

Program Research Project

EMPOWERING UNITED STATES PUBLIC DIPLOMACY FOR THE WAR OF IDEAS

BY

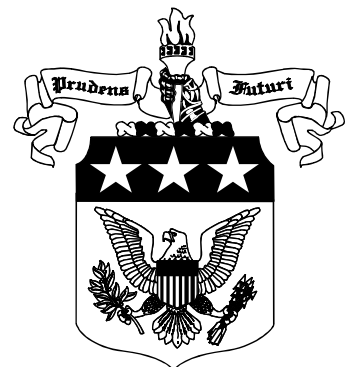
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by

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ABSTRACT

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Former President George W. Bush described the Global War on Terror (GWOT) as more than a battle of arms, but more importantly, a war of ideas, placing particular emphasis on implementing effective public diplomacy (PD). However, eight years into the GWOT, international polling data demonstrates U.S. failure to gain substantive ground in the war of ideas. In fact, years of marginalizing PD left the U.S. with an emaciated and arguably ineffective weapon in the war of ideas. Enveloped within the Department of State, devoid of an independent vision, and a shadow of its prior budgetary and personnel strength, current U.S. PD is ill prepared to confront the crucial and formidable battle of ideas, now, or in the near term.

This paper explores how U.S. hubris regarding its global influence in a unipolar world marginalized the once independent and effective PD effort. Similarly, the paper illustrates how misguided U.S. impression of the universality of the democratic peace theory and its fundamental misunderstanding of the roots of international terrorism, continue to impede sustainable progress in the war of ideas. The paper concludes with recommendations to revitalize U.S. PD and to establish a sustainable and effective vision for the future.

EMPOWERING UNITED STATES PUBLIC DIPLOMACY FOR THE WAR OF IDEAS

Following events of September 11, 2001, President Bush described the Global War on Terror (GWOT) as more than a battle of arms, but a battle of ideas.¹ In his 2002 National Security Strategy, President Bush placed particular emphasis on implementing effective public diplomacy (PD) as a means to gain the trust and confidence of those who may otherwise support international terrorism.² President Bush hoped to capitalize on PD's powerful ability to foster relationships and cultural understanding among people of differing nations to influence global attitudes and actions in the war of ideas.³ However, eight years into the GWOT, international polling data demonstrates U.S. failure to gain substantive ground in the war of ideas.⁴ In fact, years of marginalizing PD left the U.S. with an emaciated and arguably ineffective weapon in the war of ideas.⁵ Enveloped within the Department of State (DoS), devoid of an independent vision, and a shadow of its prior budgetary and personnel strength, current U.S. PD remains ill prepared to confront the crucial and formidable struggle in the battle of ideas now or in the foreseeable future.

This paper explores how U.S. hubris regarding its global influence in a unipolar world led to marginalizing the once independent and effective PD effort under the U.S. Information Agency (USIA). Additionally, a presupposed universality of the democratic peace theory and a fundamental misunderstanding of the roots of international terrorism continue to obscure a definitive strategy and progress by U.S. PD in the war of ideas. The paper concludes with recommendations to empower U.S. PD and establish a sustainable and effective vision for confronting the war of ideas in the future.

“If I were grading, I would say we probably deserve a ‘D’ or a ‘D-plus’.⁶ Stark testimony from former Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, delivered to the U.S. Army War College in March 2006, regarding U.S. performance in the war of ideas to date. Such assessment is considerably more damning when conceding, in addition to the President’s 2002 NSS, the U.S. National Strategy for Combating Terrorism also concluded success in the GWOT hinges on winning the war of ideas.⁷

Considering America’s war of ideas began long before events of 9/11, Secretary Rumsfeld’s current assessment of U.S. strategy in this struggle is rather generous. Reasonable arguments might trace the West’s war of ideas with Islamic extremism as far back as the fall of the Ottoman Empire or earlier.⁸ However, America’s war of ideas ostensibly began with the Iran Hostage Crisis. Analyzing this crisis, International Relations Professor, Adda Bozeman in 1979 described America’s ongoing intelligence collection failures and profound ignorance of complex cultural patterns and historical perspectives of the region as the sources of that conflict.⁹ These criticisms appropriately reverberate in today’s GWOT (now Overseas Contingency Operations) and painfully illustrate just how little progress the U.S. has made over the last 30 years in the war of ideas.

Such lack of progress in the war of ideas warrants strategic reevaluation. Developing an effective and enduring strategy for U.S. DP in the war of ideas requires analysis of factors contributing to America’s ineffective response to its greatest security challenge in decades. While a multiplicity of factors undoubtedly contributes to U.S. PD’s recent ineffectiveness, the most prominent impediments are America’s power

paradox, inappropriately applying a 'one size fits all' universality to the democratic peace theory, and America's fundamental aversion of religious ideological struggles.¹⁰

America's Power Paradox – The Dismantling of U.S. Public Diplomacy¹¹

The fall of Communism in the early 1990s placed America in a position of unparalleled dominance. As the world's preeminent superpower, Congress argued Democracy's triumph over Communism would itself suffice as the most effective and lasting public diplomacy for the United States.¹² Competition over scarce budget dollars pressed Washington to question the continued need for a broad, independent public diplomacy agency in a unipolar world.

Following a decade of progressive budget cuts and staff reductions, a major restructuring of U.S. PD dramatically reduced its autonomy and flexibility.¹³ In October 1999, the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act reduced U.S. PD to a subsidiary within the DoS. The Act placed U.S. PD under the direction of a new, 'Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs'.¹⁴ The fledgling Department of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, and America's premiere weapon in the war of ideas, found itself ill suited to meet the needs of an aggressive foreign policy agenda by the Bush administration. In the absence of an established, effective, and robust public diplomacy effort to help successfully facilitate this new foreign policy, the stage was set for a dismal collapse.

In the GWOT, the Bush administration needed a well-orchestrated public diplomacy effort to reassure the international community that the objective was not U.S. imperialism or a threat against Islam, but a global struggle against those who perpetrate terrorism. Unfortunately, due to the organizational structure within the State

Department, the Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs lacked direct oversight or control of the regional bureaus and field posts needed to synchronize the agenda.¹⁵ To compound the problem, regional field posts lacked a coordinated strategic approach to their mission.¹⁶ Some field posts were vacant. Moreover, of those filled, only 60 % contained officers with the minimum required language proficiency skills.¹⁷ Security concerns limited the effective outreach of these posts and average staff tours in the Middle East region were 22 % shorter than tours in other parts of the world.¹⁸

Maintaining a forward posture, President Bush used his 2002 National Security Strategy to declare the United States would act preemptively and unilaterally, if necessary, to prevent future hostilities against American interests.¹⁹ While this stance was a public affairs success, without the necessary foundation established by an effective public diplomacy agency, such an aggressive approach quickly created concerns of U.S. hegemony within the international community.²⁰ These perceptions undermined American influence abroad and eroded much of the world's sympathy and support previously garnered after events of September 11, 2001.²¹ As President Bush worked to build a case against Iraq and formulate a coalition, Pew Research Center polls indicated that U.S. public diplomacy failed to contain growing animosity toward U.S. foreign policy across the globe.²² World public opinion trends from 1999 to 2003 demonstrated marked decreases in U.S. favorability ratings in both Muslim and European countries.²³

On May 1, 2003, after approximately two and a half months of conflict, the President stood aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln in front of a banner that proclaimed, "Mission Accomplished" to announce that major combat operations in Iraq had ended.²⁴

What had only begun was the devastating blow to U.S. PD that would degrade its ability to influence world opinion on U.S. foreign policy. In the subsequent months, extensive investigations failed to uncover substantial or conclusive evidence to support the claims by U.S. intelligence agencies that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction or had definitive ties to al-Qaeda.²⁵ America's moral authority was now severely marred; debilitating its soft power in global influence.²⁶ At the time, even former Under Secretary of U.S. PD and Public Affairs, Karen Hughes, acknowledged that repairing the U.S. image abroad could take years if not decades.²⁷

One Size Does Not Fit All

The second impediment to U.S. Public diplomacy's effectiveness in the war of ideas is a misunderstanding of the Muslim culture, attitudes and behaviors. In an oversimplification of the democratic peace theory, America's foreign policy objective of democratizing the Middle East neglects to consider how such an agenda may affect regional culture.

Profound respect for history and cultural tradition defines and binds Middle Eastern cultures.²⁸ As such, fears regarding Western colonization of their holy lands remain at the forefront of their consciousness. U.S. military stationed in the Middle East and Western Coalition forces invading Iraq and Afghanistan exacerbate these concerns.²⁹ Similarly, despite Western views of Saddam Hussein and the Taliban as abusive regimes, removal of these leaders overlooks that, in the Muslim faith, even corrupt or tyrannical leaders engender obedience, so long as they do not interfere with Muslim's religious practices.³⁰ Thus, attacks on these regimes threaten even moderate Muslims, widening the gap with the West and further complicating the war of ideas.³¹

Imposing Western values on Muslim cultures similarly complicates the war of ideas. Civil liberties, human rights, separation of church and state, and political freedoms honored in the Western democracies have no applicable translation in the Muslim culture.³² Muslims argue, these principles fail to honor the primacy of Islam and are therefore Godless, and represent the West's attempt to corrupt Islam and suppress Muslims.³³ Attempts to demonstrate religious tolerance to the Muslim culture also fail to resonate. Muslims consider religious tolerance as evidence of moral decline rather than virtuous.³⁴ What the West views as freedom, Muslims view as purposeless gratification of the individual.³⁵ Muslims argue Islam offers personal submission to a higher authority.³⁶ Therefore, U.S. policies espousing the spread of democracy, promoting individual liberties or, preserving human rights will likely engender resentment, suspicion and resistance with target audiences in the Middle East. To Muslims, such agendas suggest Western political and moral superiority over Islam.³⁷

Application of Western values to theorize the etiology of Islamic terrorism similarly obscures the true foundations of this extremism, further complicating strategic development in the war of ideas. Perceptions of social injustice, income disparity, and lack of political representation, as the causes of Islamic terrorism dominate Western political thought.³⁸ However, historical analysis refutes these theories as problems existing in the Muslim world throughout the modern era.³⁹ Rather, the intrusion of Westernization into the Muslim world likely fuels current Islamic terrorism.⁴⁰ Accelerated by globalization, Western influence directly threatens to disrupt the social fabric that dominates the Muslim world.⁴¹ In Muslim societies, religion is organic and loyalty to the extended family within a patriarchal structure is implicit.⁴² This social structure is

hierarchical and everyone knows his or her place.⁴³ Individuality or disloyalty to this social architecture is strictly shunned, and at times with dire consequences, as evidenced by 'honor killings'.⁴⁴ Thus, intrusion of Western social values threatens to dismantle Muslim social and religious structures that provide the very foundation of their societies.⁴⁵ Such perceived external threats stimulate greater religious conviction among Muslims and mobilizes resistance as an obligation to protect Islam.⁴⁶

America's Aversion to Religious Ideological Struggles

A final impediment to the development of an effective PD strategy in the war of ideas is America's natural aversion to religious ideological struggles. Religious tolerance, separation of church and state, and freedom of speech are fundamental to American society. Thus, the concept of discrediting religious viewpoints, even those considered extreme, is hypocritical and unnatural to most Americans.⁴⁷ Non-Muslims defining Islamic extremism to Muslims presents a formidable challenge.⁴⁸ In Islam, non-Muslims have no authority to opine on matters of the internal struggle that only Muslims can wage.⁴⁹ As a result, much of U.S. PD efforts to date disproportionately focused on addressing methods to improve America's global favorability ratings.⁵⁰ Far more relevant to U.S. national security is a PD strategy that empowers moderate Muslims around the world to confront and arrest the spread of Islamic extremism.⁵¹ While both improving America's image and undermining terrorist organizations' ability to recruit are relevant in the war of ideas, presuming one will solve the other is a flawed strategy destined for failure.⁵²

The Current State of U.S. PD: 'Ready, Fire, Aim'

Sun Tzu stated, "...if you know the enemy and know yourself; you need not fear the results of a hundred battles."⁵³ Arguably, the United States has done neither in the war of ideas. As Senator John McCain notes, abolishing the USIA and subsequently marginalizing the remaining U.S. PD programs within the DoS unilaterally disarmed the U.S. in the war of ideas.⁵⁴

In fact, in the years since the consolidation of the USIA into the DoS, there is no evidence that Department officials are involving PD when considering new FP initiatives.⁵⁵ The USIA was the largest PD operation of any nation ever, as well as the world's largest publisher.⁵⁶ USIA boasted a greater overseas representation than any other U.S. government agency.⁵⁷ The merger of PD within the DoS reduced the number of PD officers by half.⁵⁸ Since the merger, the number of overseas PD staff has remained essentially unchanged.⁵⁹ Similarly, US PD suffered marked reductions in funding upon merging with the DoS. Although increased from its nadir in 2001, U.S. DP's funding in of just over 800 million dollars (includes broadcasting) is less than the funding it received in 1957 (in constant dollars).⁶⁰ To add perspective, PD's current funding is approximately 4 % of the DoS's overall foreign affairs budget and a mere 0.6 % of the DOD's budget.⁶¹

Not only does the DoS fail to have a recruitment program for the PD career path, but also, PD officers are conspicuously absent from the senior-most ranks of the department, demonstrating an overall lack of integration.⁶² PD officers report now spending the overwhelming majority of their time addressing administrative duties as

opposed to their primary intended responsibility of direct contact with their target populations.⁶³

An initial evaluation that PD has horribly failed in its mission to explain the United States to other nations is an oversimplification. Deeper inspection reveals the misappropriate use of PD as a modality for crisis management. Whether driven by fiscal considerations, hubris, or perhaps a combination of both, after the collapse of the Berlin wall, the costly 'peace dividend' presumption that the U.S. no longer needed to devote the continued level of funding, personnel, or effort toward its public diplomacy program prevailed within the executive and legislative branches of government.

The choice to marginalize its PD initiatives precipitated a cascading decline in America's ability to maintain its global positive image. Currently, the U.S. lacks the solid foundation of a world well versed in the virtues, human rights and freedoms for which America stands and espouses. There is no established base of credibility to buffer lies and misconceptions, nor a stable network of field ambassadors groomed by years of familiarity in their host nations to stem the tide of animosity and isolate the extremists.

What remains of the once vibrant and effective U.S. Information Agency is a U.S. PD that is a mere shell of its former capability. Subsumed within the DoS, U.S. PD efforts appear fixed on public affairs-centric focus as opposed to developing an enduring strategic plan to win the war of ideas. U.S. PD leadership lacks direct supervision, control or input of their field officers. Inadequate budgets prevent modernizing to keep pace with information technology advances or filling staffing requirements causing critical vacancies in field offices. Current U.S. PD officers appear disproportionately saddled with administrative responsibilities, impeding them

performing their primary function of networking with their target populations. Similarly, many U.S. PD field officers lack the necessary language skills enabling them to engage with their target audience. This is the arsenal available to the United States to confront, arguably, the greatest challenge in the history of U.S. PD, the war of ideas.

Failure to implement effective U.S. PD in the war of ideas also yields direct consequences for the war fighter. As anti-Americanism rises, losing ground in the war of ideas translates into greater resistance and hostility of the host populous against the deployed troops. Expanding war efforts means more frequent and perhaps longer deployments. Secondary effects adversely influence divorce rates, mental health, and retention among military members.⁶⁴

Failure to contain the spread of extremism will produce additional regions of global hostility, requiring new mobilization requirements for military members. Similarly, failure to succeed in the war of ideas risks extending the sanctuary, funding, and recruitment of enemy forces in the War on Terror.⁶⁵ A losing effort in the war of ideas may affect U.S. ability to form or maintain coalitions in the GWOT, forcing U.S. military to assume a larger role creating more frequent and or longer deployments with larger areas of responsibility.⁶⁶ Prior allies may refuse to assist in the war effort, as was the case with Turkey, creating greater logistic challenges for troop, supply, and equipment movements.⁶⁷

Inability to inspire like-minded alliances, partnerships, and coalitions to sacrifice for common interests, changes the dynamic of the operational environment for Joint Force Commanders.⁶⁸ Ability to form alliances obviates U.S. troops from shouldering far greater theater responsibilities, and averts the politically disastrous impression of U.S.

unilateralism to forward its own interests. Failure to staff the necessary number of overseas U.S. PD officers risks causing military mission drift. Military members may find themselves assuming PD roles and responsibilities that U.S. PD is understaffed and under-funded to execute.⁶⁹

Recommendations to Empower U.S. Public Diplomacy

To improve the effectiveness of US public diplomacy, changes must begin at the very highest levels. The Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy must have direct access to the President, be present at the development of foreign policy, and have a seat at National Security Council meetings.⁷⁰ This crucial input will provide insight into international reactions to proposed foreign policy initiatives and will help shape necessary preemptive public diplomacy strategies to gain greater reception to American influence abroad. Now is an ideal time for President Obama to establish this cultural change, thereby creating the standard for future administrations regarding the importance and relevance of U.S. PD in advancing national interests.⁷¹ Such recognition by the Executive office will better delineate lines of authority, engender greater priority, and foster interagency cooperation for PD initiatives.⁷² As former prominent USIA director Edward R. Morrow warned, “Public diplomacy needs to be in at the take off of foreign policies, not just at the occasional crash landing.”⁷³

First, and foremost, the Undersecretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs must coordinate all U.S. public diplomacy efforts. Unity of effort and interagency coordination of PD related programs within the White House, the DOD and the DoS, prevents irregular emphasis and competing priorities. Cooperation among departments facilitates successful implementation of U.S. foreign policy agendas. Synchronized

strategy enables a streamlined, uniform approach reducing the likelihood of both gaps and redundancy in various areas of effort or geographic regions.

Similarly, the Under Secretary of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs must be in the direct chain of command for all public diplomacy efforts down to the very level of field officers. As discussed, a synchronized approach at all levels with clear mission objectives is essential to the success of any agenda. It is the responsibility of the Under Secretary to create, implement and then adjust strategy as necessary. Without the authority over all areas and assets of public diplomacy, the flexibility of implementing urgent changes in strategy is lost. Additionally, the potential for essential regions to go understaffed and field agents to lack a unified mission focus becomes a dangerous reality.

The training and recruiting public diplomacy field officers must receive greater emphasis within the DoS. Public diplomacy strategy is only as effective as its messengers. Having as few as 60 % of field officers meet the most minimum standards in language proficiency of their host nation is a poor testimony to the effectiveness of any program. If field officers are not able to converse and interact fluently and seamlessly with their target population then credibility is lost, and so is the message they are trying to deliver. Given the intensity of the rancor that exists in Muslim regions, the United States can ill afford field officer vacancies due to understaffing. Similarly, if PD is the weapon of choice in the war of ideas recruitment of PD officers must receive far greater emphasis and priority.

Preparing a successful vision for U.S. PD in the war of ideas requires a return to Cold War era prominence in the national security strategy. A 2008 survey of USIA

Alumni argue precedent exists to warrant such action.⁷⁴ Seventy-two percent of those surveyed reported that PD was instrumental to the defeat of communism.⁷⁵ A similarly large majority (77 %) echo that U.S. PD plays an equally critical role in today's conflicts.⁷⁶ These experts note the top six U.S. PD priorities during the Cold War are the same PD priorities identified in today's war of ideas.⁷⁷

At the height of the Cold War, the U.S. devoted nearly 10,000 employees and a \$1 billion dollar budget to its PD programs.⁷⁸ Additionally, PD served as an independent foreign affairs entity within the executive branch and boasted the most extensive global presence of any US government agency.⁷⁹ Today's PD budget of \$859 million and 1,332 PD officers are a meager shadow of Cold War standards.⁸⁰

To make U.S. PD more effective in the war of ideas, the U.S. must regain its base of credibility; beginning with its allies. Recent international polling data indicates, since the start of the GWOT, the U.S. lost a substantial degree of influence globally, but even among its closest allies.⁸¹ In 2008 polls, of America's traditional allies, Britain, France and Germany, only Britain showed a slim majority (53%) reporting favorable views of the U.S., with France (42%) and Germany (31%) reporting smaller minorities.⁸² This data reflects a significant decline in U.S. favorability among these close allies who in 2000 each demonstrated large majorities reporting favorable views of the U.S.⁸³

Notably, the U.S. currently suffers unprecedented anti-Americanism in Western Europe, even in the United Kingdom where 41 % of individuals polled believe the U.S. is a greater threat to world peace than Iran.⁸⁴ Similarly, other allies such as Japan and Australia, where clear majorities previously held favorable views of the U.S. in 2000, reported steady declines in US favorability since the beginning of GWOT to present.⁸⁵ In

Turkey, a NATO ally, U.S. favorability ratings have plummeted from 52% in 2000 to 12% in 2008.⁸⁶ Similarly, only 13% of those polled in Turkey held favorable views of Americans.⁸⁷

Equally concerning, of the 24 countries polled in the 2008 Pew Global Attitudes Project (GAP), 21 view the U.S. as having a predominantly negative influence in their country⁸⁸. Nineteen of the twenty-four countries polled similarly reported the U.S. economy had a negative influence on their country.⁸⁹ Fortunately, most countries polled in the Pew GAP viewed Americans more favorably than the U.S. itself, indicating less hostility toward the American people⁹⁰. A notable exception to this finding, however, occurred in the Latin American countries polled, Mexico, Argentina and Brazil, where strong negative views of the U.S. correspond closely with similar negativity directed against U.S. citizens.⁹¹

United States PD must also regain credibility with Muslim nations to succeed in the war of ideas. This strategy requires the U.S. to demonstrate its willingness to depart from past policies, transition away from the confrontational term, 'war of ideas' and emphasize cultural connections with Muslim nations. Expanding U.S. PD programs to bridge relations with Iran is a bold strike, one likely to find success rebuilding U.S. credibility among Muslims.

The U.S. engaging Iran via public diplomacy is a formidable task; particularly when considering the significant number of Iranians who hold negative views of the U.S. government, but developing such relations is a cornerstone to progress in the war of ideas. Recent World Public Opinion.Org polls demonstrate the critical nature of this goal. Specifically, 74% of Iranians feel the U.S. Government has a negative influence on

the rest of the world.⁹² While a large majority of Iranians (>80%) believe the U.S. seeks to control Middle East oil reserves for its own interests.⁹³ Eighty-four percent of Iranians believe the U.S. objectively seeks to weaken and divide the Islamic world.⁹⁴ Equally concerning, 64% of Iranians polled feel the U.S. intentionally desires to humiliate the Islamic world.⁹⁵

Despite remnants of distrust between the two nations, Steven Kull, director of WorldPublicOpinion.org, believes Iran currently expresses a greater readiness to normalize relations with the U.S., particularly in such areas as tourism, trade, and journalistic, educational, cultural and athletic exchanges.⁹⁶ His opinion stems from a significant decrease in hostility toward the U.S. illustrated by comparing polling data from 2006 and 2008 where the belief that violent conflict between the West and Muslims is inevitable, has dropped to 12 % in 2008 compared to 25% in 2006.⁹⁷ Additionally, decreasing numbers of Iranians state the U.S. is a direct threat to their country and hostile to Islam (65% in 2006, vs. 51% in 2008).⁹⁸ Similarly, fewer Iranians consider U.S. military presence in the Middle East a direct threat against Iran (55% in 2008, down from 73% in 2006) or view Americans unfavorably (37% in 2008, down from 49% in 2006).⁹⁹ Equally reassuring, 76% of Iranians polled felt attacks against U.S. citizens in the U.S. was never justifiable.¹⁰⁰

Perhaps more compelling is data suggesting that efforts to normalize relations with Iran may aid U.S. foreign policy objectives in the Middle East and mitigate concerns regarding Iranian nuclear weapons development. A majority of Iranians reported regional concessions and concessions with their nuclear energy program would be acceptable in exchange for normalized relations with the U.S.¹⁰¹ In fact, a majority of

Iranians oppose nuclear weapons development with a near equal majority stating such weapons violate the principles of Islam.¹⁰² Similar majorities endorse the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty allowing the International Atomic Energy Agency full and permanent access to Iranian nuclear facilities in exchange for allowing Iran to conduct full-cycle nuclear energy production.¹⁰³ A majority of Iranians polled stated they would end support for armed anti-government groups in Iraq for normalized relations with the U.S.¹⁰⁴ Twenty-four percent of Iranians expressed willingness to recognize the State of Israel.¹⁰⁵ That number nearly doubled when posed as a condition for normalizing relations with the U.S.¹⁰⁶ Finally, the majority of Iranians had no desire for Iranian dominance within their region, preferring instead, the development of cooperative relations with surrounding Middle Eastern countries.¹⁰⁷

Polling data collected in the U.S. and Iran also suggests majorities in both nations believe common ground, with similar wants and needs, exists between them.¹⁰⁸ Both Americans and Iranians view terrorism as a national threat and both have strong negative opinions toward Osama bin Laden.¹⁰⁹ Both the majorities of Americans and Iranians reject the concept of attacks against civilians.¹¹⁰ A large majority of Iranians support the principles of free elections and freedom of the press.¹¹¹ Nearly equal majorities from each country (69% of Iranians and 73% of Americans) support bilateral discussions on ways to stabilize Iraq.¹¹²

The recent ease on U.S. restrictions regarding stem cell research by the Obama administration represents a poignant opportunity for U.S. PD to initiate relations with Iran. Iran is an international leader in stem cell research whose scientists developed human embryonic stem cell lines as far back as 2003 and who, in 2008, devoted 2.5

billion in funding to the country's stem cell research over the next 5 years.¹¹³ In fact, several other Muslim countries, such as Malaysia, Egypt and Turkey, are also actively involved in their own stem cell research programs.¹¹⁴ United States PD could conduct and orchestrate international scientific symposia devoted to the advancement of stem cell research and the development of global international ethics standards for such research.

Prior to any U.S. PD exchange with Iran, the U.S. must respect that polling data demonstrates, a majority of Iranians are satisfied with their form of government.¹¹⁵ Similarly, the majority of Iranians disapprove of U.S. attempts to spread democracy within Iran.¹¹⁶ These data warrant further review by the DoS, who continues to identify promoting democracy as one of the primary objectives of U.S. PD.¹¹⁷

Success in the war of ideas may also require modifications to current U.S. foreign policy objectives. International opinion surveys demonstrate that much of the decline in America's image over the last several years surrounds opposition to recent U.S. foreign policy initiatives and its expanding global military presence.¹¹⁸ Indeed, polling data of Muslim publics in the Middle East indicate wide support for the withdrawal of U.S. Forces from the Middle East, including U.S. Naval forces in the Persian Gulf.¹¹⁹ Similarly, international concerns exist that feel the build up of U.S. military presence in the Middle East over the last several decades actually exacerbates threats of nuclear proliferation and terrorism.¹²⁰ Ironically, while large majorities of Muslims polled disapprove of terrorist attacks against Americans; equal majorities support al Qaeda's methods of pressuring the U.S. to remove all its forces and bases

from Muslim lands.¹²¹ Large majorities view the U.S. military presence in the Middle East as a means to weaken and divide the Islamic world.¹²²

Polls obtained in Iraq in 2008 also demonstrate a growing desire for decreased U.S. Military presence in the region. Data indicates that the majority of Iraqis are impatient with the pace of U.S. military withdrawal.¹²³ Eighty-four percent of Iraqis polled desire the withdrawal of U.S. forces within a year.¹²⁴ Of particular concern, 71% of Iraqis feel the U.S. desires to occupy Iraq with permanent bases and 61% view the presence of U.S. forces in Iraq as destabilizing their security situation.¹²⁵ Such findings are an ominous predictor of the Iraqi's willingness to cooperate with the coalition forces, or support an insurgency.¹²⁶ Sixty-one percent of Iraqis support attacks on US troops, while 68% of Iraqis endorse non-military assistance by the U.S., to include, building schools, health clinics and other assistance with organizing communities.¹²⁷

While global opinion polls should not dictate any country's foreign policy, countries should not routinely dismiss them. As such, the U.S. should re-evaluate its military force structure in the Middle East. Phased reductions of American forces and bases in the Middle East based on a timetable ratified through the UN Security Council, demonstrates U.S. commitment to international governing bodies and multilateralism.

Conclusion

Concluding budget cuts and staff reductions alone account for U.S. Public Diplomacy's ineffectiveness in the war of ideas to date oversimplifies the greater complexity of issues at hand. Upon merging within the DoS, U.S. Public diplomacy abandoned the very principles that define its functionality; independence, agility, coordinated action, a direct voice with the executive office, and person-to-person

contact with target populations. Rather than appropriately vetting aggressive new foreign policy initiatives through U.S. PD, America blindly attempted to superimpose Western values upon an established foreign culture with predictable results only to then question, 'Why do they hate us?'. Lastly, America's apprehensions toward confronting ideological struggles led to a disproportionate emphasis for U.S. PD on public relations as opposed to confronting the more challenging issue of containing the spread of Islamic extremism.

Success in the war of ideas requires a comprehensive, coordinated, overarching strategy for U.S. PD, something lacking since the Cold War era. Rather than viewed as a relic of a past conflict, the success of U.S. PD (or USIA) during the Cold War era should serve as a template for the level of national commitment and emphasis necessary for PD to favorably influence the war of ideas.¹²⁸ International anti-Americanism and the spread of Islamic extremism threaten U.S. interests globally and create a growing national security threat. The U.S. must prioritize its PD efforts to counter these threats and to do so it must engage in the war of ideas with as much vigor and capital as it dedicated to winning the Cold War.¹²⁹ Similarly, PD must regain the prominence it held during the Cold War era as a central component of national strategy and America's premiere political weapon to contain Soviet influence beyond its borders.¹³⁰

As recent opinion polls indicate, Islamic extremism is losing favorability in even the most conservative of Muslim countries. Now is the ideal time for the new administration to capitalize upon this momentum and redefine America's approach to the war of ideas. Rebuilding PD will enable the U.S. to distance itself from the

ambiguous and arguably confrontational term, 'war of ideas', and launch a new, inclusive direction aimed at creating cultural harmony with moderate Muslims.

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