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## Casualty of Design: An Exploration of the Zeniths and Nadirs of American Public Diplomacy

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Casualty of Design:  
An Exploration of the Zeniths and Nadirs of  
American Public Diplomacy



Senior Project submitted to  
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of Bard College

by

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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York  
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## Abstract

This thesis is an examination of various factors inhibiting effective American public diplomacy. A unique case study, American public diplomacy operationalized through educational and cultural exchanges, radio broadcasting and American cultural centers and libraries and implemented through American public diplomacy agencies such as the World War II era Office of War Information and the Cold War era United States Information Agency has been an effective tool for pursuing U.S. foreign policy objectives. Despite positive impacts, for example, helping to dismantle the Soviet Union, facilitating cross-cultural understanding and respect between nations, and the positive portrayal of the American culture and way of life, the history of American public diplomacy is troubling and displays a level of inadequate funding and support from American political establishments due to a myriad of factors. Among those factors are the persistent propaganda charge and considerable skepticism targeted at operations in addition to other phenomenons such as rising anti-Americanism, a consequence of unfavorable policies, most notably U.S. support for Israel and the 2003 U.S. Invasion of Iraq. These factors have stifled the generation of support for public diplomacy programs and impeded access to foreign audiences. Finally, as portrayed by what this thesis terms as a series of “zeniths and nadirs,” one of the greatest challenges negatively affecting the maintenance of sustained American public diplomacy programs and agencies is the historical precedent that mandates the design of public diplomacy be a tool used in the wake of international crises, keeping operations from achieving their most effective status as a long-term U.S. foreign policy strategy.





## Introduction

At the heart of America's system of information and cultural operations is the direct engagement of international audiences. This practice is commonly known as public diplomacy.<sup>1</sup> Officially coined in the mid-1960s by former U.S. diplomat Edmund Gullion, public diplomacy is a component of American "soft power," broadly understood as a nation's ability to secure the national interest through the promotion of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies.<sup>2</sup> American public diplomacy, or APD, specifically seeks to inform and ultimately influence audiences abroad through coordinated information and culture dissemination programs.<sup>3</sup>

Over the course of the years, APD has also been utilized as a transparent means by which the United States engages and interacts with foreign audiences to realize and secure American interests. It has routinely served as an effective foreign policy tool for the United States to combat ideological foes, spread pro-democratic messages across the globe, and create an environment advantageous to American foreign policy. Done so through the promotion and circulation of attractive cultural and political ideals,<sup>4</sup> APD promotes and endorses American values, foreign policy, and culture. Additionally, APD encourages the acquisition of pertinent cultural and linguistic knowledge for both Americans and foreigners, while simultaneously seeks to engender positive feelings toward the U.S., ultimately constructing an environment friendly to

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, *Decline and Fall of the United States Information Agency: American Public Diplomacy 1989-2001*. (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), summarized in Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. (New York, Public Affairs, 2004), preface.

<sup>3</sup> USC Center on Public Diplomacy, "What is Public Diplomacy?" accessed on April, 27, 2019, <https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/page/what-is-pd>.

<sup>4</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, X-XII.

the realization of American interests. Justifiably so, American public diplomacy is held co-responsible for many of the United States' foreign policy successes.

## Notable Foreign Policy Successes

Through the implementation of adequately funded and effectively utilized information and cultural operations exemplified in cultural diplomacy, or the managed export of culture,<sup>5</sup> exchange diplomacy, or the exchange of persons with other actors for mutual advantage,<sup>6</sup> and through other vehicles such as radio broadcasting, APD operations have facilitated cross-cultural dialogues, fostered international understanding and established international alliances. Notably successful American public diplomacy programs have historically helped turn the tides in infamous global conflicts, as illustrated by the Office of War Information (OWI) which effectively used radio broadcasting, among other tools, to poke holes in foreign support for the Axis' powers during World War II.<sup>7</sup>

American public diplomacy was also a major component of U.S. Cold War strategy. For instance, cultural and educational exchanges of students, academics, entrepreneurs and diplomats were particularly effective in combating anti-American narratives promulgated by the Russians.<sup>8</sup> These programs also played a particularly special role in the range of forces that led to the final implosion of the Kremlin's authority and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.<sup>9</sup> A high ranking Soviet official, Oleg Kalugin, who became a senior executive in the KGB, described

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<sup>5</sup> Cull, *Decline and Fall*, summarized from Introduction.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the US Information Agency*, (Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 33-34.

<sup>8</sup> Yale, Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War* (Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania States University Press, 2003), 22-32.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 75.

exchanges as “a Trojan Horse for the Soviet Union,”<sup>10</sup> saying, “They played a tremendous role in the erosion of the Soviet system....They kept infecting more and more people over the years.”<sup>11</sup>

## Factors Hindering Public Diplomacy Operations

Despite its many apparent foreign policy benefits, the history of APD is riddled with numerous adversities and unexpected challenges. Two instances in the recent history of APD best corroborate the policy’s travails. Throughout the mid to late 1990s up until the attacks on September 11th, 2001, American public diplomacy had been steadily subjected to a reduction of funds, personnel decreases, and program cuts. Additionally, APD operations saw the dismantling of one of America’s most effective public diplomacy institutions, the United States Information Agency (USIA), whose ability to successfully tell America’s story was attributed to its status as an independent agency and its global reach which was operationalized through cultural centers, diplomatic connections, and public diplomacy exchange programs.<sup>12</sup> When the 9/11 terrorist attacks occurred, the USIA had already been closed for a few years, and with it a multitude of its programs, expertise, and connections had been lost. Many public affairs officers (PAOs) felt that the USIA’s closure, augmented by the reality that remaining APD operations following the agency’s closure were radically underfunded and under prioritized, left public diplomacy at an operational level unable to take on Bin Laden and his communications network. Compounded by the absence of a strong and cohesive agency to respond promptly and advocate effectively for adequate funding on APD’s behalf, many PAOs during the early 2000s found that public

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War*, 22-32.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Cull, *Decline and Fall*, summarized from introduction.

diplomacy operations were ill-equipped to combat rising anti-Americanism swelling across the globe.<sup>13</sup>

The second instance is the current threat that the present administration poses to APD operations. Budget proposals for fiscal year 2019 and 2020 paint a potentially devastating picture for America's public diplomacy programs and activities. FY 2019 proposed a complete zeroing out of the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) which is tasked with implementing educational and cultural exchanges, a staple of APD operations. President Trump's most recent budget proposal for FY 2020 suggests another substantial cut to foreign aid and diplomacy by 23 percent.<sup>14</sup> What is more, there are a plethora of vacancies within the current State Department. As of fall 2018, almost half of the top-level jobs in the State Department were still awaiting appointments.<sup>15</sup> Effective public diplomacy is undermined by, for example, an absence of ambassadors in several prominent countries such as Jordan, Qatar, and Singapore,<sup>16</sup> given that this asserts broader U.S. diplomatic missions are not a top priority for the Trump administration.

These budget proposals in addition to the current absence of a fully staffed State Department highlight a dispiriting history for American public diplomacy, and prove that operations are consistently facing apparently counterproductive obstacles. The operational low points of the 1990s and early 2000s, in addition to the current administration's attacks on APD

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<sup>13</sup> William A. Rugh, *American Encounters with Arabs: The "soft Power" of U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Middle East*, (Connecticut, Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 159.

<sup>14</sup> Kate Rabinowitz, Kevin Uhrmacher, "What Trump proposed in his 2020 budget," (The Washington Post, 2019), accessed on April 27, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/politics/trump-budget-2020/?utm\\_term=.aa20af7a6a90](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/politics/trump-budget-2020/?utm_term=.aa20af7a6a90).

<sup>15</sup> Doyle McManus, "Almost Half the Top Jobs in Trump's State Department Are Still Empty," (The Atlantic, 2019), accessed on April 27, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/11/state-department-empty-ambassador-to-australi/574831/>.

<sup>16</sup> American Foreign Service Association, "Tracker: Current U.S. Ambassadors" (2019), accessed on April 27, 2019, <https://www.afsa.org/list-ambassadorial-appointments>.

efforts give rise to the question that animates this study: “Why does APD, a seemingly effective strategy to secure American interests and influence public attitudes toward the United States routinely face operational challenges, budget cuts, and institutional dismantling? Otherwise put, what explains APD’s troubling and dispiriting history riddled with operational low points?”

The history of struggle for American Public Diplomacy is further perplexed by the increased efforts of other nations to amplify their public diplomacy strategies. For instance, the Chinese People’s Institute of Foreign Affairs (CPIFA) is working to expand youth educational and cultural exchanges with Europe, as indicated by public diplomacy programs like the China-Austria Young Leaders Program, an initiative established in 2016 which draws delegates from Chinese and European governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), media outlets, think tanks, universities and businesses to discuss topics such as cultural inheritance, China-EU interconnectivity, and potential ways China and European countries can work closer together in order to confront global issues.<sup>17</sup> He Zhigao, assistant professor at the Institute of European Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, noted the benefits of such a program, saying,

Public diplomacy is a possible and even a necessary approach to promote mutual understanding between Europe and China which may have a positive effect on co-evolution....Evidence shows that younger people develop a lot more understanding and respect for each other if they interact directly, if they grasp the background, the living conditions and the contexts of others.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Guo Yiming, “China, Austria spark 'young energy' in mutual Understanding,” (2016), accessed on April 27, 2019, [http://www.china.org.cn/china/2016-12/05/content\\_39850907.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/2016-12/05/content_39850907.htm).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

While China is expanding its public diplomacy policy, so too is Spain. Take for instance, the Cervantes Institute which was created in 1991 by the Spanish government. The largest public diplomacy organization dedicated to the study and teaching of the Spanish language and culture, the Cervantes Institute has expanded to over 44 different countries in the last two and half decades, with 87 centers and libraries responsible for implementing language classes, cultural events, and other educational resources such as offering the Diplomas of Spanish as Foreign Language (DELE) examinations on behalf of the Spanish Ministry of Education.<sup>19</sup>

## Explanations for APD's Troubling History

Despite expansionary public diplomacy measures enacted by other global actors, the United States remains a particularly unique case within this discourse. There are several explanations enlisted to explain these distinctive hardships facing APD, with the first one being the recurrent anxieties surrounding public diplomacy operations hindering the ability to generate domestic support within the American Congress and electorate. This failure to adequately support APD efforts has been justified by arguments that suggest American public diplomacy propagandizes domestic constituencies, enables enemies to infiltrate operations, and engenders support for opposing political agendas. By exploring the propaganda charge which resulted in constraining stipulations within the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948, the first section of this thesis determines a connection between public diplomacy's troubling operational history and its struggle to generate support for information and culture operations within domestic spaces. As a result of the propaganda charge, apparent skepticism within the

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<sup>19</sup> Instituto Cervantes, "Spanish, a language for dialogue," accessed on April 27, 2019, [https://www.cervantes.es/imagenes/File/guias/guia\\_ic\\_2009-ingles-aus.pdf](https://www.cervantes.es/imagenes/File/guias/guia_ic_2009-ingles-aus.pdf).

American Congress targeted at APD activities, and an absence of broader public awareness and appreciation of America's public diplomacy programs, APD operations have been scrutinized, its institutions have been heavily restricted in addition to being routinely dismantled, and overall, American public diplomacy has been relegated to a position of low status on the totem pole of foreign policy tools.

In order to fully comprehend the historic challenges present within this discourse, the second explanation explored within this thesis focuses on other travails highlighting APD's difficult operating history. Section two specifically discusses the hostile working environment for public diplomacy programs and personnel created by some rather unpopular American policies, most notably, U.S.-Israel policy and the 2003 Invasion of Iraq. These policies have compounded anti-Americanism within certain regions across the globe, consequently, limiting and in certain cases banning interactions with foreign populations, impeding effective public diplomacy. This dilemma is best suggested by U.S. Middle East policy, which illustrates how a perceived bad policy product can negatively impact APD efforts by keeping public diplomats from interacting effectively with skeptical or unfriendly audiences, and from keeping programs from operating at all.

Without neglecting the aforementioned explanations, this study will also incorporate a third explanation that thus far has not received sufficient attention: a cyclical "rise and fall" historical trend, displayed in what this thesis terms as a series of "zeniths and nadirs." An apparent trend throughout APD discourse, this series of zeniths and nadirs is a consequence of a historical precedent that mandates the robust utilization of APD efforts in the form of establishing new agencies and increasing program funding only after an international conflict



takes hold. The consistent post-conflict prioritization of operations exposes these efforts and institutions to scrutiny once the conflict has been resolved and hinders the follow-on work of sustaining and bolstering environments conducive to the achievement of American national interests.

Among other things, this trend has solidified the broader role of American public diplomacy as a reactionary measure, (with a few exceptions to this rule, notably the Fulbright Program and the radio broadcasting unit, Voice of America which both stand to be examples for systemic reform.) This distorted view surrounding the mission of APD operations has been embedded in the purpose of American public diplomacy strategy. Moreover, without a consensus on the benefits of sustaining operations past the resolution of an international conflict, presidential administrations, such as the Truman Administration, the Clinton Administration, and currently the Trump administration are able to approach the utility and place of public diplomacy in varying degrees. Skye Wallace Henry, American Councils for International Education Program Manager for the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Abroad program, a public diplomacy initiative funded by the U.S. Department of State, echoed these findings in an interview conducted for this study, saying “one of our greatest challenges as individuals working on the implementation of public diplomacy programs remains the changing priorities of each new presidential administration, and what that means for public diplomacy programs.”<sup>20</sup>

Part three of this thesis aims to show that relegating public diplomacy to the post conflict toolkit has kept political administrations from developing and sustaining a sufficient level of APD funding and infrastructure, in comparison to, for example, the high priority status the U.S.

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<sup>20</sup> Skye Henry Wallace, interview by author, Washington D.C., January 25, 2019.

military enjoys. Routinely funding and cutting APD's budget, assembling and dismantling public diplomacy institutions, and discontinuing programming obstructs an ability to effectively engage and interact with foreign audiences in order to achieve long-term benefits. By not prioritizing long-term APD strategies, the United States additionally negates decades of acquired cultural and linguistic knowledge, diplomatic connections, and cross-cultural understanding, necessary components of conducting U.S. foreign policy. This reality is illustrated by the decreased funding of APD programs following the conclusion of the Cold War in the 1990s, and ultimately the closure of the United States Information Agency (USIA). These cuts to public diplomacy programs and USIA's closure meant a severe depletion of critical linguistic abilities, cultural knowledge, and vast diplomatic connections, along with a weakened understanding of foreign attitudes towards the United States. Consequently, in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks, the Bush administration had few APD resources to utilize when addressing growing anti-americanism and religious extremism.

Although American public diplomacy has endured a steady decline as discussed by international relations scholars William Rugh, Nicholas Cull, Joseph Nye, and Wilson Dizard, my study draws attention to a different trend within American public diplomacy discourse. While a necessary component of this discussion, the viewpoint concerning decline is only a part of this narrative and solely focusing on the decline neglects the more nuanced approach that attends to APD's rising and falling historical handicap, which has negatively impacted public diplomacy operations. It is this cycle of "zeniths and nadirs," brought about by a historical precedent ingrained into the very framework and purpose of American public diplomacy that has kept APD programs and agencies as casualties of their own design, additionally obstructing programs from

reaching and maintaining an apex of operations consistent with APD's most effective decades of service.

## Purpose of Study

This study aims to examine distinct challenges facing American public diplomacy, specifically the inability to generate robust support for public diplomacy operations, the negative impacts of unpopular American policies, and the structural defect of marrying APD's purpose and operations to international crises. This thesis highlights notable weak points within American public diplomacy and outlines suggestions to remedy these issues such as the expansion of APD's most effective programs, an allocation of adequate funding, and a rejection of the historical precedent mandating APD operations exist as a tool utilized only after a global conflict arises. In conclusion, this study argues that the United States must address APD's low-status priority on the federal level by establishing a long term and sustained effort to maintain and effectively utilize funds and implement information and culture dissemination initiatives, accomplished through a deeper appreciation and expansion of public diplomacy resources.

To illustrate this thesis centered on the travails within American public diplomacy discourse, my research will trace APD's troubling operational history, beginning with APD activity in the mid-20th century and ending with the current Administration's public diplomacy policy. In the first section, this study will examine APD operations during and following World War II, focusing heavily on the tenure of the former Office of War Information and the United States Information Agency, given these agencies' pivotal roles in pursuing American Interests

during WWII and the Cold War. In addition, this study will outline APD operations throughout the Middle East and North Africa, specifically analyzing activities and programs implemented during the days of the United States Information Agency, along with recent policies regarding APD activity within the region. In the third section, I will expand this exploration to cover APD's broader post-WWII working timeline, choosing to devote particular attention to the final operating years of key agencies once dedicated to American public diplomacy. In the conclusion, this study cites suggested reforms from international relations scholars such as Joseph Nye in addition to providing a few of my own suggestions for remedying these issues.

## **Part I:**

### **Persistent Anxieties: Obstacles Inhibiting Broader Domestic Support**

The ancestral roots of American public diplomacy can be traced back to before Edmund Guillon coined the term in the 1960s to public diplomacy operations enacted during the second World War by President Franklin Roosevelt, who planned to employ a network of information and culture operations to inform the American public of wartime aims, generate support for war efforts, and combat a rise of authoritarian ideologies within foreign audiences.<sup>21</sup>

While the president had committed his support to the use of information operations to aid in the war effort, the American public and the United States Congress in particular were apprehensive of such campaigns, given the belief that these operations were seen as potential

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<sup>21</sup> Sydney Weinberg, "What to Tell America: The Writers' Quarrel in the Office of War Information," (Indiana, *The Journal of American History*, 1968), 77-78.

vehicles of presidential propaganda.<sup>22</sup> Elected officials in the United States were also fearful that an American propaganda machine could resemble that of Joseph Goebbels' virulently anti-semitic propaganda in Germany that was drumming up huge endorsements for Hitler and his Nazi Party.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, previous attempts at similar activities, namely those of the Committee on Public Information (CPI), established by President Woodrow Wilson in 1917 during the first World War,<sup>24</sup> were largely viewed as a failure.

The CPI, an independent federal agency created to influence public opinion to support U.S. participation in WWI had a series of missteps that gave information operations a sour name. To begin, the committee chairmen, George Creel, an investigative journalist and politician, exploited his overseas operations as a way to gain favor with congressmen who controlled the CPI's funding by sending his congressional friends on brief assignments to Europe.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, many of the committee's business arrangements were met with congressional criticism, in particular, the CPI's sole right to distribute battlefield pictures.<sup>26</sup> Some elected officials, like Republican Representative Allen Treadway of Massachusetts described this as a "monopoly," suggesting that CPI presented clear threats to the entertainment and media industries.<sup>27</sup>

In another instance, Chairman Creel used the committee's resources to locate the source of negative stories concerning Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, a former newsman and a

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<sup>22</sup> Allan Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945* (Connecticut, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 23.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Executive Order 2594, "Creating Committee on Public Information," accessed on April 27, 2019, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/executive-order-2594-creating-committee-public-information>.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory: America in World War I*, (New York, Basic Books, 2003), 148-149.

<sup>26</sup> *Hearings Before the Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives, on the Proposed Revenue Act of 1918, Part II: Miscellaneous Taxes* (Washington, DC: 1918), 967ff.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

political ally of Creel. The stories were traced back to Louis Howe who was the assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin Roosevelt. Creel threatened to expose Howe to the President Wilson if the stories did not cease.<sup>28</sup> The CPI was ultimately shut down following the conclusion of the first World War, but its legacy left the American Congress and electorate skeptical of wartime information dissemination institutions and programs. This coupled with the reality that the United States was experiencing a relatively peaceful time of isolationism at the start of World War II created a rather uninterested response to involve the country in a global information campaign, only augmented by perceptions that saw public diplomacy information and culture operations largely as having propagandist persuasions.

## The Creation of the Office of War Information

Regardless, as World War II demanded increased involvement of the United States, an information and culture operations strategy became paramount. Consequently, the Office of War Information, or OWI, was erected. Established in 1942, by Executive Order 9182,<sup>29</sup> following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the OWI was tasked with coordinating public and private entities and interests to mount an immense information and cultural offensive against the Axis powers.<sup>30</sup> The office consolidated a variety of previous governmental entities, such as the Office of Facts and Figures (OFF), the Office of Government Reports, and the Division of Information of the Office for Emergency Management, in addition to co-opting international connections mainly facilitated

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<sup>28</sup> Fleming, *The Illusion of Victor*, 148-149.

<sup>29</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Executive Order 9182 Establishing the Office of War Information," (1942), accessed on April 27, 2019, <http://www.coldwarradiomuseum.com/executive-order-9182-establishing-the-office-of-war-information-june-13-1942/>.

<sup>30</sup> Gerhard, Peters, John T. Woolley, "Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Executive Order 9182 Establishing the Office of War Information.," June 13, 1942" *The American Presidency Project*. University of California - Santa Barbara.

by two prominent New Yorkers, Nelson Rockefeller and William Donovan, who engaged in such information tactics in an attempt to drum up support for their business endeavors within foreign markets.<sup>31</sup>

During the War, the extent of OWI's efforts and reach operated on a global scale, engaging millions of individuals.<sup>32</sup> Within its arsenal of programs, the office employed radio broadcasting, documentary film screenings, pamphlet drops, and exchanges of educators and professionals to tilt the balance of WWII in favor of the Allies.<sup>33</sup> The Office's Overseas Branch enjoyed much success.<sup>34</sup> In one notable incident, the OWI effectively used radio broadcasts through outlets like the second most powerful station on the European continent, Radio Luxembourg (captured in a tank raid), to convince German civilians and German military personnel that they were losing the war.<sup>35</sup> As was the case with Germany, OWI's radio broadcasting arm dually operated throughout the Pacific front. On one occasion, a medium-wave radio station provided civilian listeners in Japan with information on the grim realities facing the country, including the potential of a mainland invasion by the Allied powers.<sup>36</sup>

OWI leaflet campaigns complimented the office's other efforts, and were utilized in a whole host of nations, most notably in Northern Africa, Italy, Germany, the Philippines, and Japan. In Japan, the OWI dropped over 180 million leaflets, of those approximately 98 million were dropped throughout the summer of 1945.<sup>37</sup> Leaflets dispersed in the Northern African country of Tunisia read "You Are Surrounded." Across the Mediterranean in Sicily, leaflets

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<sup>31</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 9.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 22-33.

<sup>34</sup> Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 76.

<sup>35</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 33.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 34.

<sup>37</sup> Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 79.

reading, “The time has come for you to decide whether Italians shall die for Mussolini and Hitler or live for Italy and civilization” were also dropped.<sup>38</sup> Such efforts poked holes in support for the Axis powers and bred dissent towards continued war efforts within these populations.

## Impacts of the Persistent Propaganda Charge and Apparent Skepticism

Despite the office’s important role in the War effort, original feelings of discomfort towards propagandizing activities remained. Given that the office’s initial order was a dual mandate to carry out information programs both within the United States and overseas,<sup>39</sup> the act of disseminating information within domestic audiences in order to generate support for war efforts created tensions within the American Congress.<sup>40</sup> From the start, many legislators saw the office as a propaganda machine of the Roosevelt administration that could be exploited for political gains. Congressmen routinely viewed these information campaigns as having subliminal bipartisan agendas, and were apprehensive to support such efforts. As a consequence of the growing concern regarding the potential of exploiting OWI’s activities, Congress mandated that much of OWI’s outreach be focused on the foreign space, rolling back domestic programs such as press and radio broadcasts, and the production and distribution of various information and war-combat motion pictures.<sup>41</sup> The propaganda charge additionally resulted in a substantial reduction to the agency’s funding, with programs being sharply curtailed by Congress in 1943.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 117-119.

<sup>39</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 17.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>41</sup> United States History, “Office of War Information,” (2019) accessed on April 27, 2019, <https://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h3959.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 17.



As the dust from War World II settled, America's already controversial wartime information office faced added scrutiny.<sup>43</sup> A coalition of conservative Republicans and Southern Democrats routinely questioned the relevance of OWI's programs, with one Republican Representative, Leon Gavin of Pennsylvania justifying his intent to abolish the office by saying that such a closure would, "save \$50 million for the taxpayers and a lot of headaches for the American people."<sup>44</sup> At the end of the day, few legislators were prepared to defend a controversial government program.<sup>45</sup> Coupled with attacks from another disgruntled associate of OWI, the commercial media industry, the future of the OWI looked bleak.

The commercial media companies had paradoxically played a crucial peripheral role in many of the office's operations. For instance, Hollywood was a key creator of newsreel content and American movies<sup>46</sup> that were distributed throughout Germany, Japan, and Italy, in addition to being viewed in the United States.<sup>47</sup> What few domestic programs were permitted to operate were heavily reliant on the entertainment industry. The OWI's Bureau of Motion Pictures (BMP) collaborated closely with Hollywood movie studios to create and circulate films that advanced American wartime aims. Successful films depicted the Allied armed forces as courageous "Freedom fighters," and advocated that civilians become involved in war efforts through the conservation of fuel and the donation of food to American troops.<sup>48</sup> Despite this necessary partnership, the relationship between this sector of the American capitalist market and America's Office of War Information was not a strictly symbiotic one.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Charles A. W. Thomson, "Overseas Information Service of The U.S. Government," (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution, 1948), 65-67.

<sup>47</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 28-29.

<sup>48</sup> Allan Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 57.

Media companies were highly skeptical of the office and tended to perceive OWI as the thin wedge of government control over their activities, eroding and infringing upon their First Amendment protections.<sup>49</sup> What is more, the federal establishment's ability to organize media operations worldwide appeared as a potential threat to the sector's plans for postwar expansion into overseas markets.<sup>50</sup> In general, media companies kept their partnerships with American public diplomacy programs at a strategic distance, viewing them more as competitors rather than as allies. With the end of WWII, the industry welcomed the closure of the Office of War Information.<sup>51</sup> In the Fall of 1945, with congressmen against the existence of OWI and the commercial media sector encouraging the disbanding of the office, President Truman signed an executive order officially closing the Office of War Information and transferring some of the agency's functions to the Department of State, while cutting the majority of programs. With the closure of OWI, the immediate years following WWII bore a notable absence of American information and culture operations, additionally lacking a robust infrastructure to engage and interact with foreign audiences.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the closure of OWI, the necessity for information and culture operations did not disappear. The newest "ism," Communism championed by the Soviet Union posed a distinctive threat to the United States in the post-war era. Solidified in what would be called the Truman Doctrine, America committed to confront the Soviet threat and defend democracy, a struggle portrayed by President Truman as the "struggle for the minds of men."<sup>53</sup> Similar to the manner in which the OWI was employed to combat the "isms" present during WWII such as Nazism,

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<sup>49</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 37.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>53</sup> Rugh, *American Encounters with Arabs*, 28.

Fascism, and Japanese Imperialism, the Truman Doctrine necessitated an active and vigorous system of information and culture dissemination campaigns that would simultaneously combat the spread of communism and effectively sell democracy to the rest of the international community.<sup>54</sup>

As the Cold War commenced, many in Congress echoed Truman's sentiments and pushed for the passing of the "The U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948", commonly known as the "Smith-Mundt Act." The sponsor of the legislation, a once isolationist, Republican congressman Karl Mundt of South Dakota was inspired to author the act by a fact-finding mission to Europe.<sup>55</sup> Upon his return, the congressmen expressed a newfound commitment to internationalism<sup>56</sup> sparked by his realization that "in every country we visited... we are losing this war of words."<sup>57</sup> In response, Mundt proposed the legislation to help address this issue of American influence on the decline.

The U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act, which seeks to promote better understanding of the United States among "the peoples of the world and to strengthen cooperative international relations,"<sup>58</sup> additionally supports "the preparation, and the dissemination of information about the United States, its people and its policies, through press, publications, radio, motion pictures, and other information media and through information centers and instructors abroad,"<sup>59</sup> effectively legislating the use of public diplomacy.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Emily T. Metzgar, "Seventy Years of the Smith-Mundt Act and U.S. International Broadcasting: Back to the Future?" (California, CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy, 2018) 17, accessed on April 27, 2019, [https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/Seventy\\_Years\\_Metzgarv2.pdf](https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/uscpublicdiplomacy.org/files/Seventy_Years_Metzgarv2.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Karl Mundt, "We Are Losing the War of Words in Europe," (New York, *The New York Times*, 1947).

<sup>58</sup> Public Law 584, 79th Congress (chapter 723, 2nd Session) S.163. Quoted in: Rugh, *American Encounters with Arabs*, 27.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

## Anxieties Surrounding the Smith-Mundt Act

Like the anxiety present during the tenure of the Office of War Information, Congress was once again apprehensive towards the use of American public diplomacy information and culture operations. Many congressmen would only support the Smith-Mundt Act if distinct provisions restricting the domestic dissemination of public diplomacy materials, such as films, radio broadcasts, and other media campaigns were included in the legislation, out of fear that presidential administrations could exploit these information tactics for partisan gains, advancing a political agenda and potentially propagandizing the American people.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to these sentiments, there was an apparent anxiety that these operations could be co-opted by communist infiltrators. Democratic Congressman of Georgia and chairman of the House Rules Committee, Eugene Cox, in a conversation with Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, William Benton implied that ten of the twelve committee members were opposed to anything the State Department favored, including the public diplomacy operations detailed in the Smith-Mundt Act because of its “Communist infiltration and pro-Russian policy.”<sup>62</sup>

Congressman Cox also publicly characterized the State Department as “chock full of Reds.”<sup>63</sup>

Other comments regarding the use of information and culture operations were similarly tough. The ranking minority member of the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee, Republican John Taber of New York demanded a “house-cleaning” of “some folks”

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<sup>60</sup> Edward L. Carter, Allen W. Palmer, “The Smith-Mundt Act’s Ban on Domestic Propaganda: An Analysis of the Cold War Statute Limiting Access to Public Diplomacy,” (Utah, All Faculty Publications, 2006), 7.

<sup>61</sup> Rugh, *American Encounters with Arabs*, 27.

<sup>62</sup> Frank Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas : U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950*. (London, Cambridge University Press 1981), 122.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

in the State Department and to “keep only those people whose first loyalty is to the United States.”<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, the FBI added its own set of concerns to the debate, appearing skeptical of State’s ability to monitor and control participants in its exchange programs.<sup>65</sup> As a result of these concerns, the bill was only passed with notable restrictions on information and culture operations in place, namely limitations on the circulation of material within the United States, and stipulations limiting radio broadcasting programs that receive federal funds, such as the highly popular Voice of America (VOA) from making their material openly available to the American public. While available to foreign audiences, the same subject matter and resources were inaccessible to domestic audiences.

The stipulations appeased the critics of the Smith-Mundt Act. Seemingly critical timing, the law’s passing came at a moment when Cold War tensions began to escalate, mandating president Eisenhower create arguably America’s largest and most famous public diplomacy agency, the United States Information Agency (USIA). Established in 1953, USIA played an instrumental role in developing and carrying out a national strategy for overseas information and culture operations. During the peak era of Cold War tensions, USIA had the most extensive overseas presence of any Washington agency, and its outsized role in projecting American ideas and “Telling America’s Story”<sup>66</sup> spread to all four corners of the globe.<sup>67</sup>

The USIA was seemingly an empire of communication networks and cultural outreach programs with a massive staff coordinating a global network of posts known as the United States

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<sup>64</sup> John D. Morris, “Seek to Halt Fund for Federal News: Republicans Say Department of State Lacks Authority to Use \$10,000,000 Would Kill \$10,000,000 Fund Harriman Testimony Secret.” (New York, The New York Times, 1946.)

<sup>65</sup> Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas*, 147.

<sup>66</sup> Cull, *Decline and Fall*, 2.

<sup>67</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 4.

Information Service or USIS.<sup>68</sup> The breath of overseas operations implemented by the agency was immense, running a wide range of offices and programs. The agency oversaw short-wave radio stations, cultural centers and libraries, documentary film and television units, embassy press specialists, magazines, speakers, exhibitions, and educational and cultural exchanges of students, diplomats, and entrepreneurs.<sup>69</sup> This multiplicity of public diplomacy programs operated in a whole host of nations including some that had strained relationships with Washington, most noteworthy of those being the Soviet Union.

Showcasing American culture was a prodigious asset to the agency. By heightening the attractive cultural features of American music, art, architecture, and technological advances, the United States was able to counteract narratives the Soviets were using to depict Americans as backwards and aggressive. This facet of public diplomacy, known as cultural diplomacy, played an important role in generating a favorable image of the U.S. abroad, and as it appeared, the international community could not get enough of America's culture. The USIA operated magazine, *America Illustrated*, who's first issue featured colorful pages filled with pictures of Detroit automobiles, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Mt. Palomar telescope, and modern architecture in San Francisco was highly popular among readers within the Soviet Union. Copies were even exchanged at black market prices.<sup>70</sup>

## A Domestic Dilemma: Restrictive Provisions within the Smith-Mundt Act

Despite its impressive global reach, USIA was struggling to reach audiences at home. As was the case during the OWI years, the USIA's domestic information campaigns were

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<sup>68</sup> Cull, *Decline and Fall*, 2.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 72.

comparatively lacking to that of its programs abroad, in part due to the stipulations in the Smith-Mundt Act, which did not allow for the complete circulation of public diplomacy materials within the United States. In one instance, upon obtaining a copy of the USIA film “Czechoslovakia 1968,” Senator James Buckley of New York sought to show the film as part of his televised reports series. In response, Senate Foreign Relations Chair, William Fulbright opposed the use of the film on NY television stations, writing in a letter to Acting Attorney General, Richard G. Kleindienst stating, “The (U.S.) Information Agency was created for the purpose of disseminating information about the United States, its people, and policies abroad. It was not created for the dissemination of information in the United States.”<sup>71</sup> This case led Congress to enact a 1972 amendment, specifically targeting USIA operations by “barring (domestic) public distribution of any and all materials produced by the United States Information Agency.”<sup>72</sup>

In addition, the amendment restricted what individuals were permitted to obtain and view USIA materials, writing that USIA materials

Shall not be disseminated within the United States, its territories, or possessions, but, on request, shall be available in the English language at the Department of State, at all reasonable times following its release as information abroad, for examination only by representatives of United States press associations, newspapers, magazines, radio

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<sup>71</sup> S. Rep. NO. 92-754, at 83 (1972), accessed on April 27, 2019, <https://law.resource.org/pub/us/case/reporter/F3/134/134.F3d.1165.97-5017.html>.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

systems, and stations, and by research students and scholars, and, on request, shall be made available for examination only to Members of Congress.<sup>73</sup>

In one instance, Michael Gartner, the president of NBC News and winner of a Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing, published a commentary in *The Wall Street Journal* highlighting the fact that his access to archives at the Voice of America was only made possible due to his status as a journalist.<sup>74</sup> Even with this status, Gartner was prohibited from receiving a written transcript, given the potential of its content being circulated. He wrote,

The people at the Voice, who are awfully nice, wouldn't give me a transcript and wouldn't let me make a copy. And even if I had a copy, I couldn't share it with you. It's against the law for me to tell you.<sup>75</sup>

The 1972 amendment wasn't the only instance Congress doubled down on the act's restrictions. In 1985, Congress updated the ban, including a section that stated, "no funds authorized to be appropriated to the United States Information Agency shall be used to influence public opinion in the United States, and no program material prepared by the United States Information Agency shall be distributed within the United States."<sup>76</sup> The intent behind the 1985

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<sup>73</sup> Carter, Palmer, "The Smith-Mundt Act's Ban on Domestic Propaganda: An Analysis of the Cold War Statute Limiting Access to Public Diplomacy," 10.

<sup>74</sup> Metzgar, "Seventy Years of the SMith-Mundt Act and U.S. International Broadcasting: Back to the Future?" 23-24.

<sup>75</sup> Michael Gartner, "Don't Repeat What Your Uncle Sam Tells Those Other Folks," (New York, *The Wall Street Journal*, 1988), 1. Quoted in Metzgar, "Seventy Years of the Smith-Mundt Act and U.S. International Broadcasting: Back to the Future?" 23-24.

<sup>76</sup> Pub. L. No. 99-93, Title II, (1985), Carter, Palmer, "The Smith-Mundt Act's Ban on Domestic Propaganda," 10.



amendment was encapsulated by Democratic Senator Edward Zorinsky of Nebraska. He stated, “The American taxpayer certainly does not need or want his tax dollars used to support U.S. Government propaganda directed at him or her.”<sup>77</sup> This comment illuminates the omnipresent fear that these operations were perceived to be propagandist. Senator Zorinsky, among other members of Congress routinely exploited the propaganda charge to impede USIA’s domestic programs, engendering further scrutiny and skepticism surrounding APD operations.

With the advent of modern technology rendering much of the Smith-Mundt Act stipulations obsolete, certain congress members sought to combat, for example, the powerful force of the internet and further expand the act’s restrictions. For instance, when USIA capitalized on the use of the internet by incorporating internet programming, certain U.S. senators, most notably, Republican Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, were quick to cite the act in order to pressure USIA to roll back these efforts. In response to Helms’ claim that the expanded use of the internet in USIA operations violated the Smith-Mundt Act, the agency was forced to transfer all large volumes of information from electronic servers accessible to U.S. Internet users to other sites with addresses that were, ostensibly, “secret” from U.S. citizens.<sup>78</sup> Additionally, USIA staff were required to respond to inquiries concerning the exact website of the Voice of America by saying “they could not legally tell the Website address to Americans.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *Gartner v. United States Info. Agency*, 726 F. Supp. 1183, 1186 n.2 (S.D. Iowa 1989) (citing 131 Cong. Rec. 14945 (June 7, 1985)) Quoted in Carter, Palmer, “The Smith-Mundt Act’s Ban on Domestic Propaganda,” 11.

<sup>78</sup> Carter, Palmer, “The Smith-Mundt Act’s Ban on Domestic Propaganda,” 13.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

## Implications of a Skeptical and Unsupportive Congress

The distinct lack of support for America's public diplomacy operations within the American Congress as illustrated by the Smith-Mundt Act issue was a consequence of the persistent anxieties, particularly embodied by the propaganda charge and the pervasive skepticism surrounding public diplomacy operations. The subsequent justifications for the act's restrictive stipulations presented a clear challenge for American public diplomacy personnel to transparently inform Americans on public diplomacy operations and subsequently, generate broader support for the continuation of APD programs and agencies.

Upon reflection of his time at the United States Information Agency, President George H.W. Bush's USIA Director, Bruce Gelb noted how he regretted not doing more to address the lack of Congressional support for USIA operations saying, "There's nothing like hindsight, but I wish I'd spent more time pounding the corridors of Congress." Gelb added, "I didn't think that was the role of the director of USIA. I thought I was supposed to run a 9,000 man and woman worldwide organization."<sup>80</sup> Director Gelb's comments highlight the shortage of support for information and cultural operations within the United States. The United States Congress was apprehensive to support the robust use of domestic dissemination campaigns, consequently enacting restrictions within the Smith-Mundt Act that, among other things, did not allow for domestic audiences to fully comprehend the importance of America's public diplomacy strategy, and rather shrouded APD operations in layers of skepticism and secrecy.

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<sup>80</sup> Judith Havemann, "At USIA, The Beef Over the Chief," (Washington, The Washington Post, 1990), accessed on April 27, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1990/06/08/at-usia-the-beef-over-the-chief/1ae3f2c9-793e-4d46-a306-964f272a3d15/?utm\\_term=.f76ef45466fa](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1990/06/08/at-usia-the-beef-over-the-chief/1ae3f2c9-793e-4d46-a306-964f272a3d15/?utm_term=.f76ef45466fa).

Without broader domestic support in place, the closing of the United States Information Agency was welcomed by the Clinton administration and Congress, who saw the agency as expendable.<sup>81</sup> Given the general lack of few USIA supporters, with the exception of those working within the agency, the final closure of America's largest public diplomacy agency received very little push back, illustrated by the reality that when the official move was made in 1999 to absorb USIA into the State department, the transition received very little press. Arguably America's most effective federal agency dedicated to the implementation of information and culture operations had been shut down, with many of its programs and personnel that were not included in the move to State being completely cut.

The history of America's public diplomacy programs and implementing agencies depicts notable skepticism surrounding the mission and execution of APD activities. The propaganda charge and pervasive skepticism targeted at public diplomacy operations was used to justify restrictions such as the amendments in the Smith-Mundt Act placed on agencies tasked with executing APD policy, resulting in limitations on the accessibility of public diplomacy materials for domestic constituents and inhibiting the generation of robust domestic support for American public diplomacy in both Congress and the American electorate. Ultimately, without this support to oppose the shutdown of agencies like OWI and USIA, effective public diplomacy operations were weakened as a result. It is these adversities, consequences of absent support for APD, noted by public diplomats such as former USIA Director Gelb, that have presented clear challenges to the continuation and maintenance of American public diplomacy operations.

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<sup>81</sup> Cull, *Decline and Fall*, 123.

## **Part II:**

### **APD's Anti-Americanism Problem: The Consequences of Unpopular Policies**

Budget decreases, domestic programming cuts, and the dismantling of APD institutions motivated in part by the anxieties perpetuated by the propaganda charge and apparent skepticism surrounding public diplomacy operations are not the only components of American public diplomacy's dispiriting history. In order to illuminate the various operational challenges present within APD discourse, this section focuses on the obstacles produced by unpopular U.S. foreign policies. In order to fully detail the travails presence within APD discourse, this section examines U.S. Middle East policy and its subsequent implications such as anti-Americanism, concluding that hostility and limited access to Arab communities as a result of anti-American sentiment are negatively affecting American public diplomacy operations.

#### **Cold War Superpowers Vie for Influence in the MENA**

Beginning with the Cold War, the American reputation centralizing on democracy and freedom needed to supersede that of the Soviet Union which posed an encroaching threat to U.S. influence, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). As the Soviet influence spread to this region, the Russians sought the realization of a few key objectives. First, the USSR wished to expand its naval and military reach by establishing ports and bases throughout the MENA, securing positions of geostrategic strength.<sup>82</sup> Additionally, the Soviet Union intended to

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<sup>82</sup> Sean P. Ashley, "Cold War Politics in the Middle East," (E-International Relations Students, 2012), accessed on April 27, 2019, <https://www.e-ir.info/2012/08/30/cold-war-politics-in-the-middle-east/>.

achieve ideological domination across Eurasia by boosting support for local Communist movements.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, the Russians desired prolonged entrenchment in the region in order to “prevent the alleviation of regional conflict thereby assuring the USSR of continued access to the region.”<sup>84</sup> Such accomplishments would solidify the Soviet Union as a global hegemon.

Throughout the Cold War, Soviet encroachment in the MENA was considerably strong due to vigorous economic and diplomatic campaigns that additionally involved the sale of military arms. Evidence of Soviet influence could be found in virtually every Arab country. With the increase in the number of revolutionary regimes in the region, the Soviet government acted swiftly to strengthen these “progressive” military states by supplying weapons, offering courses in Russian, and employing its own military personnel and technicians to serve as advisers to Middle Eastern armed forces in Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Egypt and Syria.<sup>85</sup> Coupled with several bilateral trade and cultural agreements, the network of Soviet contacts extended all the way from Rabat to Tehran.<sup>86</sup> Egypt specifically was a desirable ally for the Soviets, and ergo the Americans. Given its size, political and military weight, and the influence of its writers and cultural figures, Egypt was the Arab friend the Americans and the Soviets wanted in their respective corners.<sup>87</sup>

However, the Arab nation proved to be an elusive ally for the United States. During Egypt’s struggle for independence, the then Colonel, Gamal Abd al-Nasser, a supposed ally of the United States’ and a supposed proponent of America’s mission to combat Soviet influence and Communism in the Middle East, promised that with American support to rid the country of

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Joseph S. Nye, “U.S. Power and Strategy After Iraq,” (Foreign Affairs, 2003), 1.

<sup>85</sup> Aaron S. Klieman, *Soviet Russia and the Middle East*, (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1970).

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Rugh, *American Encounters with Arabs: The "soft Power" of U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Middle East*, 51.

colonialist Britain, “Egypt was basically inclined toward the West and that Russia and Communism represented the only conceivable danger to Egypt’s security.”<sup>88</sup> Convinced by the Egyptian political star’s assurances, the United States helped broker an Anglo-Egyptian agreement signed on October 19, 1954.<sup>89</sup> Regardless of professed support for the American cause, Nasser engaged in a two-face type of foreign policy, playing the two superpowers, the U.S. and the USSR off one another.<sup>90</sup> For instance, when the Americans failed to meet Nasser’s demand for increased weapons, the Egyptian President looked to the Soviet bloc to purchase these arms.<sup>91</sup> The case of Egypt confirmed the attraction Arab governments felt towards the Soviet Union, and moreover, the very real potential of these countries rejecting the Americans, and ostensibly keeping the U.S. from achieving its strategic interests in the process.

The American’s strategic objectives as they relate to the MENA were largely centered around inhibiting Soviet access to Middle Eastern and Northern African territory, in order to stop the spread of Communism. Done so through the U.S. policy of containment, the United States sought to counter Soviet expansion and challenge the Soviet sphere of influence within the region. Additionally, the United States heavily emphasized the protection of Israel, and attempted to alleviate Arab-Israeli tensions by brokering peace talks. A final component of U.S. Middle East policy during the Cold War (and one that remains an element of U.S. policy in the region today) was the preservation of access to oil reserves.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Quoted in: David W. Lesch, *The Middle East and the United States : A Historical and Political Reassessment*, (Colorado, Westview Press, 2007), 142-143.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 143.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ashley, “Cold War Politics,” accessed on April 27, 2019, <https://www.e-ir.info/2012/08/30/cold-war-politics-in-the-middle-east/>.

## Challenges Facing America's Public Diplomacy Strategy in the MENA

As the Soviet Union broadened its presence in the MENA, the role of American public diplomacy became paramount in America's containment strategy. Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) recognized the importance of intensifying their presence in the Middle East in order to mitigate the growing Soviet influence, and thusly tailored specific programs to convey American objectives, promote favorability, and counter soviet narratives.<sup>93</sup> Fulbright exchange grants expanded into most Middle Eastern and North African countries, the Voice of America radio station broadcasted in Arabic across the MENA, and the United States opened popular cultural centers and USIS sites that in many cases dually served as American libraries around the Middle East and North Africa, additionally implementing programs like the Yemeni-American Language Institute (YALI) which offered English lessons to Yemeni students and professionals, most of whom lived remotely in traditionally difficult to reach areas.<sup>94</sup> These programs were able to convey a broad and balanced picture of American society, and simultaneously promote favorable images of the United States.<sup>95</sup>

While the history of American public diplomacy in the context of the Middle East and North Africa displays a robust use of information and culture operations, it also highlights a few defining struggles that came to fruition as a result of unfavorable policy measures, ultimately presenting operational challenges to these programs. Among these factors is the impact of certain features of American Middle East policy, producing discord between Arabs and Americans. Specifically, U.S. support for Israel in addition to controversial military interventions such as the

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<sup>93</sup> Rugh, *American Encounters with Arabs*, 27-28.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 56.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 47.

2003 Invasion of Iraq have contributed to the creation of an unappealing American image within the MENA, negatively affecting public diplomacy operations.

## Consequences of U.S. Support for Israel

U.S. Middle East policy relating to Israel has had a major effect on increasing anti-Americanism, presenting American information and culture operations with a set of notable adversities. American support for Israel has been one of the most controversial policies affecting America's image in the Arab world, with public affairs officers being consistently challenged on the issue.<sup>96</sup> On one occasion, during an ambassadorial speech at a formal luncheon in Beirut, the American Ambassador was bombarded with a series of questions by several prominent Lebanese politicians who expressed deep criticisms of America's support for Israel.<sup>97</sup>

For many Arabs, their quarrel with the Israelis is founded upon a strong resentment for the Jewish state fueled by the various Arab–Israeli Wars and conflicts throughout the post WWII era, following the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Israeli victories such as those during the wars of 1956 and 1967, coupled with the large number of Palestinian refugees displaced as a result of the creation of the Jewish state, evoked massive resentment within Arab nations targeted at Israel and subsequently, one of the nation's biggest supporters, the United States. These tensions strongly took hold within Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, nations that saw Israel as an absolute enemy.<sup>98</sup> Not surprisingly, as the United States strengthened its alliance with the state of Israel, Arab frustrations increased, stoking spreading anti-Americanism.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>98</sup> Bernard, Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites*, (New York/London, Norton, 1986), 204.

<sup>99</sup> Rugh, *American Encounters with Arabs*, 47.



Similar to the instances when Egypt turned to the Soviets to provide arms when the American failed to do so, Arab leaders and media outlets operating throughout the region looked to the Soviet Union for support when the Americans failed to legitimize grievances concerning Israel. Arabic media outlets in particular were becoming increasingly hostile to the United States, while simultaneously embracing a more congenial tone towards the Soviet Union. Various editors who held a positive view of the USSR circulated those ideas in editorials, newspapers, and the like. They referenced Soviet military assistance as proof of Moscow's positive influence, and labeled the USSR as a friendlier state in comparison to the United States. In countries such as Egypt and Syria, editors felt free to criticize American policy, and those who were friendly to the United States hesitated to praise the Americans.<sup>100</sup> In one instance, during the tenure of the Public Affairs Officer, Dick Underland who held this position in Syria from 1979 to 1983, USIS relations with the Syrian press were seemingly absent. For instance, Underland only saw chief editors of the Syrians newspapers once a year.<sup>101</sup>

Arab press officials were not the only individuals distancing themselves from the Americans. Several Arab governments began to disassociate themselves from the United States as a result of growing anti-American sentiment. In Syria during the 1970s and early 1980s, the official government attitude toward the United States was rather unfriendly and unwelcoming.<sup>102</sup> As a result, no interaction was permitted between the Syrian military and the Americans; conversely, the Syrian military had close relations with the Soviets. Additionally, members of the Ba'ath Party were under strict instructions to have no contact with the Americans as well.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

Connections fostered through public diplomacy were weakened as a result. These instances demonstrate that the United States' support for Israel undermined America's policy of containment by negatively impacting public diplomacy programs throughout the Middle East and North Africa during the Cold War.

Moreover, anti-Americanism contributed to increased hostility directed at public diplomacy personnel throughout the region. Due to an increase in suspicion surrounding the intentions of American public diplomats, on several occasions, Arab intelligence services regularly interrogated USIS local employees, monitoring their activities.<sup>104</sup> Without disregarding these instances, it is important to note the most extreme assault on effective APD operations in the MENA remains the violent attacks on American embassies, American centers, and American diplomats and military personnel themselves. In one case that occurred in April 1970 in Amman, Jordan, Palestinian Militants motivated by resentment towards U.S. policy towards Israel burned the American center there, destroying all of the USIS records. Three of the four Americans at the USIS post were evacuated, leaving only a PAO, who could not risk leaving the safety of the embassy.<sup>105</sup>

## The Negative Effects of Anti-Americanism

While hostility towards U.S.-Israel policy continues to exist throughout the MENA, these anti-American sentiments have been multiplied by recent U.S. military engagements, especially the United States' 2003 Invasion of Iraq. A June 2004 Zogby International poll taken in five Arab countries revealed that approval of America's policy in Iraq was virtually nonexistent. The

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 71.

unfavorable to favorable ratings were 97:1 in Saudi Arabia, 98:1 in Morocco, 91:4 in the UAE, 93:4 in Lebanon, and 78:2 in Jordan. When asked what Americans could do to improve its image in the Arab world, the second or third most common reply in all five countries was to get out of Iraq (the first was related to Israel or justice.)<sup>106</sup> Today's State Department faces considerable challenges to the promotion of goodwill given this apparent rebuke of U.S. foreign policy and the anti-americanism that has been embraced by many Middle Eastern and North African countries, represented by a plethora of anti-American demonstrations that have occurred throughout the region, many of them placing American diplomats and public diplomacy personnel in harm's way.<sup>107</sup>

Given this rise in hostility, the United States has been forced to implement security measures around spaces of public diplomacy such as the construction of barriers and security screening procedures in embassies, American centers, and American libraries. In addition, the United States in the post 9/11 era has enacted increased restrictions for visa applicants. Regardless of necessity, international relations scholar and former Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, William Rugh argues in his book titled, *American Encounters with Arabs* that in many cases these defense mechanisms are undermining APD efforts, given that “the implementation of much tougher visa regulations has dissuaded many Arab students and professionals from coming to the United States.”<sup>108</sup> Ambassador Rugh notes the negative impact of such regulations, stating, “The great mutual benefit derived from exchanges of persons has diminished.”<sup>109</sup> In other words, increased visa regulations, security screening procedures, and

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 180.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 98-99.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 197.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

barriers erected around embassies, USIS offices, and American centers and libraries have severely restricted contacts with Arabs. Ambassador Rugh additional remarks that while security measures in conflict zones are essential, these procedures are not user friendly, and make combating anti-Americanism within Arab communities an exponentially harder undertaking.<sup>110</sup>

In summary, the history of American public diplomacy operations in the MENA paint a troubling picture of the afflictions present throughout APD discourse. Seen as a necessary component of Cold War strategy, the U.S. viewed the MENA as a focal point of engagement, and supported its policy of containment through a wide array of public diplomacy initiatives. However, an embrace of seemingly unfavorable policies have fueled vicious anti-Americanism. The consequences of the U.S.-Israel alliance in addition to U.S. military interventions in Iraq have negatively affected public diplomacy operations by frustrating the working environment for programs and personnel, ultimately, leading to hostile working conditions and impeding access to important audiences. As the United States has amped up its engagement and overall presence in the region throughout the post 9/11 era, the potential benefits of APD operations such as the accurate portrayal of U.S. foreign policy within the region, the establishment of friendlier environments conducive to the achievement of American foreign policy objectives, and the mitigation of strong anti-American sentiment through the relationships and cross-cultural understanding that APD programs promote have become increasingly necessary. Consequently, the United States must re-examine its Middle East policy in order to productively address apparent anti-Americanism, hostile working climates, and limited access to Arab audiences.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

Neglecting to address these concerns stands to further undermine and negatively impact American public diplomacy operations, as well as frustrate broader U.S. influence in the region.

### Part III:

## American Public Diplomacy: Casualty of Design

This research in so far has explored a few significant challenges present within American public diplomacy discourse, including the propaganda charge and apparent skepticism which has resulted in a general lack of support for APD operations, permitting the reduction of funds, programming cuts, and the dismantling of effective public diplomacy implementing agencies. In addition, this study has discussed the consequences of unpopular American foreign policies such as U.S. support for Israel and the 2003 U.S. Invasion in Iraq which have fueled anti-American sentiment, contributing to a hostile operating environment within the Middle East and North Africa, and ultimately obstructing interactions with Arab audiences. This section seeks to introduce and examine another pressing handicap exhibited by a noticeable historical trend present throughout the history of APD. Rather than focusing on the decline of U.S. public diplomacy, this section will examine APD's series of zeniths and nadirs, a consequence in large part due to the historical precedent mandating the inherent design of American public diplomacy operations and institutions be tools utilized and erected after an international crisis arises, not before. This precedent has distorted the role of American public diplomacy and later subjects operations to scrutiny and an eventual reduction of funding, programming and personnel cuts, and institutions dismantling once the international conflict subsides, keeping programs from reaching and maintaining a long-term level of infrastructure and adequate funding.

Seen in figure 1, whose data is taken from the 2017 Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting, it is inferred that APD has experienced a rather unsteady operational history. Figure 1 details a series of zeniths and nadirs present throughout the historical timeline of U.S. public diplomacy, supporting the notion that suggests America's information and culture programs have not enjoyed a level of sustained institutional priority, and have not been developed and maintained as a long-term foreign policy strategy.

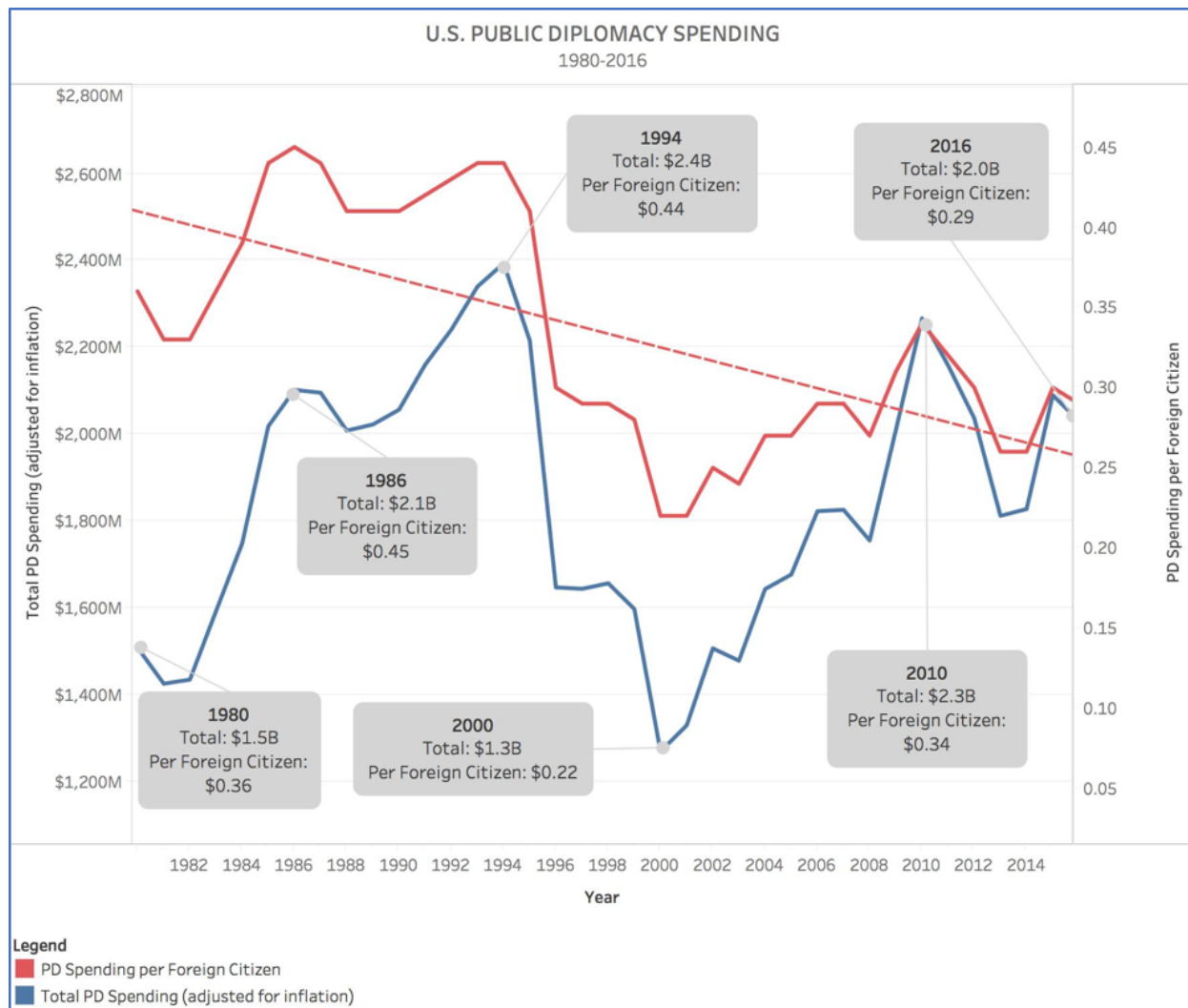


Fig. 1. (U.S. Public Diplomacy Spending 1980-2016)<sup>111</sup>

A 2003 report sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations, titled “Finding America’s Voice: A Strategy for Reinventing U.S. Public Diplomacy” reiterates these assertions saying,

<sup>111</sup> U.S. Department of State and the Broadcasting Board of Governors, “2017 Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting,” (Washington D.C., 2017), accessed on April 27, 2019, <https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/valuing-public-diplomacy>.

“American Public diplomacy is treated as an afterthought.”<sup>112</sup> A result of the perceived mission of APD, the United States has traditionally used public diplomacy programs in the wake of international crises, solidifying the role of these operations as a short-term solution. Consequently, American public diplomacy has been relegated to the margins of the policy process, limiting APD’s efficacy and keeping it from being incorporated into the foundations of the U.S. foreign policy process.<sup>113</sup>

## OWI sets a Historical Precedent

The regard of public diplomacy as an afterthought has frustrated most of America’s public diplomacy operations and institutions. The Office of War Information, was no exception. OWI, which was solely intended for wartime operations had seemingly outlived its use following the Allied Victory, setting the precedent of marrying APD operations to international conflicts. The war ended with the Japanese surrender in August 1945 and with it OWI’s original purpose as a temporary force to aid in the war effort by way of information and culture dissemination campaigns.<sup>114</sup> Many within the American Congress believed the Office of War Information suddenly had no visible mission. The duty of explaining and selling America’s wartime mission to the World had concluded. In other words, with the War over, officially there was nothing left to sell, and nothing left to explain.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Peter G. Peterson, Kathy Bloomgarden, Henry Grunwald, David E. Morey, Shibley Telhami, Jennifer Sieg, Sharon Herbstman, “Finding America’s Voice: A Strategy for Reinvigorating U.S. Public Diplomacy,” (New York, Council on Foreign Relations, 2003), 6.

<sup>113</sup> Peter G. Peterson, Kathy Bloomgarden, Henry Grunwald, David E. Morey, Shibley Telhami, Jennifer Sieg, Sharon Herbstman, “Finding America’s Voice: A Strategy for Reinvigorating U.S. Public Diplomacy,” (New York, Council on Foreign Relations, 2003), 6.

<sup>114</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 34.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 34.



Consequently, OWI operations, having outlived their purpose, were merged into the National Security Council and the State Department, codified in the National Security Act of 1947. The act, although vague in its wording using phrasing like “functions and duties...affecting the national security,”<sup>116</sup> allocated foreign policy operations and with it the oversight of public diplomacy programs to the two bodies in order to properly and comprehensively advise the president on foreign policy issues. During this time with no explicit adversary in sight, information operations dwindled, and an organizational low point, or a historical nadir occurred.

Although, the White House executive order mandating the closure of the OWI asserted that the United States “would endeavor” to conduct an international information program giving foreign audiences a “full and fair picture of the United States and its policies,”<sup>117</sup> the mission statement was lacking in direction and substance. Public diplomacy implementing institutions that immediately followed the OWI received less funding than that of the OWI, had fewer staff, and functions were routinely transferred to other government agencies.<sup>118</sup> Constructed as a reactionary force to the threat posed by Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan, the OWI’s temporary existence was just a primary point in a pattern of closures for America’s public diplomacy institutions.

## The Fall of the United States Information Agency

The historical precedent set by OWI was married to the United States Information Agency’s mission as well. Established during the Eisenhower administration, the agency was largely viewed as an element of Cold War strategy. Once the Cold War ended, APD activity fell

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<sup>116</sup> Section 102 (d), National Security Act of 1947.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 34.

from its most distinct operational zenith in 1994 to a depressingly ineffective nadir in the year 2000. Essentially, after the fall of the Soviet Union, “American leaders in both the legislative and executive branches discarded PD as a Cold War relic.”<sup>119</sup> With the Cold War over, the intensity of attacks targeted at USIA increased. With the mission of the agency being attached to a conflict that had seemingly concluded by the 1990s, USIA’s future did not look promising.

Consequently, the Clinton Administration enacted a steady sequence of budget cuts throughout 1990s, and entertained a plan for closing the agency, championed by Republican senators Jesse Helms of North Carolina and Sam Brownback of Kansas. The plan proposed the a radical change for USIA, attacking the agency’s \$1.3 billion budget, passing exchange programs and broadcasting to the private sector and folding the rest into the State Department.<sup>120</sup> Eventually, President Clinton vetoed the bill and for a few more years USIA remained operationally safe, although the administration did continue with its steady cuts to the agency’s budget.

With the second term of Bill Clinton’s presidency came the appointment of a few new personalities that saw the “Cold War relic”<sup>121</sup> as an expendable entity. In particular, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright changed the balance of forces against the USIA, and deemed the agency as unnecessary.<sup>122</sup> Concurring with the Secretary’s sentiments, the new assistant secretary of state for Public Affairs, James Rubin, thought USIA’s mission “belonged in the State Department.”<sup>123</sup> Rubin proposed “weaving public diplomacy efforts into broader foreign policy. The result would make public diplomacy more central to foreign policy,” and would make better

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<sup>119</sup> Helle Dale, Carnes Lord, “Public Diplomacy and the Cold War: Lessons Learned,” (The Heritage Foundation, 2007), accessed on April 27, 2019, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/public-diplomacy-and-the-cold-war-lessons-learned>.

<sup>120</sup> Cull, *Decline and Fall*, 104.

<sup>121</sup> Dale, Lord, “Public Diplomacy and the Cold War,” accessed on April 27, 2019.

<sup>122</sup> Cull, *Decline and Fall*, 123.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*.

use of the “increasingly important public diplomacy tools and skills of USIA.”<sup>124</sup> Despite seemingly good intentions, prominent figures within the USIA warned against the move, and feared that the creativity and energy of the agency would be stifled within the State Department’s multi layered bureaucracy.<sup>125</sup>

An additional rationale for Madeleine Albright’s intentions for absorbing the agency into State rested with her regard that the State Department should be the be-all and end-all of American diplomatic missions. By consolidating operations implemented by an agency largely viewed as outdated by a Congress increasingly unsupportive of public diplomacy,<sup>126</sup> Albright sought to make State a more influential and powerful cog in Washington’s bureaucratic machine. In an attempt to assert State’s unwavering importance, Secretary Albright worked diligently to reach across partisan divides, and work with the Republican congress not against it. In her memoir, *Madam Secretary*, Albright writes,

Reaching out to Republicans was pragmatic, because we needed their votes. The GOP controlled both houses of Congress and all the key committees. So I joked about how, when I entered government, I had had my partisan instincts surgically removed. And I concentrated on building good working relationships. I testified early before the house Committee on International Relations and its chairman, Representative Benjamin Gilman

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<sup>124</sup> See Duffey papers: Rubin, “Reinventing and integrating the foreign affairs agencies,” (1997), quoted in: Cull, *Decline and Fall of the United States Information Agency*, 124.

<sup>125</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 219.

<sup>126</sup> In correspondence with former USIA public diplomat and U.S. Ambassador, Robert Gosende, he conveyed to me that the makeup of the US Congress changed dramatically between 1953 when USIA was established and 1999 when it was folded into State. Senior Members of Congress who were veterans and who had overseas experience had become a rarity by 1999, when the agency was ultimately shut down.

of New York. I made homestate appearances with each of the four subcommittee chairmen who controlled parts of our budget.<sup>127</sup>

It was evident that Secretary Albright saw congressional support as a core component of her mission to “restore the foreign policy primacy to the State Department,”<sup>128</sup> this goal and one distinct alliance between the secretary and a republican colleague sent off red flags for USIA.

In a trip to North Carolina with iconic USIA dissenter, Senator Jesse Helms, Secretary Albright was photographed in front of hometown fans exchanging friendly handshakes and pleasantries with her congressional ally. Albright even gifted Helms with a shirt saying “Someone at the State Department Loves You.”<sup>129</sup> This seemingly theatrical display of friendship to reach across the aisle in order to ensure support for State Department operations, also came at a time when Albright needed a guarantee from Helms to support U.S. participation in the Chemical Weapons Convention. In exchange for his vote, a concession was made at the expense of USIA. Albright negotiated the deal, conceding the perceived outdated public diplomacy agency in return for Helms’ agreement not to block the Chemical Weapons Convention, reaching two milestones by ensuring the go ahead on the Chemical Weapons vote and further asserting the primacy of State.

Staff at USIA were less than enthusiastic with the proposal, and felt this would ultimately stifle meaningful public diplomacy work. Two of the biggest opponents of the merger, Joseph Duffey, the then director of the agency, and his deputy director, Richard Penn Kemble fought against the move. Among their various contributions at United States Information Agency was

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<sup>127</sup> Madeleine Albright, *Madam Secretary*, (California, Disney Publishing House, 2003), 231.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, 507.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, 231.

the launch of a major civic education initiative called “Education for Democracy” to strengthen the bonds of civil society in Eastern Europe and around the world. In addition to this initiative, their tenure saw the launch of CIVITAS, a series of international conferences dedicated to the promotion of citizenship and civic education which were implemented in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education.<sup>130</sup>

Duffey and Kemble worked tirelessly to save the USIA, insisting that a “closely coordinated” rather than a “streamlined” structure was the most effective way to proceed.<sup>131</sup> Kemble argued that merging USIA with State, the body with “the poorest management record” was like “putting the healthy kidney into the sick body.”<sup>132</sup> Director Duffey concurred, and recommended that the Clinton administration construct an entirely new foreign affairs agency in which elements from State and from USIA could be integrated as equals, further asserting the necessity for adequate APD infrastructure. Duffey also believed this would serve as a catalyst for broader reform of the State Department, and would not smother the vitality of public diplomacy operations under the soggy layers of Foggy Bottom bureaucracy.<sup>133</sup>

The Albright State Department reviewed the counter proposals, but moved forward with the institutional shifts anyways. In a last-ditch effort, director Duffey sent one final memo to President Clinton, urging an alternative course in the restructuring. Duffey knew that consolidation was inevitable but attempted to retain as much of the agency’s structural integrity and operational efficiency as possible. He warned the president that shutting down the agency might destroy the “expertise and experience of USIA,” articulating that USIA’s “capacity for

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<sup>130</sup> Nicholas J. Cull, “Penn Kemble, Public Diplomat,” (California, USC Center on Public Diplomacy, 2006), accessed on April 27, 2019, <https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/penn-kemble-public-diplomat>.

<sup>131</sup> Cull, *Decline and Fall*, 125.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, 124-125.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, 124.

public outreach” would be “gobbled up by the more traditional activities” at state.<sup>134</sup> Despite these efforts, Kemble and Duffey proved unable to save the agency.

In April, President Clinton unveiled the new proposal. The USIA would rejoin the State Department as of 1999 with the responsibility of implementing American public diplomacy falling to a new under secretary.<sup>135</sup> In January 1999, with USIA slated to be downsized and merged into the Department of State, Duffey resigned. Kemble became the acting director of the agency and oversaw the process of preparing the agency for its future at State. However, he did not himself end up joining the State Department like the majority of the remaining USIA staff but rather served as the American representative to a new international organization dedicated to bolstering democracies.<sup>136</sup> As for Senator Helms, he claimed “a major victory for the Republican Congress: their first successful shutdown of a federal agency.”<sup>137</sup> From the time the Berlin Wall fell in 1991 and the USIA closed in 1999, the budget of the entire agency had decreased by ten percent. When it was taken over by the State Department at the end of the decade, USIA had only 6,715 employees (compared to 12,000 at its peak in the mid-1960s).<sup>138</sup> What is more, the closure happened in the lame-duck months of the Clinton Administration, and the transfer of USIA duties to State placed operations on low priority status at the White house, State Department and in Congress, ultimately permitting the next administration to continue to disregard APD programming. Clinton’s successor, President Bush even took nine months before appointing a new under secretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs.

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 128.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 126.

<sup>136</sup> Cull, “Penn Kemble, Public Diplomat,” accessed on April, 27, 2019, <https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/penn-kemble-public-diplomat>.

<sup>137</sup> Cull, *Decline and Fall*, 130.

<sup>138</sup> Joseph Nye “The Decline of America’s Soft Power,” (Foreign Affairs, 2004).

## Impacts of APD's Operational Nadirs

After the Cold War ended, public diplomacy experienced a plethora of programming cuts, impacting many USIS sites, American libraries, and exchange programs. American historian and professor of public diplomacy, Nicholas Cull, details a particular feature of USIA's operations, cultural diplomacy, that especially did not fare well during the end of the agency's tenure. Cull writes,

The USIA lost most of its magazines, its Arts Ambassador projects, and most of its cultural centers and libraries too. Despite some well-considered programs, and the creativity of officers in the field in raising private money and piggybacking on other events, cultural diplomacy suffered immensely. Between 1993 and 2001, the budget for educational and cultural exchanges fell by more than a third in real terms.<sup>139</sup>

This was a particular hit to public diplomacy's work. Cultural diplomacy had traditionally played an invaluable role in America's soft power policy throughout the Cold War and without the robust utilization of many of the programs that were on the chopping block, APD effectiveness to portray the United States as a beacon of cultural leadership dwindled.

The dismantling of USIA and the cuts to many of the agency's public diplomacy programs led to a historic operational low point in the late 90s, creating an APD system in disrepair by the end of the century. What is more, the public diplomacy professionals

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<sup>139</sup> Cull, *Decline and Fall*, 183.

incorporated in the move to State were scattered around in many different offices, under bureaucratic layers of people who did not fully comprehend the intricacies of public diplomacy, forming a segregated unit that was unable to act quickly to respond to daily challenges.<sup>140</sup> Consequently, when the attacks on September 11th, 2001 occurred, the United States government received a harsh wake up call to the status of its public diplomacy strategy.

As is the recurring theme within public diplomacy discourse, after disaster strikes, in this case after the Twins Towers fell, the U.S. government reached instinctively into its foreign policy tool kit for its APD strategy. Yet, what President George W. Bush found were operations severely lacking in the vigor and effectiveness of USIA's lifetime. Networks had withered, connections had grown cold, and embassies and consulates were lacking pertinent cultural and linguistic knowledge to convey and clarify to various political and media outlets the complexities of American foreign policy objectives.<sup>141</sup> This was particularly seen in the Middle East, an area of ever-increasing geostrategic concern for the U.S., where the 1990s cutbacks ended public diplomacy programs and caused regional experts to take early retirement or accept buyouts. As a result, crucial Arabic language skills and pertinent cultural knowledge and connections became a real rarity. In the wake of 9/11, there were only three serving US diplomats capable of being interviewed in idiomatic Arabic by Al-Jazeera.<sup>142</sup> In an interview for this study, co-founder of American Councils for International Education, Dr. Dan Davidson who has devoted his career to public diplomacy foreign language education programs, highly emphasized the foreign policy benefits produced by these public diplomacy programs. Specifically, Dr. Davidson conveyed how enhancing and promoting language capabilities and cultural knowledge within the U.S.

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<sup>140</sup> Rugh, *American Encounters with Arabs*, 144-146.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, 190.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, 189.



government allows the United States to more effectively interact and understand foreign audiences.<sup>143</sup> Seemingly counterproductive, the decline of APD operations in the 1990s meant that necessary linguistic and cultural knowledge became notably absent in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks.

The American government's lack of individuals well-versed in crucial cultural and linguistic knowledge, comparable to the public diplomats of USIA's hayday, did not just impact APD operations. For instance, following the terror attacks, it was evident that the United States military not only had a shortage of personnel able to communicate effectively with foreign forces in Arabic and other local dialects, but additionally lacked cultural awareness necessary to better understand the environments U.S. soldiers were operating in.<sup>144</sup>

The notable absence of language and cultural knowledge facilitated by public diplomacy programs weakened America's post 9/11 foreign policy strategy. Puzzled by ineffective operations, longtime U.S. diplomat, Richard Holbrooke asked, "How can a man (Osama Bin Laden) in a cave outmaneuver the world's leading communications society?"<sup>145</sup> Holbrooke's words illuminate the reality that U.S. information and culture operations were considerably deficient of funds, programs, and personnel, and as a result the United States was struggling to effectively counter religious extremism during the early 2000s. Lacking a robust APD infrastructure additionally led to missteps throughout the role out of Bush era public diplomacy information campaigns. In one case, President Bush himself received push back from Arab states

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<sup>143</sup> Dr. Dan Davidson, interview by author, Washington D.C., January 25, 2019.

<sup>144</sup> U.S. House of Representatives Committee on armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations, "Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military: DOD's Challenge in Today's Educational Environment," (2008), accessed on April 27, 2019. [https://armedservices.house.gov/\\_cache/files/3/7/3737c7c1-efeb-4672-bc99-74b340faf0ba/540DE3C82A9F532C584E402C683E8439.language-and-culture-report-11-08-vf.pdf](https://armedservices.house.gov/_cache/files/3/7/3737c7c1-efeb-4672-bc99-74b340faf0ba/540DE3C82A9F532C584E402C683E8439.language-and-culture-report-11-08-vf.pdf).

<sup>145</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 219-220.

by calling America's response to the attacks a "crusade," inadvertently equating U.S. Middle East policy to images of Christian knights embarking on a religious reclamation of the Holy Land against their Islamic enemies.<sup>146</sup>

While it cannot be justifiably assumed that if USIA had not be dismantled 9/11 may not have occurred, the notable absence of a robust APD strategy, a general scarcity of cultural and linguistic knowledge, and an inability to properly address and publicly discuss the threat of terrorism did not aid in America's counter-terrorism operations during those critical years following the attacks. Moreover, this clear operational low point in APD history speaks to the implications of not maintaining and sustaining a robust APD infrastructure. With these subsequent debacles, Albright herself even reflected on USIA's closure. In a 2003 event at the Aspen Institute, Albright asked former USIA Director, Henry Catto, "Did we make a mistake folding USIA into the State Department" Catto confirmed that he believed they had indeed made a great mistake. He surmised that "the mother" of consolidation had "renounced the bastard child."<sup>147</sup>

Despite an expansion of APD in the last decade as a response to the 9/11 terror attacks, the current president, Donald Trump may be reversing these increases with proposed major cuts to America's public diplomacy apparatus, potentially leading to another operational nadir. These cuts include a 74.9% cut to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs,<sup>148</sup> in order to "prioritize the efficient use of taxpayer resources," a sentiment echoed by former Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson. President Trump has been a staunch opponent of the State Department, and

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 221.

<sup>147</sup> Cull, *Decline and Fall*, 178.

<sup>148</sup> Christopher Sabatini, "The Flawed Logic of the Trump Administration's Cuts to Exchange Programs," (Global Americans, 2018), accessed on April 27, 2019, [https://theglobalamericans.org/2018/02/flawed-logic-trump-administrations-cuts-exchange-programs/#\\_ftn1](https://theglobalamericans.org/2018/02/flawed-logic-trump-administrations-cuts-exchange-programs/#_ftn1).

his budget proposals support his view that public diplomacy is not a current federal priority. Back in August of 2017 his administration proposed cuts to the J1 visa program, a visa used by many individuals on Department of State cultural exchanges. In addition, the most recent proposal for fiscal year 2020 proposes budget cuts that would slash the budget for foreign aid and diplomacy by 23 percent.<sup>149</sup> While the majority of his cuts have not been enacted, the very consideration to cut these programs suggests that both growth and maintenance of public diplomacy operations within this administration are unwelcome.

## The Benefits of Long-Term APD Operations

President Trump's rejection of the importance of public diplomacy operations, what could potentially be another operational lowpoint within this discourse, showcases the continued counterproductivity of this series of zeniths and nadirs, given that public diplomacy is most effective when the investment is made for the long term. For example, an exemplar of the benefits of long-term public diplomacy is the Fulbright program which still operates decades after its conception. Begun in 1947, managed overseas by USIA, and continuing to operate today, the Fulbright program is the forerunner of a wide variety of two-way exchanges of scholars and researchers with over 175 countries.<sup>150</sup> Mike Mansfield, former Ambassador to Japan, attests to the impact of Fulbrighters saying "the understanding that grew from experience as an exchange student, appreciation of U.S. artistic traditions, or the influence of an American author may be the impetus that propels an individual into political activity that supports our

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<sup>149</sup> Rabinowitz, Uhrmacher, "What Trump proposed in his 2020 budget," accessed on April 27, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/politics/trump-budget-2020/?utm\\_term=.aa20af7a6a90](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/politics/trump-budget-2020/?utm_term=.aa20af7a6a90).

<sup>150</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 7.

bilateral relationships.”<sup>151</sup> In its first year, the program sponsored a hundred two-way exchanges; currently the number is over four thousand annually.<sup>152</sup> A number of exchange alums have gone on to hold prominent policy making positions within their respective countries, among them former UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali, British political leader Shirley Williams, Swedish prime minister Ingvar Carlsson, and Bangladeshi women’s activist Salma Shan.<sup>153</sup> Overall, cultural connections facilitated by programs like Fulbright provide a unique perspective of the United States, engendering cross-cultural understanding and respect while simultaneously bringing innovation, language skills, and other benefits to participating nations, including the United States. In addition, cultural and educational exchange programs like Fulbright promote ideas about civil society and democracy across the international community.

Another sustained champion of American public diplomacy has been the Voice of America (VOA). Established during World War II and operated through the former OWI and USIA, VOA produces content for digital, television, and radio platforms, broadcasting a whole host of programs dedicated to disseminating pro-democratic thought and accurate portrayals of American culture.<sup>154</sup> Throughout the USIA years, VOA was one of the most noteworthy and successful features of the agency. Showcasing American culture through this particular venue allowed USIA to brand the nation as a global cultural icon.

The enlistment of celebrities by VOA gave cultural diplomacy an added boost in its mission. One special celebrity, Washington disc Jockey Willis Conover, impacted thousands of

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<sup>151</sup> UUL Tom Korologos papers, Box 18/4, Mike Mansfield (Tokyo) to Feulner, 25 August 1988, quoted also in Cull, *Decline and Fall*.

<sup>152</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 188.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*, 188.

<sup>154</sup> Voice of America, “Mission and Values,” (Washington), accessed on April 27, 2019, <https://www.insidevoa.com/p/5831.html>.

individuals with every episode of his VOA show, *Music USA*. Conover was a well-versed jazz enthusiast and had a personal record collection of over sixty thousand selections. His program regularly featured interviews with popular artists like Duke Ellington and Frank Sinatra.<sup>155</sup>

Another celebrity frequently enlisted in USIA efforts, Helen Hayes, a famous stage and screen actress appeared regularly on the VOA English language service program, *Have You a Question?* During the show, Hayes would answer questions about the United States sent in by curious listeners from all over the world.<sup>156</sup> These shows were platforms of direct engagement with foreign publics, allowing Conover and Hayes to act ostensibly as cultural ambassadors for the United States.

*Music USA* and *Have you a Question* were broadcasted in over forty languages and heard by 100 million people weekly.<sup>157</sup> It is no exaggeration then that, for over three decades, Willis Conover, Helen Hayes and celebrities alike were some of the most influential USIA employees. Furthermore, much of their following and fan bases abroad consisted of young people.<sup>158</sup> This was a crucial audience for the United States, which saw inspiring goodwill and favorability toward American ideals and values within a nation's future policy makers, engineers, scientists, and entrepreneurs as a core tenant of its work. Today, VOA which is still operational, carries a similar impact. The radio network remains the largest U.S. international broadcaster, providing news and information in more than 40 languages to an estimated weekly audience of more than 275 million people.<sup>159</sup> VOA and the Fulbright Program embody the potential for American public diplomacy operations if maintenance and sustainability are uniformly embraced.

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<sup>155</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 70.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, 127.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>159</sup> Voice of America, "Mission and Values," accessed on April 27, 2019, <https://www.insidevoa.com/p/5831.html>.

Casualties of their design, public diplomacy information and culture operations have led an unsteady existence. The decision to become involved in WWII led to the creation of the Office of War information (OWI). When the Japanese surrendered in August 1945, OWI was shut down and with it America's public diplomacy operations were cut back drastically. The onset of the Cold War reversed this decision with a dramatic expansion of overseas public diplomacy programs in the 1950s through the establishment of the United States Information Agency. The Soviet regime's collapse in 1991 resulted in another cycle of cutbacks.<sup>160</sup> It wasn't until the rise of religious extremism and the attacks on the World Trade Center that the United States revisited its need for intense public diplomacy strategy. This habitual marrying of public diplomacy operations to international crises has proven to impede APD's inability to sustain peak levels of efficacy, negate decades of acquired cultural and linguistic expertise, and create APD systems in disrepair when operations are needed most.

These findings highlight a pressing historical trend within APD discourse, a drastic sequence of zeniths and nadirs. Represented in a series of institutional disassemblings and reassemblings, paralleled by budget cuts and budget increases, American public diplomacy is gripped by a crippling structural defect. With the exception of a few programs such as the Fulbright Program and the Voice of America which have proven to be beneficial components of U.S. foreign policy, the mandate of APD operations is deeply flawed in the sense that programs have been historically seen as seemingly temporary forces utilized after international conflicts take hold. Until American public diplomacy is regarded as a long-term strategy of U.S. foreign policy and subsequently maintained at adequate levels of infrastructure and funding, APD

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<sup>160</sup> Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy*, 3.

programs and agencies will continue to exist as a series of zeniths and nadirs, inevitably undermining America's ability to effectively communicate with the rest of the world. As former USIA director during the Kennedy administration, Edward Murrow believed, public diplomacy must be "included in the take offs, not just the crash landings."<sup>161</sup>

## Conclusion

The history of American public diplomacy details an existence of adversity and instability. The propaganda charges, along with the skepticism and fear these accusations were attached to limited the ability of American public diplomacy to expand, find robust support within domestic constituencies, and placed APD programs under intense scrutiny. Unpopular American foreign policies such as the United States' support for Israel and American military interventions in Iraq have fueled anti-Americanism, creating a challenging and hostile operating climate for APD programs and personnel, increasing the need for security measures, consequently, impeding access to important foreign audiences. The history of American public diplomacy additionally underscores a historic design flaw gripping APD operations, a consequence of the historical precedent mandating APD's perceived role in American foreign policy discourse be merely reactionary. This has impeded the sustained maintenance of an effective public diplomacy infrastructure in the form of APD agencies that are well staffed and able to implement important programs. In addition, this inherent design flaw has depleted the United States government of APD professionals and programs well equipped to effectively communicate to international audiences and confront international crises.

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<sup>161</sup> Peterson, Bloomgarden, Grunwald, Morey, Telhami, Sieg, Herbstman, "Finding America's Voice: A Strategy for Reinvigorating U.S. Public Diplomacy," 8.

## Addressing APD's Weak Points

This study has examined several weak points contributing to the dispiriting state of American public diplomacy. My thesis commends the step to reform several of the Smith-Mundt Act's restrictions in 2012 which "amends the United States Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 to authorize the domestic dissemination of information and material about the United States intended primarily for foreign audiences, and for other purposes."<sup>162</sup> A step in a more transparent direction, this move suggests a loosening grip on the propaganda charge. To further mitigate the lack of support caused by the propaganda charge, this thesis suggests distancing APD operations from the idea suggesting programs are merely propaganda, given the skepticism this term generates. While public diplomacy and propaganda are similar in their aims of changing the perceptions of the United States within foreign audiences, public diplomacy is distinctly different given that APD programs are a form of two-way communication, allowing Americans to interact with foreign peoples, cultures, and ideas.<sup>163</sup>

This phenomenon can be capitalized on through an expansion of cultural and educational exchanges that both send and receive students, military personnel, entrepreneurs, academics, and governmental officials. Furthermore, by targeting and welcoming exchange participants from traditionally underrepresented areas and demographics in the United States, APD operations stand to better address the concerning lack of domestic support and knowledge pertaining to

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<sup>162</sup> H.R.5736 - Smith-Mundt Modernization Act of 2012, accessed on April 27, 2019, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/house-bill/5736/text>.

<sup>163</sup> Jan Melissen, "Beyond the New Public Diplomacy," (Clingendael Paper, 2011), accessed on April 27, 2019, <http://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-471#acrefore-9780190228637-e-471-bibItem-0019>



these programs within the American electorate. Such an incorporation of underrepresented voices has extra benefits, for example, the accurate portrayal of a diverse American society. In addition to these measures, public diplomacy is a growing academic field and capitalizing on the expanding corps of policy experts with public diplomacy expertise,<sup>164</sup> for, by example, appointing these individuals to ambassadorships, allows for operational growth, increased prioritization and a deeper appreciation of this work.

This study notes the consensus among international relations scholars that conclude funding and resources for information and culture operations stands at an inadequate level. The 2003 Report conducted by an Independent Task Force Sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations, titled “Finding America’s Voice: A Strategy for Reinvigorating U.S. Public Diplomacy” notes that;

The United States allocates too few resources to public diplomacy programs. Public diplomacy programming is severely underfunded both in absolute terms and in comparison to other allocations. For every dollar spent on the military, the U.S. government spends seven cents on diplomacy. And of those seven cents, only one-quarter of one penny is spent on public diplomacy (including exchange and educational programs).<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> CPD Advisory Board, “Making the Case for U.S. Public Diplomacy,” (California, USC Center on Public Diplomacy, 2017), accessed on April 27, 2019, <https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/publication/making-case-us-public-diplomacy>.

<sup>165</sup> Peterson, Bloomgarden, Grunwald, Morey, Telhami, Sieg, Herbstman, “Finding America’s Voice: A Strategy for Reinvigorating U.S. Public Diplomacy,” 8.

While this study concurs with these findings, it is important to note that only upholding a set monetary value of funding for operations does not necessarily denote effective programming. For example, in one instance a major American effort to produce and circulate television advertisements throughout the Middle East and North Africa that depicted American Muslims being well treated at home had little to no effect on opinion polling.<sup>166</sup> Rather, in addition to providing adequate funding, this thesis also supports reforms suggested by international relations scholar, Joseph Nye who argues that in order to achieve effective public diplomacy, there must be, among other changes, a quicker response and explanation of current events. Nye notes that such a change can be accomplished through new broadcasting, like Radio Sawa, which broadcasts in Arabic and intersperses news with popular music.<sup>167</sup>

Additionally, Nye suggests a methodology for branding America as a democratic nation. He cites the charge that American policies are indifferent to the destruction of Muslim lives, arguing such a stereotype can be fought head-on by pointing to American interventions that saved Muslim lives in Bosnia and Kosovo, as well as assistance to Muslim countries to foster development and combat AIDS.<sup>168</sup> Finally, Joseph Nye highlights that the problems facing American public diplomacy operations, specifically in the context of the Middle East and North Africa, a particularly difficult case for APD activity, must incorporate a broader approach, focusing on distinct long-term responses. Nye advocates for the expansion of educational and cultural exchanges that champion civil society and democracy and that promote goodwill between the United States and other nations, facilitating friendlier environments conducive to the

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<sup>166</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, 121.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*, 121-122.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid*.

achievement of American foreign policy objectives.<sup>169</sup> A prime example of this approach is the Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program. Funded through the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs (ECA), the YES program provides scholarships for high school students from countries with significant Muslim populations to spend up to one academic year in the United States. While in country, students live with host families, attend high schools, engage in activities to learn about American society and values and acquire leadership skills.<sup>170</sup>

Programs like YES have shown promising results. A post program survey conducted by the international exchange program implementation organization, Academic Year and America (AYA), which oversees international students from the YES program, along with other Department of State exchange participants, shows that the majority of program participants, approximately 78% percent of those surveyed had a "more favorable" view of the United States, and 75% of participants understood the U.S better, with 70% saying they now have a more positive opinion of Americans.<sup>171</sup>

In addition to exchange programs, current public diplomats are commissioning modern-day vehicles of information dissemination like the internet and social media platforms to boost the benefits of American public diplomacy.<sup>172</sup> On the website [www.America.gov](http://www.America.gov), run by the Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP), foreign audiences

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study, "About Us," accessed on April 27, 2019, <https://www.yesprograms.org/about/about-us>.

<sup>171</sup> AIFS Foundation and Academic Year in America, "Program Outcomes Assessment: A View From Our Alumni (2003-2012)," accessed on April 27, 2019, [https://www.aifs.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Unsere\\_Programme/High\\_School/Outcomes\\_Assessment\\_2014.pdf](https://www.aifs.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Unsere_Programme/High_School/Outcomes_Assessment_2014.pdf).

<sup>172</sup> William A. Rugh, *The Practice of Public Diplomacy ; Confronting Challenges Abroad*, (United Kingdom, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 27.

have access to a substantial aggregate of information on the United States. By providing transparent information on American culture, global challenges, politics, economy, society, and law, websites like [www.America.gov](http://www.America.gov) help combat harmful narratives that undermine America's standing in the world. Additionally, American embassies are co-opting the use of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to directly engage with foreign audiences by way of live chats, commentary and the sharing of events and programs.<sup>173</sup>

Increasing the usage of educational exchanges such as the YES program in addition to expanding upon modern-day technological advances also commits the United States government to the use of long-term APD strategies, reorienting these programs as the standard for American public diplomacy operations, not the exception. Mitigating the institutional series of zeniths and nadirs can be done through maintained and sustained long term programs, as exemplified by the Fulbright program and the Voice of America, helping bring about an end to a historical trend that has led to operational low points and periods of ineffective APD activity. Moreover, a commitment to the long-term maintenance of public diplomacy programs and agencies ensure that when the United States needs robust communications networks and necessary linguistic and cultural knowledge, operations and personnel are already equipped with these tools, ready to confront the issue at hand.

In conclusion, the troubling history of American public diplomacy does not only educate us about the challenges hindering information and culture operations; it illuminates areas of improvement, that when fully addressed stand to help the United States more effectively achieve foreign policy objectives. While it is presumptuous to assume that public diplomacy can mitigate

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

all of America's international afflictions, history shows that when programs are institutionally prioritized, maintained and sustained at a monetary status of adequate funding, backed by a robust institutional infrastructure and are dynamic, creative, and inclusive in their programming approach have the potential to enact global change, promote the national interest, and facilitate lasting multilateral relationships.

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