public\\_diplomacy.pdf](http://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/public_diplomacy.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> Brian Knowlton. “Rice admits U.S. fails to influence Muslims ; ‘Public diplomacy’ falls short, aide says.” *International Herald Tribune*, August 20, 2004, available from Lexis Nexis.

The programmatic changes offered in the report highlight the need for more Arab exposure to American culture, language, and values. Increased English language training, a rapid expansion of the American Corners program, and the creation of the American Knowledge Library were some of the recommendations. This report also suggests increased funding on the part of the U.S. government to universities in the Arab world.<sup>57</sup>

Professor Mohamed Kamal who teaches American political systems at Cairo University does not agree with this last suggestion. Kamal argues that "these centres should be funded by Arab donors... and should not be viewed as tools for American propaganda in the region. Enhancing America's image is for the US Embassy to handle, and not for centres like ours."<sup>58</sup> Kamal is worried about losing credibility among others in the region should his university accept American donations.<sup>59</sup> Credibility, as we shall see later in this analysis is a huge problem facing American efforts abroad, especially in the media sector.

Ali Fayad, head of the Beirut-based Consultative Centre for Studies and Documentation, contested the findings of the Advisory Group. He said that "there is an implicit assumption [running] through the report that the problem is diplomatic in nature rather

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<sup>57</sup> Djerejian, et al, 70-71.

<sup>58</sup> Omayma Abdel-Latif. "Selling America to the Arabs," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Issue 659, 9-15 October 2003, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2003/659/in5.htm>.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

than political. There is talk about the language, the performance, but [the report] fails to acknowledge the fact that the policies are the primary reason for Arab discontent."<sup>60</sup>

### ***Council on Foreign Relations Report***

A second report, commissioned in 2003 and sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations, focuses on the presentation of our policies to foreign audiences. "The United States must take the views and politics and cultural lenses of others into account as it formulates and communicates its policy in order to make that policy more effective and better understood and accepted."<sup>61</sup> While many of the recommendations are similar to those made by the House Appropriations Committee report, there are quite a few significant differences. Whereas the House Appropriations committee report focuses primarily on the structure of government institutions to accommodate a more effective public diplomacy strategy, the Council on Foreign Relations report focuses on the culture and values of others when disseminating information about U.S. policies around the world.

The Council on Foreign Relations report revealed that growing anti-American sentiment has a profound effect on our national security. Some shortcomings of U.S. public diplomacy included the underutilization of the private sector when promoting U.S. views, the low priority of public diplomacy over the years, and the lack of resources allocated to public diplomacy efforts. The United States must, therefore, act quickly and accordingly to reverse the damage that has been done to its image abroad.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Abdel-Latif, 2003.

<sup>61</sup> Peterson, et al, 4.

<sup>62</sup> Peterson, et al, 6.

The recommendations of this task force that are most compelling are the following:<sup>63</sup>

*1) Improve U.S. capacity to “listen” to foreign publics*

More public opinion polling is necessary to understand the reaction to U.S. foreign policy making, and U.S. policies should be tied to American culture and values so that others have a better sense of why the U.S. is promoting these policies. The task force also recommends that public diplomacy officials be included in foreign policy making.

*2) Bridge the gap between public and private sector initiatives by creating an independent, not-for-profit “Corporation for Public Diplomacy”*

This is similar to the corporation suggested by the House Appropriations Committee report. This organization, based off of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, would be important because it would be independent from political pressures. According to the task force, the Corporation would probably attract media and personalities that would not respond as well to government initiatives. The programs and organizations funded by the Corporation would carry more credibility than U.S. government-sponsored efforts in the target region. If the messages are coming from a private organization, people will be less likely to label it as simply U.S. propaganda.

*3) Strengthen relationships between the U.S. government and foreign journalists*

This suggestion would not only show Arab countries that their journalists are valued by the U.S., but this would also increase the visibility of our representatives on foreign media outlets. It could be more beneficial to get our representatives on the foreign media

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<sup>63</sup> Peterson, et al, 8-16.

sources which are more popular among Arabs than to have a station of our own which competes with them.<sup>64</sup>

- 4) *Support voices of moderation, with particular attention over the longer term to the young, in order to empower them to engage in effective debate through means available or created in their societies*

Changing perceptions can most easily be accomplished in youth, and the Council on Foreign Relations task force understands this. The views of America that youth carry through their lives will eventually carry over into their adult careers – in some cases into political and governmental careers. The idea here is to encourage and strengthen the voices of the moderates in the Islamic world so that youths pay attention to them. The power and sway of Islamic fundamentalists overpowers these moderate voices too much today, but they must be heard.

- 5) *Create bridges between U.S. society and others using common cultural pursuits in every genre of art, music, theatre, religion, and academia*

The goal of this recommendation is to help foster respect for American values and cultures through an alternative source of information. The task force suggests that some of these programs, such as art exhibits and American libraries, could be conducted through the U.S. embassies, and others can be conducted through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academic institutions such as healthcare organizations.

While both reports offer highly valuable suggestions as to how we should proceed in our public diplomacy efforts abroad, the key to improving our image abroad can be found in the Council on Foreign Relations report. More specifically, the recommendations made

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<sup>64</sup> William A. Rugh. "An American View of the Arab Media." A lecture given at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, October 30 2004, notes by author.

to enhance our knowledge of Arab/Islamic culture and values will help us more than concentrating too much on exporting our culture abroad. This is not to say that the efforts we make to export our culture and values are futile – they must be continued - but the severe lack in our understanding of Arab culture and values is hindering our progress in having them understand us.

### ***GAO Report on Public Diplomacy***

The most recent report was conducted by the General Accounting Office (GAO) in May 2006. The report highlights three main challenges to the Department of State’s public diplomacy programs in the Middle East.

#### *1) State Devotes Significant Public Diplomacy Resources to the Muslim World but Programs Generally Remain the Same*

While funding has increased for the regions of the world where there are significant Muslim populations, there has not been a marked increase in the number of personnel. In addition, many of the programs initiated by the Department of State in the region have not been successful. One example mentioned in the report is the Shared Values Initiative which was created to highlight similarities between Americans and Muslims. These included television campaigns, brochures and speaker tours. Part of the problem with this initiative was its perception as a propaganda piece and the fact that it wasn’t shown in some countries due to political reasons.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, 12.

2) *Post Program Planning and Evaluation Efforts Lack Appropriate Guidance, but Improvements are Planned*

GAO found that public diplomacy initiatives lacked “strategic planning elements” such as “core messages and themes, target audience segmentation and analysis, details on program strategies and tactics, in-depth research and evaluation to inform strategic communication decisions, and a fully developed communications plan to tie everything together.”<sup>66</sup> A more private sector communications strategy would enable the State Department to coordinate messages or themes abroad while tailoring these messages to well-defined target audiences.

The bottom line is that in order to conduct more effective public diplomacy programs, the GAO suggests that the Department of State carry out more audience research (on audience attitudes, beliefs, social, economic, political and military environments, local media and communication options).<sup>67</sup> The problem is that the posts don’t have the budget, or the time, to carry out this research.

The IIP Bureau has moved on two of the GAO suggestions in 2006. The first response to these suggestions was to develop a country-specific pilot for conducting market research on target audiences in the Middle East. The hope is that this pilot can be replicated and used as a framework for conducting additional audience research in other countries of interest. In fact, before USIA had been integrated into the Department of State in 1999, USIA had developed country plans, which, according to some, were far superior to the

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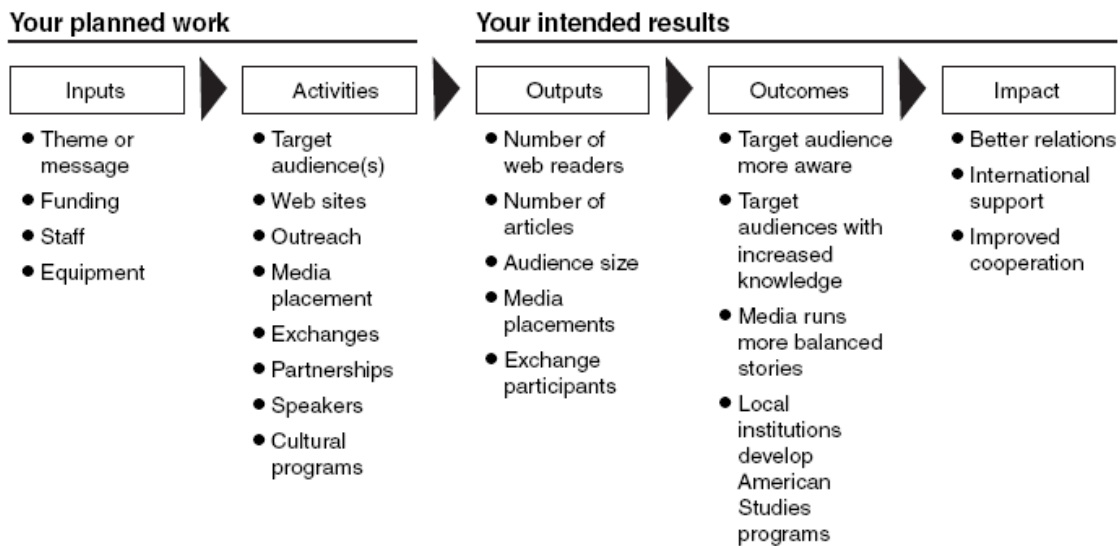
<sup>66</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, 18.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 24-25.

communication plans developed by the posts now.<sup>68</sup> The second response by IIP involves the Media Matrix – a database containing detailed information on major media outlets in the world. Most research conducted for the Media Matrix was transferred from the post to IIP to free up post personnel for more pressing tasks. It is expected that the database, once complete, can be a user-friendly tool for post personnel to use when formulating its strategic communication and public diplomacy initiatives.

A final point in this section highlights a logic model that should be implemented as a performance measurement. The logic model, as found in the GAO report, follows:

**Figure 4: Logic Model for State Public Diplomacy Programs**



Source: State Department.

### 3) *Security and Staffing Pose Challenges to Public Diplomacy Efforts in the Muslim World*

One of the most prominent issues with U.S. public diplomacy is its balance between security and public outreach programs. As security situations have gotten worse for U.S.

<sup>68</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, 26.

personnel in some posts around the world, the U.S. response has naturally been to build barricades to hide behind. However, this has had a great impact on the quality and quantity of public outreach that is carried out by U.S. embassy or consulate personnel.

The GAO report mentions that some “public diplomacy programs have had to limit their publicity to reduce the risk of becoming a target.”<sup>69</sup> By keeping a low profile it makes it increasingly difficult to reach the masses. This is one of the reasons the American Corners program, mentioned in Chapter 1, was created. While there is disagreement over how effective the American Corners program will be (evaluation results pending)<sup>70</sup>, it is a start, and perhaps the only alternative the State Department has at this time, to attempt to mimic what the American Libraries programs provided in the past.

Another issue facing the U.S. is that it still lacks sufficient number of staff at each post to carry out effective outreach programming. The GAO report states that even though there has been increased funding towards public diplomacy, the lack of staff has made it hard to utilize the funds effectively. In addition, post personnel spend a great deal of time on administrative tasks such as budget, internal reporting and personnel, that they don’t have as much time to spend on public diplomacy initiatives.<sup>71</sup> This is also hindered by language deficiencies and shortened tours of duty.

Taking the above into account, the report’s final recommendations for U.S. public diplomacy programming in the Middle East are:

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<sup>69</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, 32.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>71</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, 35.

1. Implement guidance for a public diplomacy strategy that models itself on private sector best practices
2. Develop a country-level communication plan that could be adapted for local use by posts
3. Create a systematic mechanism for sharing best practices data to address long-standing program challenges

Many of these recommendations have been taken into consideration when forming the criteria laid out in Chapter 4 of this paper. Next we take a look at current methods used to measure U.S. public diplomacy.

## **CHAPTER 3: Current Methods to Measure the Effectiveness of U.S. Public Diplomacy Programs**

There are various methods used to gauge the success of U.S. public diplomacy programs. While international polls and surveys are most prominently mentioned in the media, there are other ways in which the U.S. government collects information about its programs. These additional methods are anecdotal evidence, databases, program evaluations and specific indicators used by the BBG for radio and television. This chapter argues that the methods, when taken collectively, are valuable in measuring the effectiveness of public diplomacy.

### ***Anecdotal Evidence***

While anecdotal evidence is very qualitative in nature, this is not a reason to discount the importance of this type of measurement. For example, anecdotal evidence can provide information on how a lecture by a visiting scholar was received, why people, in general, watch Al-Hurra or Radio Sawa, or how foreign affairs officers view current U.S. public diplomacy initiatives. This can give a good feel for the situation, but cannot give a concrete answer to questions relating to effectiveness. So anecdotal evidence needs to be considered in conjunction with other forms of measurements.

### ***Polls/Surveys***

Joseph Nye counters the myth that soft power cannot be measured. Nye suggests that soft power, or the “cultural, communications and diplomatic resources that might produce soft power” can be measured and compared. He mentions public opinion polls as an

example of how soft power can be measured.<sup>72</sup> However, while public opinion polls can show a country's attractability ratings over time, it is very difficult to determine which of the U.S. efforts lead to these ratings. Even if you could determine that the ratings are due to public diplomacy efforts, is it possible to determine which of the U.S. efforts (public diplomacy, policy changes, etc.) has the most impact from public opinion polls? To date, there are no formal regression analyses available to this author's knowledge which reflect public diplomacy's effect on the U.S. image.

Some public affairs officers (PAO) feel that more public opinion poll research is necessary to help determine public diplomacy effectiveness. However, at the same time, only 46% of PAOs surveyed said that they actually use the poll data. And when it comes to Broadcasting Board of Governors survey data, 91% of those surveyed said they "rarely, if ever, receive such data."<sup>73</sup> The GAO Report above mentioned that State Department officials said that these reports are disseminated but not always to the correct public affairs officers overseas. The problem is not with the surveys being done, but with the dissemination of this data. This is one area that can easily be remedied.

### ***Databases***

Another way that public diplomacy is measured is by using databases to collect data on certain initiatives. One such database holds information about events that the embassies organize and carry out. The event is rated based on attendance and perceived success.

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<sup>72</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Think Again: Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, March 1, 2006.

<sup>73</sup> U.S. General Accounting Office, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Expands Efforts but Faces Significant Challenges*, Report to the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives. September 2003, 22-23. (accessed December 15, 2006); available from <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d03951.pdf>.

The problem with this type of measurement is two-fold: first, not all events that are carried out in the field are submitted to Washington, and second, embassies are more likely to send information on successful events, rather than on unsuccessful events. The importance of getting information on unsuccessful events is that one could then determine what types of programs may need to be discontinued at a specific post or even at the country level. This database, which is housed in the International Information Programs (IIP) Bureau at the State Department, is currently undergoing evaluation. The database is not very user friendly, and while useful information is stored in it, the database does not allow for the easy collection of data that would be most helpful.

### ***Program Evaluations***

A third way that public diplomacy program effectiveness is being measured is through professional evaluations of the programs. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) consistently evaluates their programs, providing links to completed evaluations as well as a list of evaluations in progress on its website. For example, the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) was evaluated in 2004-2005. The following results were found, and they are a good indication of what types of criteria delineate a successful program at ECA:<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *International Visitor Leadership Program Outcome Assessment*, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs., February 7, 2006. (accessed December 15, 2006); available at <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/evaluations/onepaggers/ivlprogram.pdf>.

- **Serving the National Interest and Promoting Mutual Understanding**
  - 97% of IVLP alumni respondents agreed that the program helps achieve the legislative goals of increasing mutual understanding between Americans and people of other countries, and developing friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and other countries.
  - 91% have communicated more accurate information about the United States to other people in their home country based on the knowledge they gained during their IVLP experience in the United States.
  - 77% felt their IVLP exchange experience increased their willingness to trust Americans to a great or moderate extent, while 71% agreed that the United States is a trustworthy partner for their country.
  - Alumni gained a more favorable view of Americans (73%) and the U.S. government (65%) as a result of their program.
- **Support for Democratic Principles and Values**
  - IVLP alumni respondents overwhelmingly agreed with statements on democratic values: citizens should have equal rights (99%); rule of law is fundamental to democracy (99%); free and fair elections are cornerstones of democracy (98%); individuals and organizations have the right to free speech (97%); and independent media is important (95%).
- **Professional Learning and Increased Understanding of the United States**
  - 98% of respondents felt their IVLP exchange experience enhanced their knowledge of their IVLP project theme.
  - The IVLP increased respondents' understanding of the United States (88%) and Americans (86%), in general; U.S. government institutions (76%); daily life in the United States (74%); and U.S. values and culture (71%).
- **Institutional Changes**
  - Respondents initiated work-related changes based on knowledge gained during the IVLP experience: introduced new ideas and knowledge (64%) and new policies or procedures (53%); and founded an NGO or other organization (22%).
- **Program Satisfaction**
  - 98% of respondents felt their IVLP experience to be moderately (34%) or very (64%) valuable for their professional life.
  - Over 90% felt satisfied with the program's administration, experiences, and relevance to their professional development.

Source: State Department

Two other programs, mentioned in Chapter 1, that are currently being evaluated by ECA are the YES and PLUS programs. The PLUS program expects the results for their evaluation due out in 2008.

In 2006, there were two major IIP evaluations that were initiated. One was for Hi Magazine and the other was for the American Corners Program. The Hi Magazine evaluation, as well as the Soliya Connect Program evaluation, will be discussed in the case studies chapter of this analysis as it was completed this year. The American Corners Program evaluation has not been completed as of this date.

Program Evaluations can be very useful when measuring the success of a program. The key is to evaluate at the onset of the program to create a benchmark, as well as continuing

to evaluate participants, even long after the program has ended. This is the best way to ensure long-term effectiveness of the program goals.

### ***Broadcasting Board of Governors' Measurements***

The most thorough findings on public diplomacy measures can be found in the Broadcasting Board of Governors' five year plan (2002-2007).<sup>75</sup> While these measures are specific to the radio and television aspects of public diplomacy, they present a good indicator for how this type of programming is being measured.

The BBG relies on eleven types of indicators to measure the success of its programming.

These indicators are:

1. Overall weekly audiences
2. Program quality
3. Signal strength
4. Satellite network performance index
5. Affiliations
6. Internet usage
7. Transmission network consumable expense
8. Target audience
9. Cost per listener (or audience head)
10. Awareness
11. Verification and validation of indicators

#### Overall Weekly Audiences

The BBG uses a listening standard to determine its regular weekly listeners. A regular listener is assumed to be someone who listens at least once a week. While this measurement was easy to glean in the past, it has proved to be a challenge to not duplicate listeners. Because the BBG relies on re-broadcasts from affiliate stations, for example those done on FM stations, it has proven harder to get an accurate measure of

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<sup>75</sup> *Marrying the Mission to the Market: Strategic Plan, 2002-2007*, Broadcasting Board of Governors, (accessed December 15, 2006); available from [http://www.bbg.gov/reports/BBG\\_Strategic\\_Plan.pdf](http://www.bbg.gov/reports/BBG_Strategic_Plan.pdf).

listeners. While radio and television have developed certain standards for measuring audiences, there is yet to be a similar standard set for internet viewership.

#### Program Quality

In 2001 the BBG started using an outside research provider to measure a program's quality based on its content and presentation criteria. These criteria apply to various types of media and methods of delivery, ensuring a more objective view when determining the quality of the program.

#### Signal Strength

This is self-explanatory – “While signal delivery lends itself well to GPRA measurement, since monitoring data is regularly collected, U.S. international broadcasting continues to examine this approach with an eye to improving its accuracy, sensitivity and usefulness as an analytical tool.”

#### Satellite Network Performance Index

This index measures how well the satellite network accesses the population of TV households.

#### Affiliations

This index measures the types of affiliations on which U.S. international broadcasting programs are re-broadcasted. This index also measures the competitiveness, location, and censorship rating of the affiliated media.

#### Internet Usage

As this mode of U.S. international broadcasting grows, the BBG will rely on “scientific sampling of populations using survey research” rather than page views and site hits to measure this index.

#### Transmission Network Consumable Expense

This expense reflects the “total annual cost of power and parts to operate the transmitters in the network around the world”

#### Target Audiences

By finding out the listening rate of a particular subgroup, the BBG can better determine what type of programming suits this subgroups’ needs and expectations. This helps make the programming more effective and ensures better listenership.

#### Cost Per Listener

By dividing the total cost of creating and delivering programs by the regular weekly audience, the BBG can determine which programs are more attractive to the audience the program reaches. Should the cost be high, this could be an indicator that the programming is not in line with what the audience expects, or that the programming is not reaching the intended audience due to poor delivery systems or government jamming for example.

#### Awareness

The awareness index is based on surveys conducted by the BBG annually to determine if the target audiences have actually heard of the programming being offered. Should there be a low awareness level, increased advertising would be necessary.

#### Verification and Validation of Indicators

To ensure the validity of the above measurements, the BBG uses third-party research providers. There was no indication in this report which outside parties measure the effectiveness of Radio Sawa and Al Hurra, however.

Having discussed the major recommendations given for U.S. public diplomacy as well as the types of measurements currently in existence, the proposed criteria for U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East will be introduced next.

## CHAPTER 4: Proposed Criteria

In coming up with the following criteria, it was necessary to find a common link between past and present public diplomacy initiatives, and expert recommendations post-9/11.

The post-9/11 environment was taken into account in establishing these criteria because the U.S. faces a very different threat than it did during the Cold War when public diplomacy was at its peak. While these criteria were made with Middle East public diplomacy in mind, many, if not all, of these criteria could be applied to other regions of the world as well. The criteria are:

- ❖ *Criterion 1: Long term effectiveness*
- ❖ *Criterion 2: Targets young audiences*
- ❖ *Criterion 3: Empowers its target audience*
- ❖ *Criterion 4: Encourages understanding through American outreach programs and cross-cultural exchanges*
- ❖ *Criterion 5: Explains our policies, values and culture effectively, using accurate and reliable information transmitted transparently.*

### ***Criterion 1: Long term effectiveness***

One of the current debates concerning public diplomacy is whether public diplomacy efforts should focus on long term or short term goals. William Rugh argues that public diplomacy goals are long term goals, having more to do with cultural exchanges and relationship building. Information dissemination is also part of public diplomacy, mainly as a short term effort. This needs to be maintained as it is crucial when explaining U.S. policies. However, building relationships has much more long lasting effects. So the need is not to get rid of the short-term tools of public diplomacy, but to expand upon the

long-term efforts.<sup>76</sup> Jan Melissen supports this by asserting that “public diplomacy builds on trust and credibility, and it often works best with a long horizon.”<sup>77</sup>

The Coalition for Citizen Diplomacy also promotes long term, rather than short term changes that public diplomacy can facilitate. One of their goals is to “encourage Congress to reaffirm the Charter mandating that U.S. Government sponsored exchanges operate in the long-term best interests of the United States and remain separate from the short-term foreign policy objectives of a particular administration.”<sup>78</sup> However, Secretary Rice’s “transformational diplomacy” initiative may end up hurting this long-term effectiveness.

### Transformational Diplomacy

The transformational diplomacy policies that are going into effect in some ways contradict this long-term objective. One example is that more Foreign Service Officers will be placed in hardship positions, which entails moving them in and out of these dangerous places after one year or so. The reason for this is that security is a major factor in designating a post as a hardship post. This holds true especially in the Muslim world where 80% of posts have a “high” or “critical” terrorist threat rating.<sup>79</sup> Therefore tours of duties in these posts tend to be short, placing a further burden on the post itself. It is hard to see how good relationships can be formed within a year, especially having

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<sup>76</sup> Rugh, 2006, 145, 159, 173.

<sup>77</sup> Jan Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 15.

<sup>78</sup> Coalition for Citizen Diplomacy Website, [http://www.citizen-diplomacy.org/citizen\\_diplomacy.html](http://www.citizen-diplomacy.org/citizen_diplomacy.html), (Accessed November 9, 2006).

<sup>79</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, 30.

someone else come in to take over where the other left off. It is in these places that a true presence needs to be established. “Shorter tours contribute to insufficient language skills and limit officers’ ability to cultivate personal relationships, which...are vital to understanding Arabs and Muslims.”<sup>80</sup> Changing the personnel around so frequently could hardly have a positive effect on public diplomacy goals. As is mentioned many times, building relationships is perhaps the single most important outcome of a good public diplomacy program.

Rice’s transformational diplomacy does, however, have some positive aspects to it. A key part is the creation of the following:

- Regional public diplomacy center – the goal of this is to put more Arabic speaking experts on Arab media outlets such as Al Jazeera in order to tell America’s story.
- American Presence Post – diplomats will move out of the big cities to live in emerging communities to represent America.
- Virtual Presence Post – internet site that allows young people to engage online with American diplomats that may be located far away.

One of the most important things in transformational diplomacy is that Rice wants Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) to reach out more to the local publics instead of just to government officials. This seems like a step in the right direction, and goes along with initiatives that target young people in the Middle East, the next criterion.

### ***Criterion 2: Targets young audiences***

A great deal of public diplomacy effort focuses on young people in the Middle East, and for good reason. As of June 2003, youths make up the majority of the Middle East;

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<sup>80</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, 36.

roughly 50-60% of the population is under 24.<sup>81</sup> It is wise to target this age group, as it is the young who can easily be influenced by terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda. However, it is also the young people who will become leaders in the future, and who will teach their children and fellow citizens the beliefs they hold true and the political values they are willing to fight for.

Walter Lippman referred to a *pseudo-environment*, or the environment that every person creates due to past experience or lack of experience with events or people in the world.<sup>82</sup> And people are more likely to act on their perceptions formed in their pseudo-environments, and to use these perceptions in the “real world.” If the U.S. can influence these youth, in effect altering their pseudo-environment by building upon shared values of freedom and tolerance, a whole generation could be positively affected. While targeting youth may not always be the most effective criteria for public diplomacy due to the possibility of changing demographics, this current trend presents the U.S. with a great opportunity.

This is an extremely important criterion for public diplomacy. William Rugh, a critic of Radio Sawa, says that the cancellation of VOA Arabic Service focuses away from policy makers and other adults who are still essential target audience members.<sup>83</sup> VOA Arabic Service does have its place in the Arab world, but the greatest emphasis of U.S. public

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<sup>81</sup> Graham E. Fuller. “The Youth Factor: The New Demographics of the Middle East and the Implications for U.S. Policy” *U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, Analysis Paper #3*, The Brookings Institute, June, 2003, (accessed December 21, 2005); available from <http://www.brookings.edu/fp/saban/analysis/fuller20030601.htm>.

<sup>82</sup> Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion*, (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 10.

<sup>83</sup> Rugh, 2006, 161.

diplomacy needs to be on younger audiences. Because VOA Arabic listenership in the Middle East mostly remained around 2%, it doesn't make sense to continue spending money on reaching these older audiences.<sup>84</sup> While older audiences and policymakers are important to target, regular diplomatic channels target policymakers already.

### ***Criterion 3: Empowers its target audience***

One of the most important aspects of public diplomacy is the ability to empower its audience. Empowerment involves supporting those that share American values in the hopes that they too, will help foster the spirit of participation. The World Bank defines empowerment as:

*The increased focus on empowerment rests on the belief that transferring certain decisions from public bureaucracies and into the hands of communities or groups of beneficiaries will help services work better and institutions more accountable.*<sup>85</sup>

While development is not public diplomacy (disregarding the fact that USAID has been absorbed into the State Department), the idea of empowerment remains the same.

Empowerment was a key recommendation made by the public diplomacy task force sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations. The task force emphasized the need to “support voices of moderation, with particular attention over the longer term to the young, in order to empower them to engage in effective debate through means available or created in their societies.”<sup>86</sup> David Hoffman reiterated the importance of empowerment by saying that “the best way for Washington to reverse the tide in the

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<sup>84</sup> Steven Alan Honley, “The ABC’s of U.S. Overseas Broadcasting”, *Foreign Service Journal*, January 2004, 18. (accessed December 2, 2006); available from <http://www.afsa.org/fsj/jan04/honley.pdf>.

<sup>85</sup> The World Bank. *2004 Annual Review of Development Effectiveness: The World Bank’s Contribution to Poverty Reduction*, pg. 43. (accessed December 15, 2006); available from <http://www.worldbank.org/ieg/arde/2004/>.

<sup>86</sup> Peterson, et al.

propaganda war is to support those forces in the Muslim community that are struggling to create modern democracies and institutionalize the rule of law.”<sup>87</sup> It is not only important that we give people information about U.S. policies, but also about what makes a successful civil society – to empower the Arab moderates to help them make changes.

Robert Satloff argues that information is what is lacking in empowering those that would work towards our benefit. Information regarding terrorist organizations, Islamist organizations and the funding sources of these groups should be provided to the general public so that “the anti-Islamist activists and organizations through an aggressive imaginative outreach campaign, would be a forceful stimulation to action.” He further states that “information is power, and this sort of information would help empower anti-Islamist Muslims who are concerned about the direction of their own countries and communities to take matters into their own hands.”<sup>88</sup>

#### ***Criterion 4: Encourages understanding through American outreach programs and cross-cultural exchanges***

More money is spent on exchange programs than on any other public diplomacy initiative in the United States. Much of the anecdotal evidence points to the successes of exchange programs in furthering the interests of the United States by fostering relationship-building and mutual understanding among those that participate in these programs.

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<sup>87</sup> David Hoffman, “Beyond Public Diplomacy,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2002.

<sup>88</sup> Robert Satloff, *The Battle of Ideas in the War on Terror*, (Washington: The Washington Institute of Near East Policy, 2004), 65.

There are also secondary effects that derive from meeting the goals of these programs which can lead to long-term benefits. The results of these goals also serve to:

- Reduce tensions and negative attitudes towards the U.S., especially in Muslim countries
- Eliminate the fertile ground that terrorist recruiters exploit
- Influence the next generation of leaders
- Communicate freedom and democracy, justice and opportunity, diversity and tolerance
- Combat anti-Americanism and misperceptions that threaten U.S. security
- Open doors between American diplomats and host countries to improve understanding of U.S. policies<sup>89</sup>

One of the most important lessons learned post-9/11 is that Americans were not aware of the growing anti-Americanism in the world. Part of this is due to decreased international news coverage in the U.S. press, as well as minimal attention paid to language training and global cultural understanding in America. Programs such as Fulbright and Visiting Scholars pave the way for relationship building and education, not just bringing foreigners to America, but also by sending Americans abroad. Other programs designed to bridge the culture gap by bringing Americans and non-Americans together provide excellent opportunities to further this goal.

While educating America isn't part of what traditional public diplomacy entails, this is extremely important when trying to become attractive to foreign audiences. By setting an example, that we are intent on learning about others, this may help dispel some of the negative feelings about America. Helle Dale suggests changing the Smith Mundt Act, a rather contentious move, to address this issue.

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<sup>89</sup> Gregory, 14-15.

*In the spirit of initiating a dialogue with the foreign audience, an alternative, which would require already mentioned changes in the Smith–Mundt Act, would be to broadcast certain programs to the American audience. This sign of cultural exchange would be a message to the foreign audience that the dialogue is also about us trying to understand them.<sup>90</sup>*

The Smith Mundt Act prevents any U.S. public diplomacy initiative from being dispersed in the U.S. The Smith-Mundt Act was originally passed to keep U.S. public diplomacy initiatives from swaying U.S. public opinion. But with the internet expanding and other communication methods becoming more available, this may be more difficult to enforce. In fact, one can easily view the U.S. International Information Program’s USINFO site which provides information about the United States to foreign publics on the internet. While it may be unlawful to openly advertise the website address in the U.S., it is easily accessible to anyone with an internet connection.

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<sup>90</sup> Helle C. Dale, “Al Hurra Television and Lessons for U.S. Public Diplomacy,” Heritage Lecture # 909, The Heritage Foundation, November 18, 2005. (accessed December 15, 2006); available from <http://www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/Iraq/hl909.cfm>.

***Criterion 5: Explains our policies, values and culture effectively, using accurate and reliable information transmitted transparently.***

Explaining American policies is another goal of public diplomacy. However, the U.S. government needs to keep in mind that explaining policies is not effective in itself. Time and again polls have shown that in the Middle East the problem with America is not its people but its policies. The GAO report discussed in Chapter 2 supports these results. They state that “all our panelists agreed that U.S. foreign policy is the major root cause behind anti-American sentiments among Muslim population and that this point needs to be better researched, absorbed, and acted upon by government officials.”<sup>91</sup>

The publics in this region do know what America’s policies are, and even if they are better explained to them (most likely from an American point of view), they will not change their opinions. It is unlikely that the U.S. will change its policies according to the whim of foreign publics, nor should they. Therefore the most important strategy is to maintain open lines of communication between the U.S. and foreign audiences in which U.S. policies can be clearly explained and debated. In addition, American culture and values needs to continue to be expressed not only through public diplomacy initiatives, but also through the policies themselves.

This final criterion also ensures that public diplomacy efforts are transparent as far as funding, accuracy, reliability and purpose is concerned:

- The end result of any public diplomacy initiative should include the dissemination of truthful and accurate information

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<sup>91</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, 25.

- The initiative should be designed to inform, not to influence
- The source of the funding should be provided in a clear manner
- The source should be perceived as reliable in the eyes of the target audience

### Dissemination of Truthful and Accurate Information

The first guideline is important as it sets the standard for all information that is transmitted to the intended audience. When a government intends to use the media to get its message across, it must keep in mind that in order to retain any credibility, the information that is provided must be accurate. The information should be based on fact, and not on conjecture, and especially not on any politically-driven agenda.

### Inform, Not Influence

The second guideline addresses the intent of the message being sent to the audience. It is important that the intent is to inform, and not to influence. Should the audience view the message as propaganda, the government in question stands to lose some, if not all, credibility.

The idea behind U.S. public diplomacy, for example, is to share with the world American values, such as freedom and democracy. These values encompass the idea that there are many voices in America, each having the intrinsic right to express their opinion. Keeping this in mind, the best way to promote this message is to include in any initiative all sides of a story, not just one. By showing that America values these differing viewpoints while assuring the accuracy in what is presented, there is a greater likelihood that the audience will feel informed rather than influenced towards any particular viewpoint.

### Clear Source of Funding

The third guideline ensures that the intended audience is well aware of who is behind the message and the source of funding. There have been a few initiatives where this information has been omitted, blatantly falsified, or deceptively hidden.

While Al Hurra and Radio Sawa are not explicit in their American sponsorship (such as the obviously American Voice of America), it is still well-known that America sponsors them and their content, especially since each one advertises the other during air time.

It is quite another matter when a government creates a media source aimed at a foreign audience, and then obscures the fact that it is government-sponsored. The website “Magharebia: The News & Views of the Maghreb” is one such site. This website is targeted at foreign audiences interested in the culture, politics, and news from the Maghreb region. The mission of the site is “to offer accurate, balanced and forward-looking coverage of developments in the Maghreb,”<sup>92</sup> (this goal is quite similar to that of Al Hurra, Voice of America, and Radio Sawa). When the website first appeared, it was not easy to find out who was behind it. In order to find out that this site was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense, one had to click on a tiny link at the bottom of the page entitled “Disclaimer.” It is interesting to note that, today, the “Disclaimer” link appears in a much more noticeable location, perhaps because there was some confusion as to who sponsored this site.

### Reliability

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<sup>92</sup> Magharebia Website. (accessed December 15, 2006); available from [www.magharebia.com](http://www.magharebia.com).

The final guideline determines how the audience is receiving the message. In this day and age, there are multiple sources of news, so audiences have a wide range of media sources to tune in to. This competitive atmosphere provides checks and balances to any one news source. If the audience finds a government-sponsored news source to be valid and reliable, that same news source can also be considered legitimate.

In order to analyze the effectiveness of public diplomacy initiatives by the above criteria, four case studies will be examined. The first three initiatives to be examined will be U.S. government-sponsored media outlets, Radio Sawa and Al Hurra, and Hi Magazine. The final program to be looked at is the Connect Program of Soliya, a non-governmental organization. Each initiative will be analyzed using the criteria above in order to determine its effectiveness as a tool of public diplomacy.

## CHAPTER 5: Case Studies

In this section, four initiatives will be analyzed to see how they fit the proposed criteria set out above. First, we will look at three U.S. government approaches to reaching out to the public in the Middle East: Al Hurra, Radio Sawa, and Hi Magazine. Finally we will look at the efforts of Soliya, an example of a U.S.-based non-governmental organization that practices citizen diplomacy.

There have been many public diplomacy efforts by the United States with specific use of the media in the Middle East. Because the media is so prominent in the lives of people all over world, special attention (and much funding) was given to the bolstering of this avenue of diplomacy. The two most prominent U.S. government-backed media sources utilized in U.S. public diplomacy initiatives are Al Hurra (satellite television source), and Radio Sawa (radio source).

While there is no poll that focuses solely on Arab views of the U.S. efforts of public diplomacy in the region, the content of select news sources which mention these efforts provide a good indication as to how they are received in the Arab world. In addition, the polls mentioned take into account Arab media viewing habits, and attitudes towards the U.S., including views on U.S. culture and values as well as U.S. foreign policy.

### *Al Hurra*

When referring to satellite television, the U.S. government argues that the primary news outlets in the Arab world only show a narrow view of events and their broadcasts are

anti-American in nature.<sup>93</sup> Professor Shibley Telhami, the Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland, contests the U.S. argument that Arab media is promoting anti-American sentiments. “It is clear that on the opinion side the media has only a marginal impact...the media is reflecting public opinion.”<sup>94</sup>

A survey conducted in May 2004<sup>95</sup> concluded that the two most popular stations in Jordan, UAE and Morocco were Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya; in Saudi Arabia, Al Jazeera and Abu Dhabi TV; and in Lebanon, Al Jazeera and LBC. The U.S. decided it was necessary to compete with these news outlets and created Al Hurra, a government-funded satellite television station aimed at providing an alternate view in the Arab world.

Al Hurra, initiated by the Broadcasting Board of Governors and operated by the Middle East Television Network, Inc., was launched on February 14, 2004. Al Hurra broadcasts out of Springfield, Virginia, 24 hours a day, providing news and information in Arabic to 22 countries in the Arab world. Al Hurra has \$70 million in funding, compared to about \$120 million that Al Jazeera receives (mostly from the Qatari government). Al Hurra operates two separate television stations – Al Hurra and Al Hurra Iraq.<sup>96</sup> According to Harold Pachios, Chair of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, “this

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93 Samia Nakhoul. “Al-Jazeera Unveils Ethics Code to Answer Critics,” *Washington Post*, July 13, 2004.

94 Benjamin Duncan. “Poll reveals Arabs’ true feelings on US,” *Al Jazeera.net*, July 26, 2004. (accessed December 15, 2006); available from <http://english.aljazeera.net/News/archive/archive?ArchiveId=5401>.

95 *Arab Attitudes Towards Political and Social Issues, Foreign Policy and the Media*. A Public Opinion Poll by the Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland/Zogby International, May 2004.

96 *The Broadcasting Board of Governors and Al-Hurra Television*, A Hearing of the Oversight and the Investigations Subcommittee of the House International Relations Committee, November 2005, pg 21.

network will help balance viewpoints in the region by providing accurate, reliable and objective reporting and entertainment, which the region now clearly lacks.”<sup>97</sup>

### Meeting the Criteria

How does Al Hurra meet the criteria set out above?

#### *Long-term Effectiveness*

When thinking about the long-term effectiveness of Al Hurra, there are a few things to consider:

- Who is watching Al Hurra?
- Are they being influenced by the content of Al Hurra?
- How do you determine the effectiveness, even over a short-period of time?

There are varying responses to the first question, and it depends on who the source of the audience numbers are. The Broadcasting Board of Governors claims that in Iraq, for example, Al Hurra has 44% viewership. However, third party sources claim that there is only a 14% viewership.<sup>98</sup> Citing an AC Nielson survey, the BBG reports that over a quarter of the adult population of Iraq, Jordan, Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Syria watch Al Hurra. However, there is very little information as to how effective its influence is.

One critic of the BBG and Al Hurra argues that the BBG is missing the mark with its international broadcasting. That not only is it not “moving the needle” but that the BBG has not taken into account psychological factors, values and perceptions of its target

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<sup>97</sup> Harold C. Pachios. “Televising Balanced, Fair News: New Arabic Network Will Provide America a Voice in the Middle East.” *Los Angeles Daily Journal*, March 28, 2003, available from <http://www.state.gov/r/adcompd/rls/19557.htm>.

<sup>98</sup> Alvin Snyder, “The Great Al-Hurra Debate”, *USC Center on Public Diplomacy*, December 7, 2005. (accessed on December 2, 2006); available at <http://uscpublicdiplomacy.com>.

audience. As long as these factors are not taken into consideration, the BBG “will continue to implement poor broadcasting strategies that may not only be missing the mark, but creating unintended, negative consequences.”<sup>99</sup>

### *Targeting Young People*

Al Hurra is not, by design, targeting young people. The surveys conducted and referenced by BBG in regards to Al Hurra, only mention adult viewers, or those over 15. Therefore, Al Hurra does not fulfill this criterion.

### *Empowerment*

One of the main critiques of Al Hurra is that it is “al Jazeera lite in the Middle East”.<sup>100</sup> While it tries to promote free thinking, democratic values and the like, it does not go far enough in criticizing the very governments that allow it to broadcast. Therefore it is doing a disservice to those who watch it – by showing that it is acceptable to bend to the whims of those in power, and that even an American channel does not feel comfortable criticizing the very regimes that many people who watch Al Hurra would like to see brought down.

### *Encourages understanding through cross-cultural exchange*

Al Hurra does not provide for cross-cultural exchange or dialog. Much of the problem lies in the lack of availability of Arabic speakers who represent the U.S. to debate or have

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<sup>99</sup> Wendy Feliz Sefsaf, “US International Broadcasting Strategies in the Arab World: An analysis of the Broadcasting Board of Governors’ strategy from a public communication standpoint,” TBS 13, Fall 2004. (accessed on December 2, 2006); available from <http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Fall04/felizsefsaf.html>.

<sup>100</sup>Snyder

conversations with those from the region who appear on the programs. Those watching Al Hurra do not interact with Americans due to the medium of communication.

*Explains policies, values, and culture effectively, accurately and transparently*

Some of Al Hurra's content focuses on the U.S., democracy, and the promotion of other values that Americans embody. Two such programs are "Eye on Democracy" and "Inside Washington". "Eye on Democracy", a recent addition to Al Hurra, discusses challenges to democracy in the Middle East. Issues such as women's rights, human rights, religious freedom and freedom of the press are highlighted. "Inside Washington" provides interviews with U.S. policymakers to discuss politics and how government functions in DC.

The BBG strives to make Al Hurra as transparent and accurate as possible. According to the website, Al Hurra is "dedicated to presenting accurate, balanced and comprehensive news. Alhurra endeavors to broaden its viewers' perspectives, enabling them to make more informed decisions."<sup>101</sup>

As for credibility and reliability, according to the BBG 2005 Performance and Accountability Report,

*"Alhurra viewers expressed a keen interest in its news. The station's credibility rating jumped more than 20 percent in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon between August 2004 and June 2005, and over three fourths of all respondents expressed high levels of confidence in the reliability of the news. The research indicates that Alhurra and Alhurra Iraq are building an audience and effectively reaching the people in the region. The Middle*

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<sup>101</sup> Al Hurra website. (accessed December 2, 2006); available at <http://www.alhurra.com/Sub.aspx?ID=266>.

*East press has also begun to recognize the quality of Alhurra programming and the reliability of its news.”<sup>102</sup>*

### ***Radio Sawa***

Radio Sawa, which replaced Voice of America (VOA) Arabic Service, was launched in March 2002. Operated and funded by the Broadcasting Board of Governors, Radio Sawa is a 24-hour news and music station playing the latest Western and Arabic music along with news briefs twice an hour and public service announcements. Geared towards Arabs under 30, Radio Sawa seeks to reach the hearts and minds of these young people in the hopes of steering them away from the ideologies of Bin Laden and anti-Americanism that is prevalent in the region.

According to William Rugh, Radio Sawa lacks the in-depth news coverage that would gain more response from the target audience. Rather than provide short headline news briefings, Radio Sawa “may have some potential if it improves its content, and tries some of the effective programming that the VOA Arabic used over the years.” Other shortcomings Rugh mentions are audibility problems in some of the target countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and the negativity spawned from the government sponsorship of the station.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *Broadcasting Board of Governors F2005 Performance and Accountability Report*. November 15, 2005, pg. 7. (accessed on December 2, 2006); available at [http://www.bbg.gov/bbg\\_final\\_par\\_to\\_omb\\_15nov05.pdf](http://www.bbg.gov/bbg_final_par_to_omb_15nov05.pdf).

<sup>103</sup> William Rugh. “Comments on Radio Sawa and Al-Hurra Television,” Comments made in front of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, April 29, 2004, available from <http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2004/RughTestimony040429.pdf>.

Despite the shortcomings, Radio Sawa has captured a large part of its target audience. According to one study, Radio Sawa has an average listenership of 31.6% out of the general populations of Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE, thus making it the leading radio station in these countries. The same study reveals even more surprising statistics: a full 88% of listeners under 30 have tuned into Radio Sawa at least once a week.<sup>104</sup> What is still not known is whether there will be a change of heart among Arabs and Muslims towards the United States, even if Radio Sawa does succeed in attaining a large audience.

Radio Sawa was seen as a logical step as part of a new international broadcasting strategy. According to Norman Pattiz, founder of Radio Sawa, “VOA Arabic was unable to attract a significant audience. It was broadcasting a one-size-fits-all, seven-hour programming stream for the entire Middle East despite substantial regional differences in language and culture. It employed no audience targeting or modern radio formats... weekly listening rates among the general population across the Middle East were in the low single digits.”<sup>105</sup>

Therefore, Radio Sawa was created to more effectively reach a target audience. In addition to the music, Radio Sawa broadcasts programs such as *The Free Zone*, a program on freedom and democracy in the Middle East; *Ask the World Now*, a presentation of U.S. policies and editorial comment that uses statements from senior U.S.

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<sup>104</sup> “US claims new Arabic radio network rules Moroccan airwaves.” *Agence France Presse*. April 6, 2004, available from Lexus Nexus.

<sup>105</sup> Norman J. Pattiz. “Radio Sawa and AlHurra TV,” in *Engaging the Arab and Islamic Worlds Through Public Diplomacy*, ed. William Rugh. (Washington D.C.: Public Diplomacy Council, 2004), 79 (accessed December 21, 2005); available from <http://www.bbg.gov/pattiz.pdf>.

policymakers; and *SawaChat*, an interactive feature providing audiences with an opportunity to express opinions on political and social issues.

### Meeting Criteria

How is Radio Sawa meeting the criteria outlined above?

#### *Long-term Effectiveness*

As a music station eager for listeners, it does show the potential of having long-term effectiveness, but not as a public diplomacy tool. Radio Sawa does not focus enough on news and information, and many times those that listen to Sawa simply switch to another station when the news bulletins come on.

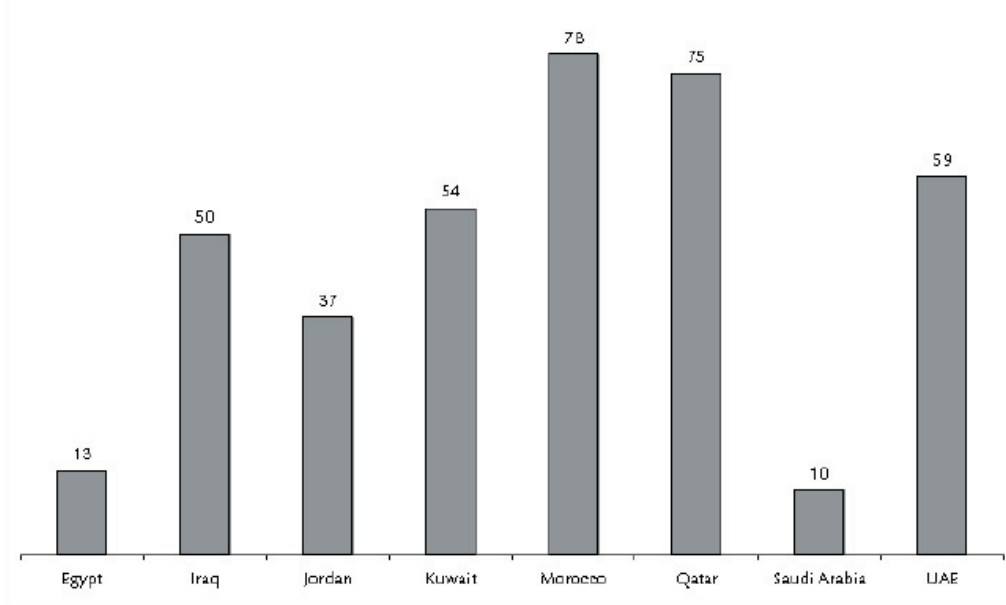
#### *Targeting Young People*

After considerable research in the region, the founders of Radio Sawa determined there was a niche in Middle Eastern radio that needed to be filled. This niche happened to cater to those under 30, or roughly 60% of the population.<sup>106</sup> This is the audience that Sawa targets. Radio Sawa has become a popular station in the Middle East, earning high listenership ratings from Morocco to the UAE. Of those between the ages of 15-29 that listen to Sawa weekly, the percentages reach as high as 78 percent in Morocco and 75 percent in Qatar (see Figure 2).

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<sup>106</sup> Leslie Evans, "Al Jazeera, Radio Sawa Founders Report on Media in the Middle East," *UCLA International Institute*, November 2003, (accessed December 21, 2005); available from <http://www.international.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=5087>.

**Figure 2**  
**Radio Sawa weekly listenership (percent of general population 15-29)**



Source: Broadcasting Board of Governors data, 2004.

### *Empowerment*

Radio Sawa targets young audiences, but little else is known about the audience to make a clear assessment of the empowering capability of this initiative. If empowering includes targeting moderate individuals that would support and spread universal values through their communities, Radio Sawa is probably hitting some of them. However, young people may not be listening to the station for its political content. According to an October 13, 2004 *Washington Post* article, a State Department report claimed that although Radio Sawa has captured a large audience, it is primarily due to the music content, and not for the political content.<sup>107</sup> A more striking observation was that “Arab-language experts hired by the inspector general's office gave the [Radio Sawa]

<sup>107</sup> Glenn Kessler, “The Role of Radio Sawa In Mideast Questioned; U.S.-Funded Station Lacks Influence, Report Indicates,” *The Washington Post*, October. 13, 2004. (accessed December 21, 2005; available from Lexis Nexus.

programming a mixed review, saying it did not match al-Jazeera in terms of quality and that parents would prefer that their teenagers not listen to Radio Sawa because its broadcasts contained such poor Arabic grammar.”<sup>108</sup> This makes it very hard to determine if those listening for the music are actually being influenced politically or ideologically. There is also little sense as to who is being empowered by the broadcasts that are made.

*Encourages understanding through cross-cultural exchange*

Radio Sawa does not promote cross-cultural exchange. While programs such as “SawaChat” cited above involve listeners calling in, there is no true exchange going on between those that listen and people in the United States.

*Explains policies, values, and culture effectively, accurately and transparently*

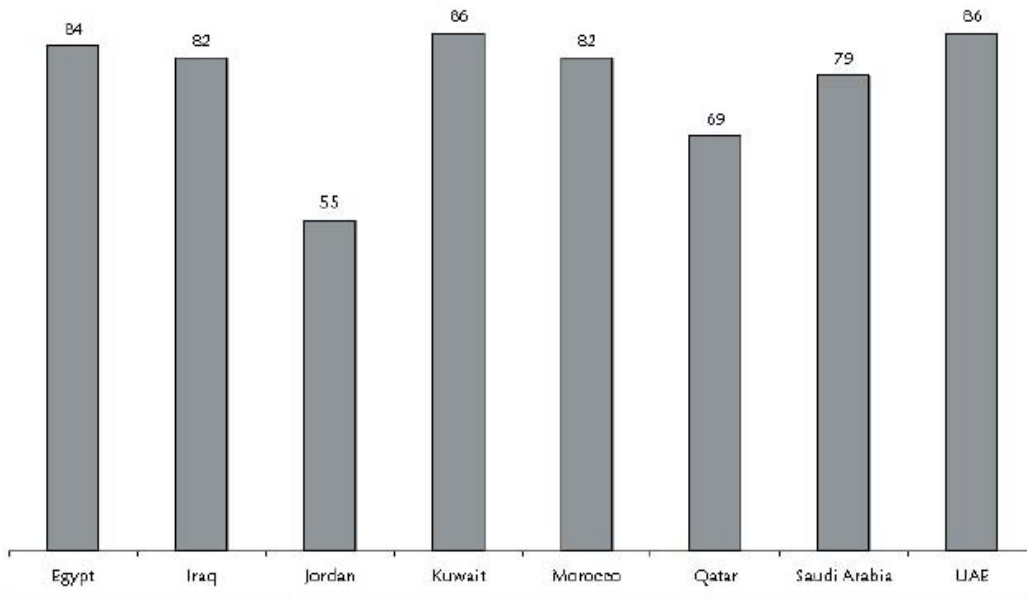
Radio Sawa does provide some information on U.S. policies, values and culture. It is surely transparent as it does not hide its American origin (Radio Sawa is actually broadcast out of the United States). Norman Pattiz emphasizes the role of Radio Sawa by saying “...it is not our job to change attitudes. It’s our job to report the news.” While some may think this is counter to U.S. public diplomacy interests, Pattiz goes on to explain that if the news you’re providing is an example of a free press then people will “feel better about democracy and freedom...and people who bring you that [reliable] information tend to get a great deal of credibility as well.”<sup>109</sup> According to a 2004 poll, Radio Sawa is seen as a reliable source (see Figure 3 below).

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<sup>108</sup> Kessler, 2004.

<sup>109</sup> Evans, 2003.

**Figure 3**  
Percentage of weekly listeners answering the question “How reliable is the news and information one can hear on Radio Sawa?” with “very or somewhat reliable”



Source: Broadcasting Board of Governors data, 2004.

Critics of Radio Sawa include Ambassador Edward Djerejian. Djerejian states that the problem is not with Radio Sawa in particular, but in order to initiate Radio Sawa the BBG cancelled VOA Arabic. He believes that in doing so you have “throw[n] away the core programs.”<sup>110</sup>

Dr. Robert Satloff has made similar critiques by claiming that “[Radio Sawa] has not made that transition yet...from a music heavy to a content heavy mix.” Stations imitate

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<sup>110</sup> Edward Djerejian, Dr. Robert Satloff and Barry Zorthian. Interview with Steve Roberts. *Battling for Hearts and Minds*. America Abroad Media. December 2004 (accessed December 16, 2005); available from <http://www.americaabroadmedia.org/explore-details.php?id=101>.

the music “but what will make it unique is the content that makes it a truly American radio station.”<sup>111</sup>

### ***Hi Magazine***

Hi Magazine, a recently discontinued U.S. government-sponsored publication, was aimed at 18-35 year olds in the Arab world. Presented in a glossy, colorful format, its purpose was to explain U.S. culture and values to its readers, avoiding politics while mainly focusing on entertainment, culture, and other non-political content.

Hi Magazine was available for free at U.S. embassies and also was available for sale at newsstands. It also had two online versions: an Arabic version at [www.himag.com](http://www.himag.com) and an English version at [www.hiinternational.com](http://www.hiinternational.com). Although Hi Magazine was recently discontinued, in both the print and online versions, it is relevant to discuss it here to find out what indicators it was being measured against (based on a State Department evaluation), and how it would stand up to the criteria set out in this paper.

#### State Department Evaluation of Hi Magazine

The State Department conducted an evaluation of Hi Magazine between March and April 2006 at the request of Under Secretary Hughes. The evaluators assessed Hi using focus groups, surveys, letters to the editor, interviews and briefings. The assessment objectives presented in the evaluation included the following:

- 1) How important is having a print product in the Middle East?
- 2) Is Hi reaching its intended audience of Muslims and Arabs 18-35 years old?

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<sup>111</sup> Robert Satloff, *Battling for Hearts and Minds*, Interview with Aaron Lobel, America Abroad Media, July 6, 2005, available at <http://www.americaabroadmedia.org>.

- 3) Is Hi providing relevant and credible information about the United States?
- 4) Is Hi informative, entertaining and interactive?
- 5) Is Hi increasing positive perceptions about the United States amongst its intended audience?

According to the evaluation, the major problems associated with Hi Magazine were poor marketing and distribution, the lack of substance in the content, insufficient budget and staff, and the highly U.S. centric point of view, which largely ignored the Arab/Muslim views which caused the readers to feel as if they couldn't relate. Finally, the most important purpose of the magazine, that the readers of Hi come away with an improved image of America, failed in its execution.

When considering the content of the magazine, the evaluation determined that public diplomacy efforts such as Hi Magazine should no longer be tailored for the Cold War-type "information-starved audiences...today's audiences, even in countries without completely unfettered access to the Internet, have an enormous number of information sources from which to choose...The content not only needs to be guided by what the U.S. Government wants to say about the United States, but as by what the intended audience wants or needs to know."<sup>112</sup> The evaluation concluded that Hi Magazine could improve by:

- facilitating the dialogue components of the publications and website, making them increasingly interactive,
- emphasizing the commonality of experiences and interests between young Arabs and U.S. society, values, culture and lifestyles,
- presenting a platform for the airing of debate and diverse opinion, and
- conveying a positive but more in depth picture of the United States.

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<sup>112</sup> *Hi Magazine Assessment*, Public Diplomacy Evaluation Office, U.S. Department of State, April 2006, 7.

## Meeting the Criteria

How does Hi Magazine meet the proposed criteria set out in this paper?

### *Long-term Effectiveness*

As we can see, it would be impossible to determine the long-term effectiveness of Hi Magazine as it was discontinued. However, we could surmise its effectiveness had the improvements suggested by the evaluation been put into place and Hi Magazine and its online version continued to be published.

If the interactive quality of Hi had been improved upon, providing a space for mutual understanding and the sharing of thoughts and opinions, Hi, much like Soliya as we'll see below, could potentially create long-term effects by encouraging its readers to pursue cross-cultural activities and projects.

### *Targeting Young People*

Hi Magazine clearly was designed to target young people. In this case, "young people" refers to those between the ages of 18-35. However, due to its low exposure (only 50,000 copies printed per month), the State Department evaluation concluded that it only reached a subset of the intended audience.<sup>113</sup> This audience tended to be university and high school students living in the capital cities and those participating in State Department programs. This was due, in no small part, to the lack of good marketing, both in terms of quality as well as quantity. Because the Arab/Muslim world is so large, it is very hard to determine what the best marketing strategy is. In fact, the marketing strategy would have to be quite diverse, due to the very diverse countries and people they were marketing to

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<sup>113</sup> Hi Magazine Assessment, 4.

(Egypt vs. the Levant vs. Morocco). This is a lesson that U.S. public diplomacy can learn in general. Robert Satloff argues that “efforts in public diplomacy under the broad rubric of “Arab world” or “Muslim world” should be rejected in favor of country-specific initiatives.”<sup>114</sup>

In addition, more copies of Hi needed to be distributed. The evaluation states that according to industry experts, a magazine targeted at a large audience (approximately 100 million) should have at least 100,000 to 500,000 copies in circulation each month.<sup>115</sup> A final point, in addition to the difficulty of marketing across borders, is that an 18 year old and a 35 year old can vary considerably in their interests, values, and views of issues.

#### *Empowerment*

The evaluation conducted by State did not look at the empowerment of its readers. While Hi Magazine appeared to increase the knowledge of the United States by its readers,<sup>116</sup> there is no indication that they would take what they have learned and apply it on a daily basis to empower themselves.

#### *Encourages understanding through cross-cultural exchange*

Hi Magazine did not fully develop its interactive capabilities. It should have been a place for dialog, as was one of its original goals. Dialogue would have fomented better understanding between the U.S. and the Arab/Muslim world by providing differing viewpoints and opinions.

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<sup>114</sup> Satloff, *The Battle of Ideas in the War on Terror*, 6.

<sup>115</sup> Hi Magazine Assessment, 5.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 5.

*Explains policies, values, and culture effectively, accurately and transparently*

One of the most obvious critiques of Hi Magazine was that it didn't cover U.S. policies. It preferred to stick to light topics instead of more serious issues (whether social or political). According to the results of 32 focus groups held in Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and Morocco, the number one response when asked "what kind of topics, subjects and information about the United States interests you?" was "politics/foreign policy" followed by "arts, including music and film". "Culture" and "Americans' perceptions of Arabs" came last out of the 10 responses.<sup>117</sup> Therefore, in order to be more effective, Hi Magazine needed to make its content more relevant to its readers.

The word naïve also frequently appeared in reference to Hi Magazine. In response to a statement in Hi magazine that America is the melting pot for different cultures, Layla El-Rifai, a high school student, remarks, "What is that supposed to mean to us? It's too naïve. We already know much more about the US lifestyle than this magazine shows, but it seems like the US does not understand our culture and mentality."<sup>118</sup> Not only does this reiterate the need for more substance in the content of Hi Magazine, but it also underscores the importance of mutual understanding between the U.S. and Arab world, that it should not just go one way. So Hi Magazine could have done a better job when conveying U.S. culture and policies.

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<sup>117</sup> Hi Magazine Assessment, 8.

<sup>118</sup> Gihan Shahine. "Hi is not enough," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Issue 656, September 18-24, 2003, <http://weekly.ahram.org/2003/656/eg8.htm>.

As far as transparency is concerned, Hi Magazine in no way concealed its origins. However, because of the lack of interaction, as well as its U.S.-centric content, Hi Magazine may not have had as much credibility as it could have had.

### ***Soliya's Connect Program***

Soliya, a non-governmental organization, was established in 2003. Its mission is “to develop a new generation of leaders with the cross-cultural knowledge, communications skills, and international connections to create a more informed, peaceful and just global society.”<sup>119</sup> By utilizing real-time video conferencing technology, Soliya’s Connect Program brings together university students from the U.S. and the Middle East to discuss U.S./Middle East relations.

The Connect Program’s structure allows for 8-10 people to be in a “meeting room” simultaneously, where all faces can be seen using web cams. To take part in the Connect Program, students register for an accredited course tied to Soliya at their university. Course topics are varied, and have included media and terrorism, globalization, public opinion, persuasion and propaganda, to name a few. The Connect Program acts as a supplement to these courses, requiring the students to spend 2 hours a week in an online session. The sessions are made up of students from the Middle East and the U.S. (some Canadians), and usually two facilitators. The facilitators’ role is to mediate the dialog between the students, guiding them along using activities and conflict resolution tools. Usually there is at least one facilitator who can speak Arabic in addition to English so that those students who do not feel as comfortable expressing themselves in English may

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<sup>119</sup> Soliya Mission Statement (accessed December 21, 2005); available from: <http://soliya.net/?mid=5>.

do so in Arabic and have it translated by the facilitator. While the curriculum requires certain topics to be discussed, there is generally a fair amount of leeway, allowing the students to talk about those topics that interest them most about U.S./Middle East relations.

### Meeting the Criteria

How does Soliya meet the criteria set out above?

#### *Long-term Effectiveness*

Since Soliya is relatively new, the long-term effectiveness of the program cannot be perfectly determined. However, if future evaluations reveal what the first two have, then we can safely assume Soliya is headed in the right direction. In addition to bolstering participants' knowledge of each others' viewpoints on U.S./Middle East relations, the program also increased the percentage of participants who said they will pursue cross-cultural initiatives in the future (82% post-program up from 61% pre-program).<sup>120</sup> This is a strong indication that the Soliya experience will have some long-lasting effect on those who participated.

#### *Targeting Young People*

Soliya was created with the sole purpose of connecting university students in the U.S. and the Middle East. Currently, those that participate in the Connect Program are undergraduate students, while many of the facilitators are graduate students from around the world.

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<sup>120</sup> *Evaluation Report for the Soliya Connect Program*, Conducted by InterMedia, March 2006, 17.

### *Empowerment*

By targeting university students in the U.S. and Middle East, Soliya has empowered a group of people that have the ability to influence their community and the world.

Empowerment, according to Soliya, refers to a student feeling that “they [have] the ideas, skills and tools to make a positive contribution to global affairs” and that they have “a responsibility to positively contribute to global affairs.”<sup>121</sup>

According to an evaluation of the Connect Program, before the program, 46% of Arab students and 73% of American students felt this type of empowerment. After participating in the program, over 87% of Arab students and 83% of American students felt this.<sup>122</sup> It is clear that the students taking part in the Connect Program are open to learning about the United States and its values, and the following section provides details on why this may be the case.

### *Encourages understanding through cross-cultural exchange*

One of the goals of Soliya is to bring U.S. and Middle Eastern students together “to collaboratively explore the relationship between the US and the Arab & Muslim World with the aim of improving intercultural awareness and understanding.”<sup>123</sup>

According to testimonials of Soliya participants, the amount of understanding and knowledge gained through the Connect Program is impressive. Before taking part in the

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<sup>121</sup> *Evaluation Report for Soliya and Search for Common Ground's Partners in Humanity*, Conducted by InterMedia, August 2005, 11.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>123</sup> Soliya Website (accessed December 21, 2005); available from <http://www.soliya.net/main.php?mid=2>.

Connect Program, 42% of Arab students and 23% of American students said they had a high level of understanding of the issues affecting Arab/Muslim-US relations.<sup>124</sup> After the program, 83% of Arab students and 70% of American students responded in kind. It is testimonials, such as the one that follows, that give credence to this particular goal of Soliya:

*I definitely believe that some of my ideas and opinions have changed as a result of this program. I think one of the biggest things I've learned was that I used to think that Palestinians or Israelis did not want to live in peace and co-exist with one another. I believed that words of peace held no meaning anymore in that conflict because of its overuse. However, after having interacted with Palestinians in this program, I have come to understand that they do in fact dream of a better Palestine living amongst their fellow Israelis as neighbors and friends. I believe it is the lack of tools to reach out and be heard that is probably hurting that country the most. I believe in the younger generation. I hope that they will be able to make a change in the future. (Female, Kuwaiti, American University of Kuwait)<sup>125</sup>*

Connect Program participants also realized they had much more in common with their counterparts abroad than they had thought. Before the program, 25% of Arab students and 43% of American students had this view, but after the program a full 71% of Arab students and 93% of American students believed they had a lot in common with each other. This realization supports the notion that this program is empowering those that share universal values.

*Explains policies, values, and culture effectively, accurately and transparently*

While Soliya is not a U.S. government-sponsored program, it provides a vast array of information on U.S./Middle East relations, with resources ranging from the Economist and the Pew Research Center, to Edward Said, Shibley Telhami, and speeches by

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<sup>124</sup> Evaluation Report for Soliya, August 2005, 6.

<sup>125</sup> Evaluation Report for Soliya, August 2005, 6.

President Bush. The idea is to give students supplements to their coursework as well as to the online sessions. The actual online sessions are unbiased, allowing the students to speak freely about their experiences, opinions and perspectives on the issues discussed. The facilitators' job is to keep the conversation flowing and to never give their opinion.

In the case of Soliya, it is not just U.S. policies, values and culture that are being discussed. Rather, it is U.S. and Middle Eastern policies, values and culture. Students from these two regions learn from each other, without any rules or restrictions on what can and cannot be expressed.

## CHAPTER 6: Analysis

Before beginning the analysis, a simple chart is provided below to give an estimate of how each program fulfills the criteria set out in this paper.

CRITERIA						
PROGRAM		Long-term effectiveness	Targets young audience	Empowers target audience	Mutual understanding	Explains policies, culture, and values accurately, transparently
	Al Hurra	No	No	No	Partly	Yes
	Radio Sawa	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
	Hi Magazine	Partly	Yes	Partly	Partly	Partly
	Soliya	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

By looking at the table above, it is easy to see which of the programs studied meet the criteria and which don't. In the case of Al Hurra and Radio Sawa, neither of them satisfied all of the criteria laid out here. While they both present U.S. policies accurately and transparently, they both lack long-term effectiveness and empowerment of the target audience. Hi Magazine either met or partly met all the criteria above. Because it was so short lived, it is very hard to analyze what could have happened given time. Soliya's Connect Program satisfied all the criteria.

### *Al Hurra*

Al Hurra does not have a specific target audience aside from the regional and linguistic characteristics of the people it reaches. Because Al Hurra does have some programs that interview Americans and provide a platform for debate, there is a chance that mutual understanding may be happening. It is imperative that the U.S. increase the number of

Arabic speakers (which they have started to do), so that these kinds of debates can be carried out more frequently. Instead of pouring money into a new satellite station, it would behoove the U.S. to get representatives on Arab television. It is ironic that while Al Jazeera has enraged so many Arab leaders because it speaks out against their regimes, the U.S. is trying to silence this station. Censoring Al Jazeera is not setting a good example to those in the region.<sup>126</sup>

One of the main problems with Al Hurra is the competitors it faces. Rugh compares what is happening to Al Hurra with what happened to VOA Arabic Service. He argues that VOA Arabic couldn't compete with Egypt's Voice of the Arabs. "Arabs everywhere listened to the Egyptian radio commentator Ahmad Said elaborate on Nasser's aggressive rhetoric with flourishes designed to rally Arab support. The Voice of America's moderate tone and reasoned approach was no match for that." Is this the same thing that is happening with Al Hurra? It doesn't use the same rhetoric and rallying call that Al Jazeera and others use? Is Al Hurra not speaking to the Arab public?

While the idea is to provide a fresh perspective on events, Al Hurra tends to soften criticism of the U.S., having more interest in calming a situation to counter the heated debates and opinions of the U.S. typically shown on Al Jazeera. "Nothing really struck me [about Al Hurra], it is an average station," said Jad Khawaz. "They try to be

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<sup>126</sup> Rugh, 2006, 179.

balanced, but they are a bit naïve. They are offering nothing new...Al Jazeera is more interesting...it is more controversial, as it grabs the attention.”<sup>127</sup>

Al Jazeera’s competitive advantage is its effectiveness in reporting, and the fact that it is not a government broadcaster. Reacting to Al Hurra’s first day of broadcasting, Jamal Dajani, director of Middle Eastern programming at Link TV based in San Francisco states “[Al Hurra] interviewed President George Bush, and that’s very much the same line [that] the state-sponsored television in the Middle East do through the region.”<sup>128</sup>

There has been a similar response to Al Hurra in Iraq. At the time of Al Hurra’s launch in the Middle East, another station was launched in Baghdad. Domestic Al-Sharqiyah, which broadcasts primarily to Iraqis, is watched more than Al Hurra. “Through its biting, comedic criticism of the US occupation in Iraq and its being in touch with the suffering Iraqis,” Al Sharqiyah intends to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqis and “be an expression of them, not to change their country in order to match the concept of the occupation.”<sup>129</sup>

Robert Satloff argues that the U.S. shouldn’t try to compete with the sensationalism of Al Jazeera. He refers to the Middle East Television Network (METN) which operates Al Hurra, by saying that

*...the problem is that no conceivable programming for METN news shows would meet the dual test of popularity abroad and political correctness at*

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<sup>127</sup> Paul Cochrane. “Lebanese Reaction to the U.S. Satellite Station: Is Al-Hurra Doomed?” *World Press Review Online*, June 11, 2004, available from <http://www.worldpress.org/Mideast/1872.cfm>.

<sup>128</sup> “A New Voice,” *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, April 15, 2004, available from [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june04/voice\\_04-15.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june04/voice_04-15.html).

<sup>129</sup> Hani Ashur. “Ten New Iraqi Satellite TV Stations Ready to Launch,” *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, July 21, 2004, (FBIS Translated Text).

*home. Al-Jazeera and other Arabic satellite news channels won popularity because of their lurid sensationalism and no-holds-barred debates. Viewers tune in to see graphic details of the bloody side of Israeli retaliation to Palestinian terrorism and talk shows that feature the most outlandish radicals, such as spokesmen for the Taliban, Hizbollah, or Saddam Hussein...Surely METN cannot try to be more sensationalist than al-Jazeera.*<sup>130</sup>

One solution he proposes is for the U.S. government to give incentives to U.S.

broadcasters to dub their programming in Arabic. It would be much more cost effective, especially since a station that provides high-quality PBS-style broadcasting would only capture a very limited audience, much like it does here in the U.S.<sup>131</sup>

In November 2005, there was a congressional hearing regarding the effectiveness of Al Hurra. One of the main concerns was that Al Hurra relies on the Associated Press for much of its news footage. They do not have bureaus in many of the “hot spots” in the Middle East. In defense, the news director of Al Hurra, Moufac Harb, explained that it would cost too much to establish bureaus in each of the major Middle Eastern cities. But what happens is that Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya tend to arrive on the scene faster than Al Hurra does.<sup>132</sup> This isn’t to say that Al Hurra doesn’t have correspondents located in the major cities, they simply don’t have physical bureaus with the necessary technological infrastructure. Now while the actual splicing of the footage is done by outside contractors, the actual editing decisions are done by Al Hurra staff.

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<sup>130</sup> Satloff, *The Battle of Ideas in the War on Terror*, 31.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

<sup>132</sup> Karen Hughes, “The Mission of Public Diplomacy, 16.

### ***Radio Sawa***

Radio Sawa's target audience is young people, but there are some who argue that those that Radio Sawa is reaching may not be the target audience. According to S. A. Schleifer of the Adham Center for Television Journalism at the American University in Cairo, Radio Sawa "is certainly not going to work for people who are offended by American policy and politics, including American mass culture...Within the constituency of middle- and upper-class Arabs, it will probably be effective. Among lower class Arabs, who tend to be sensitive to appeals of Islamic fundamentalism, it won't be effective."<sup>133</sup>

Radio Sawa also does not provide a platform for listeners to engage in dialogue with Americans, therefore failing to meet the criteria of mutual understanding. Because Radio Sawa focuses too much on music and entertainment, it is not able to empower the target audience, even though it happens to have a high listenership among young people. Should Radio Sawa increase the time devoted to news and information, there may be a greater opportunity for empowering those that can make a change. Of course, Sawa would risk losing listenership as the music and entertainment is the main draw for their audience.

### ***Hi Magazine***

Hi Magazine was short-lived, and under distributed, making it difficult to forecast its effectiveness as a public diplomacy tool. Hi Magazine did meet some of the criteria discussed here, and with time and a few changes, could have been an effective public

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<sup>133</sup> Abdalla Hassan. "U.S. Radio Broadcasts Vie for the Hearts and Minds of Arab Youth." *World Press Review Online*, September 26, 2002, available from <http://www.worldpress.org/Mideast/739.cfm/>.

diplomacy initiative. To be taken more seriously, and to not be seen as naïve, the content needed to be changed to reflect more of what young Arab/Muslim readers want to read.

Hi Magazine and Radio Sawa seem to have many similarities in this respect. Both have tried to garner a large audience by focusing on their entertainment appeal. In the case of Radio Sawa, this has worked – most likely because radio reaches more people, and is free, whereas Hi Magazine was expensive and had some distribution problems.

### ***Soliya's Connect Program***

Soliya's Connect Program is not a government-sponsored initiative. It was, however, important to look at how non-governmental efforts stand up to criteria used for public diplomacy programs. Soliya's Connect Program does yield positive results towards fulfilling the criteria, and more government programs should mimic the key characteristics of this program.

One of the strengths of Soliya is that it utilizes the Internet to bring people together. While per capita Internet use in the Middle East is still low, it is growing.<sup>134</sup> Many students participating in the program used their university computer labs or net cafés to access the Internet. Once Internet technology has been implemented on a grander scale in this part of the world, programs such as these would be a very cost-effective way to bring people together to fulfill public diplomacy objectives. Not everyone can participate in a true exchange. Therefore, alternatives, such as these, need to be considered.

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<sup>134</sup> From 2000-2006, internet usage in the Middle East increased by 479% with 10% of the population as current Internet users. Source: Internet World Stats, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm>.

There are a few issues that need to be addressed, however, in discussing the effectiveness of Soliya's Connect Program. First of all, the majority of students, if not all the students, speak English. Therefore, there is a large part of the population in the Middle East that doesn't have the opportunity to take part in the program. That being said, a key component of the Connect Program is that there is always one facilitator in each group that speaks Arabic, allowing those who are not as comfortable with their English to speak in Arabic and have it translated. This reflects, however, the nature of American students that take part in the program – even fewer Americans speak Arabic, hence the program language of choice was English. However, there are also more Americans learning to speak Arabic, so with time, more online “exchange” programs could take place in Arabic.

Secondly, Soliya's Connect Program, having been approached by the State Department, declined to work with them. The reason was purely a credibility issue. There is no doubt that Soliya has a lot of credibility on its own, but the fact that it is not affiliated with the U.S. government likely contributes to this.

Just as survey results of Fulbright participants reflect a life-changing experience due to this program, the results from Soliya participants are just as riveting. The Soliya exchange is not as “real” as a Fulbright exchange, but it succeeds in bringing groups of students “face to face” with each other, to conduct conversations they may otherwise not have had.

To give a better idea of how Soliya's Connect Program is meeting public diplomacy objectives, the Fulbright Student Program June 2005 evaluation results and Soliya's Connect Program August 2005 evaluation results were compared. Some of the similarities between Fulbright findings<sup>135</sup> and Soliya findings<sup>136</sup> include:

- Non-U.S. participants of both programs feel they can better explain U.S. values and culture to their fellow citizens, and they also believe their experience helped Americans better understand their cultures.
- Fulbright participants improved their leadership skills and Soliya participants increased their communication skills, making them better listeners.
- Participants of both programs believe they have built meaningful relationships with their counterparts in the program.

While this list isn't exhaustive, it gives a quick glance at how Soliya is mimicking some of the results of the Fulbright program, by simply using technology to bring people together. Because of the similarities of results found in both the Fulbright Program and the Soliya Connect Program, and the way in which the Connect Program meets the criteria set out in this paper, Soliya's Connect Program can be considered an effective public diplomacy tool.

### ***Are All Criteria Necessary?***

The point of this analysis was not to claim that all public diplomacy programs developed by the U.S. government conform to each and every criterion. Some modes of communication are simply not built to provide exchange opportunities or to reach young people. However, when we are talking about the Middle East, the greatest effort should be placed in programs that target young people. In addition, empowerment of these

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<sup>135</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs, Office of Policy and Evaluation, *Outcome Assessment of the U.S. Fulbright Student Program*, June 2005. (accessed December 21, 2005); available from <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/evaluations/execsummaries/UFS.pdf>.

<sup>136</sup> Evaluation Report for Soliya, August 2005.

young people, as well as developing a clear understanding by them of U.S. policies, culture, and values is extremely important – this is what public diplomacy is all about, especially as we try support those in the region who want to bring about positive change.

## Conclusion

U.S. public diplomacy is facing many great challenges today in light of recent events such as September 11th, the war in Iraq and current U.S. policies vis-à-vis the Middle East. While, according to polls, U.S. policies are linked to anti-American sentiment in the Middle East, public diplomacy still has an important job to do, regardless of whether these policies change or not. The events of September 11th served as a wake-up call to all Americans, and especially the government, by demonstrating the depth of antipathy towards the U.S. by many in the Muslim world. Global reaction to the war in Iraq has only solidified this imperative. The time for a robust public diplomacy program is now.

Many recommendations have been made over the past few years for how U.S. public diplomacy - specifically the processes and logistics associated with it - can be improved. Better language skills among personnel, increased staff presence, a coherent strategic communication plan, and better evaluation techniques all fall into this category. A second, more narrow category of public diplomacy improvements is to look at the specific criteria against which public diplomacy programs should be measured. This second category was encompassed in Chapter 4. The criteria are:

- 1) Long term effectiveness
- 2) Targets young audiences
- 3) Empowers its target audience
- 4) Encourages understanding through American outreach programs and cross-cultural exchanges
- 5) Explains our policies, values and culture effectively, using accurate and reliable information transmitted transparently.

These criteria were chosen based on recommendations made by experts in the field, and current initiatives by State to evaluate its programs. They have consistently been

mentioned in public diplomacy documents, especially those concerning the Middle East. While all these criteria should be considered when analyzing U.S. public diplomacy in the Middle East, many, if not all, could be applied to other U.S. public diplomacy efforts worldwide.

Each of these criteria are important in their own right, but perhaps one of the most important things to take away from this paper is that the U.S. government cannot perform public diplomacy on its own. Credibility aside, creating an image for the U.S. encompasses all aspects of U.S. society, from government to the business community, to exchange programs, tourism, and beyond.

The work being done by Business for Diplomatic Action (BDA), for example, is tantamount to improving the U.S. image abroad. By harnessing the energy of the private sector, and in effect, distancing their efforts from the U.S. government, BDA is addressing some of the weaknesses of public diplomacy. BDA, for instance, has partnered with the UAE branch of Young Arab Leaders (YAL) and Zogby International to provide a framework for understanding the needs of Arab youth in their professional development. Based on the results of surveys carried out by Zogby International, BDA and YAL will jointly work to promote internships, mentorships, scholarships and training to further the careers of young Arab professionals and students.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> “YAL (UAE Chapter) announces partnership with leading international organization for youth development,” AME Info, March 4, 2006, available at <http://www.businessfordiplomaticaction.org>.

The U.S. government does carry out programs similar to the BDA/YAL initiative – but there need to be more. Instead of spending money on radio stations like Radio Sawa or television stations such as Al Hurra, the U.S. government needs to focus on programs that, while smaller in scope, have a greater impact in the long-run. Today’s international environment is very different from that of the Cold War. Radio and television are much more widespread than they used to be, and people have access to a countless number of radio and television stations. The U.S. needs to utilize the channels already available, as these are the channels of communication its target audience is already tuning into.

There also needs to be more emphasis put on programs that utilize the Internet. Soliya’s Connect Program could be imitated by the U.S. government, as again, it is a cost-effective way to connect people from around the world. These types of programs fulfill the criteria of effective public diplomacy by opening up lines of communication among citizens of different countries, bridging differences, countering misunderstandings, and finally educating ourselves to be better communicators and citizens of the world.

Public diplomacy is about creating understanding among those we target in our programs, and, perhaps more importantly, about educating ourselves about those we target. As Keith Reinhard of BDA so rightly put it, we need “to truly see ourselves as others see us and to listen on a massive global scale. Listening—a trait Americans are not identified

with...must be the first step in any communications process. It is, in fact, the most important step.”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Keith Reinhard, “Hearing on the 9/11 Commission Recommendations on Public Diplomacy: Defending the Ideals and Defining the Message,” Testimony Before the House Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, August 23, 2004.

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