

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**WINNING THE WAR OF IDEAS: ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF  
PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**

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This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

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# Report Documentation Page

*Form Approved*  
*OMB No. 0704-0188*

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE <b>15 MAR 2006</b>	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED			
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>Winning the War of Ideas Assessing the Effectiveness of Public Diplomacy</b>		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER			
		5b. GRANT NUMBER			
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER			
6. AUTHOR(S) <b>Michael Wadsworth</b>		5d. PROJECT NUMBER			
		5e. TASK NUMBER			
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA, 17013-5050</b>		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER			
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)			
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)			
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT <b>See Attached</b>					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>22</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

## ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Colonel Michael P. Wadsworth  
TITLE: Winning the War of Ideas: Assessing the Effectiveness of Public Diplomacy  
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project  
DATE: 16 March 2006      WORD COUNT: 6040      PAGES: 22  
KEY TERMS: Anti-Americanism, Information, Policy  
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* calls for the United States to act on four fronts to stop terrorist attacks. The fourth front, acting to diminish the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit, establishes an objective to wage a war of ideas to eliminate the conditions and ideologies that promote terrorism. However, recent U.S. attempts at waging a war of ideas have rallied support in the Arab and Muslim world for extremists seeking redress of political and ideological grievances through violence and terrorism. This has created fertile conditions where adherents of radical ideologies use misinformation to stir civil unrest and undermine U.S. interests in the region. This paper examines the effectiveness of public diplomacy in mitigating the sources of Anti-Americanism that threaten a favorable outcome in the war of ideas. This is accomplished by discussing the realities and consequences of Anti-Americanism, defining the current policy that implements the war of ideas, and assessing the effectiveness of the policy through an analysis of ends, ways, means, and risk. The paper concludes with suggested alternatives to the current U.S. policy on the use of the information component of national power in support of the war of ideas.

## WINNING THE WAR OF IDEAS: ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The dawn of the 21st century confronts this country with unprecedented challenges, due largely to our unparalleled global influence as the world's only remaining superpower. U.S. policies, while shaped to support U.S. interests in the world, are largely misunderstood by our allies and misrepresented by our adversaries. Nowhere is this more evident than in the implementation of the war of ideas described by President George W. Bush in the *National Security Strategy* to win the battle against international terrorism. The stated purpose of the war of ideas was to use the full influence of the United States to support Allies and moderate governments to diminish the underlying conditions that support terrorism.<sup>1</sup> Instead, recent U.S. attempts at waging the war of ideas is causing broad support for disaffected militants and Arab and Muslim extremists seeking redress of political and ideological grievances through violence and terrorism. This has created fertile conditions where adherents of radical ideologies use misinformation and violence to stir civil unrest and effectively undermine U.S. policies and interests in the region. The unfortunate reality is that the United States, through ineffective and uncoordinated public diplomacy, is losing the war of ideas and fueling anti-Americanism.

### Realities and Consequences of Anti-Americanism

The United States has a strategic problem, the war on terror is increasingly perceived as a misguided American intervention to impose democratic reforms in the Middle East. Fueled by discontent over regime changes in Afghanistan and Iraq, the lack of progress in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and continued western insensitivity to Arab cultural, extremists have adversely influenced Muslim public opinion worldwide. Al Qaeda has exploited the U.S. presence in Afghanistan and Iraq to justify terrorist attacks and political violence, increasing both their influence and legitimacy among Muslims worldwide. Fundamentalist leaders recruit freely with claims that the U.S. is conducting a global "crusade" against Muslims that can only be overcome with Islamic unity. This has been confirmed in countless depositions from terrorists in U.S. custody with links to Al Qaeda from Indonesia to Malaysia and Iraq to Afghanistan who insist they are defending themselves against a U.S. led "crusade".<sup>2</sup>

While overseas opinion polls show mostly negative views of the United States, the public diplomacy and public affairs machinery at the Department of State remains in disarray, inter-agency coordination remains minimal, and America's foreign communications effort lacks focus. In contrast, Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda have successfully rallied Muslims and achieved wide consensus in the Islamic world that U.S. policies in the Middle East disadvantage Muslims.

Virtually every Muslim can recite extant U.S. policies such as support for Israel at the expense of the Palestinians, western troops on the Arabian Peninsula, U.S. occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. pressure on Arab oil producers, and overt U.S. support for apostate Muslim governments as examples of U.S. policies that disadvantage Muslims and support the fundamentalist claim of a U.S. led "crusade".<sup>3</sup>

Zeyno Baran, in a November 2005 article in *Foreign Affairs*, argues that the West is being drawn into a clash of competing ideologies within the Islamic World, moderate Muslims versus extremist Islamist organizations such as Al Qaeda. The former believe that Islam is compatible with democracy and civil liberties whereas the latter remain committed to replacing the existing world order with a global Islamic state.<sup>4</sup> Eight months earlier in March 2005, Andrew Krepinevich, the Executive Director of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, testified to the House Armed Services Committee that the Iraqi people are one of three centers of gravity in the war in Iraq. He went on to make the point that if insurgents can gain control of the population through fear or popular appeal, they significantly increase their chances of winning.<sup>5</sup> If we extrapolate Krepinevich's center of gravity out to the larger Global War on Terror, it quickly becomes apparent that the strategic center of gravity is moderate Muslims. We will not prevail in the President's war of ideas unless moderate Muslims prevail in the war of ideologies within the Islamic world.

The unintended consequences from the absence of a unifying strategic direction in both public diplomacy and public affairs since the end of cold war are clear, an increasing over reliance on hard power (military force and coercive economic measures) to solve the complex issues that confront America in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> U.S. inability or unwillingness to explain our foreign policy to the world, with a clear understanding of its impact on nation states, transnational organizations, and the disparate cultures that comprise them, has empowered extremists and perpetuated hate and animosity toward the United States. The unfortunate reality is that this lack of clear strategic direction has limited our ability to attract and support the moderate Muslims who will ultimately deny extremists the recruits necessary to prolong conflict in the Middle East.

The decline in the use of soft power (policies that make America's ideas and society attractive to others) has been accompanied by a corresponding and predictable decrease in the funding and effectiveness of public diplomacy.<sup>7</sup> Immediately after the September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States spent only \$150 million on public diplomacy in Muslim countries in 2002. In the same year, the combined costs of the State Department's public diplomacy programs and international broadcasting programs totaled just over \$1 billion or one-quarter of

1% of the Department of Defense budget.<sup>8</sup> On October 1, 2003, the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World submitted a report to the Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives detailing that the majority of the \$150 million spent on public diplomacy in 2002 funded exchange programs, salaries of public affairs officers, Foreign Service nationals, and employees working public diplomacy in embassies. Furthermore, funding for critical public diplomacy outreach programs in 2002 totaled only \$25 million for the entire Arab and Muslim world.<sup>9</sup> Although predictable, the under funding of public diplomacy aggravates the absence of a clear and unifying strategic direction and dangerously imperils the nation's ability to effectively wage the war of ideas.

If America is to prevail in the war of ideas, the administration must re-focus public diplomacy to achieve synergy with the current one-dimensional military effort. As stated in the President's *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, only the complimentary efforts of the military, information, and diplomatic resources of this country will ultimately achieve victory in the Global War on Terror.<sup>10</sup> It is time now to open a second front in the War on Terror by recommitting to winning the war of ideology by refocusing soft power to eliminate extremism and reduce the Anti-American sentiments that sustain it. The war of ideas can and must be a major contributor to fully realize the President's National Security Objectives.

#### Public Diplomacy: A Working Definition

Kathy R. Fitzpatrick, in an April 2004 speech to the Institute of World Affairs at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, defined public diplomacy as the effort of a nation to understand, inform, and influence people of other nations. More simply stated, it is international public relations. She went on to contrast public diplomacy with foreign diplomacy, making the important distinction that the former is targeted at influencing governments whereas the latter is targeted at influencing the citizens of a country.<sup>11</sup> This is an important distinction in that it requires policy makers to have a working understanding of the complex international environment which public diplomacy seeks to influence.

International public opinion is increasingly shaped by the interaction of nation-to-nation dialogue, transnational actors, and foreign publics. Christopher Ross, the U.S. Department of State Special Coordinator for Public Diplomacy, cites globalization and information technology as critical influences that have transformed the international environment in which public diplomacy operates. Globalization, the integration and interdependence of countries, is increasingly enabled by technology such as the internet which links cultures, ideologies, and causes in near real time.<sup>12</sup> This is significant in that technology is increasingly the tool of choice

for transnational organizations to highlight inconsistencies with U.S. policies in order to fragment international public opinion.

#### War of Ideas: Policy and Implementation

Waging a war of ideas was first introduced in September 2002 by President George W. Bush in Part III of the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* as one component in a broad strategy to strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism and prevent attacks against the U.S. and its friends.<sup>13</sup> This policy was subsequently refined in a clear articulation of goals and objectives within the framework of an over-arching strategic intent for achieving victory in the President's *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* published in February 2003. This document articulates a four component strategy (4D strategy) directed at *defeating* terrorist organizations, *denying* sponsorship, *diminishing* underlying conditions, and *defending* the United States. In the third component, winning the war of ideas is stated as one of two supporting objectives. The enabling objectives of this component of the policy include working to reverse the spread of extremist ideology, assuring Muslims that American values are not at odds with Islam, reaffirming America's commitment to an independent Palestine co-existing in peace with Israel, and de-legitimizing terrorism through international norms of non-tolerance.<sup>14</sup> Each of these objectives have considerable merit by providing a central theme or focus for the larger war of ideas. However, the more difficult and urgent task is implementing a mutually supporting set of programs that realize these objectives.

The principle organization charged with applying the full influence of the United States Government to implement and ultimately win the war of ideas is the State Department. Their executive agent for implementing and managing the war of ideas is the fledgling Under Secretary of State for Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy whose primary responsibility is to inform and engage the world on U.S. values, programs, and policies.<sup>15</sup> Current initiatives include the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Partnerships for Learning which extends exchange programs to undergraduate and high school students and the School Internet Connectivity Program that facilitates collaborative online projects on current affairs and civic responsibility between U.S. students and students in the Middle East and South Asia. The Bureau of Public Affairs (PA) is working with embassies in Muslim countries to broadcast key U.S. policies such as the State of Union Address live with simultaneous native translations. They are also using co-operative programming with local broadcasters in both radio and television to render an accurate picture of America to foreign audiences. The International Information Programs Bureau (IIP) is operating the American Corners programs which are

partnerships with universities, libraries, and chambers of commerce, including 10 in Afghanistan and 15 in Iraq planned and implemented in FY05. They are also developing, producing, and donating four-color books in native languages about American values, culture, and history.<sup>16</sup>

Interagency coordination is another important program being used to support the on-going war of ideas. The Office of Global Communications was established by executive order in January 2003 to present a clear and consistent American voice to the world. This office synchronizes the public diplomacy efforts of various departments and agencies -- including State, Defense, and the National Security Council (NSC) -- in an effort to counter false and defamatory reports by the foreign press. It is also designed to promote a positive image of America, its people, and its institutions. The Policy Coordination Committee of the National Security Council, jointly chaired by the Under Secretary of State for Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy and a Special Assistant to the President, seeks to ensure that all government agencies work together in support of the White House to distribute the President's messages across the world. To help get the message out, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) facilitate the open communication of information and ideas in support of broadening views and perspectives on America through Radio Sawa (Arabic), Radio Farda (Persian), and the new Middle East Television Network, Alhurra.<sup>17</sup> These media outlets endeavor to broadcast accurate, timely, and relevant news about the Middle East, the world, and the United States to the youthful population of Arabic-speakers in the Middle East.

Although public diplomacy programs and initiatives have increased post 9/11, the resources available to support them are still inadequate. The decline began in the mid-1990s with the fall of the Berlin Wall and continued through the dissolution of the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) in 1999; the predictable result of Cold War budget cuts that moved USIA functions into the State Department. During this period, funding for public diplomacy programs dropped 26% and personnel manning for public diplomacy programs dropped 35%.<sup>18</sup> The Freedom Promotion Act of 2002 effectively stopped the decline by allocating an additional \$50 million into the fiscal year 2003 budget to support public diplomacy, a 9% increase from the fiscal year 2001 budget of \$544 million. The South Asia and Near East Regions, both with significant Muslim populations, showed the greatest increase in funding during this period at \$15 million and \$23 million respectively.<sup>19</sup>

Despite these recent efforts, the financial resources for public diplomacy are simply inadequate to support the breadth of necessary programs. Resource constraints have been particularly disruptive from the standpoint of sustaining existing programs and have precluded

the State Department from expanding existing programs or creating new programs to address known shortcomings.

#### Developing an Assessment Framework

In order to assess the effectiveness of public diplomacy in waging a war of ideas to defeat terrorism, we must establish an assessment or comparative framework with corresponding metrics to enable an objective analysis of the policy. Arthur Lykke, a U.S. Army War College Professor, likened the development of strategy or policy to a three legged stool in which programs (ways) and resources (means) must be in balance with the stated objectives (ends).<sup>20</sup> Lykke's stool metaphor is a simple, but useful comparative framework for examining the construct and relationships that underpin the Bush administration's public diplomacy policy. This understanding is a necessary prerequisite for identifying suitable metrics that will enable a more thorough and objective analysis of the programs, resources, and objectives that comprise the administration's strategy to win the war of ideas through public diplomacy.

Ross, in a n article published in *Harvard International Review* in the summer of 2003, described seven pillars of public diplomacy which comprise a core "set of principles and practices to inform, influence, and engage foreign publics."<sup>21</sup> Four of Ross' pillars, integration into foreign policy, policy context, message consistency, and themes tailored for specific audiences, are particularly relevant for assessing the effectiveness of public diplomacy initiatives. Integration into foreign policy stresses the responsibility of policy makers to ensure foreign audiences understand U.S. policies for what they are rather than what others say they are. Ross stresses that policies must be clear to ensure understanding and consistency with overall themes across different audiences. Policy context provides the reason and rationale necessary to enable broader understanding of U.S. values and culture. He stresses that an understanding of policy context must extend beyond foreign governments for policies to be heard and judged fairly in Arab and Muslim countries. Message consistency is simply saying what we mean and meaning what we say. Interagency coordination enables message consistency by establishing themes, setting priorities, and coordinating communications with foreign governments. The final pillar, tailoring messages, is an extension of message consistency. It involves rapidly communicating across multiple mediums such as web pages, print media, and television and radio broadcasts. Ross stresses that understating what is heard, rather what is said, is a prerequisite to tailoring the message for the right audience on the most effective medium.<sup>22</sup>

These four pillars are useful metrics to measure both the effectiveness and suitability of programs designed to implement, sustain, and ultimately win the war of ideas. They have particular utility in assessing whether or not programs are actually achieving or promoting understanding by multiple foreign publics and non-state actors. Therefore, they comprise the first set of metrics for assessing the effectiveness of public diplomacy.

Policies without the means to collect, analyze, and understand the outcomes or consequences of the policy are frequently ineffective and counter-productive. They fuel the international perception that America is arrogant, disrespectful, and concerned only with promoting its own advantageous position in the world. Fitzpatrick summarized it best in an April 2004 speech titled *U.S Public Diplomacy: Telling America's Story* where she said "We must listen and respond to foreign public's hopes, desires, values, religions, politics. We must acknowledge and respect our differences."<sup>23</sup> Listening versus talking -- understanding the benefits and consequences of U.S. policies -- comprises the second set of assessment metrics.

During the period immediately after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the State Department experienced critical resource shortages in three areas of public diplomacy: funding, personnel, and training time. The Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World reported in October 2003 that only \$150 million of the State Department's \$600 million public diplomacy budget was actually spent on Muslim-majority countries. Of the \$150 million committed, only \$25 million was spent on high payoff outreach programs. A continuing shortage in numbers of qualified public diplomacy officials is another pressing problem. Although the State Department increased the number of Foreign Service officers serving in public diplomacy positions by 34 in 2003, most lack the cultural knowledge and language proficiency necessary to serve effectively in these positions. This can be addressed through training, however, it typically takes two to three years to properly train an officer. Once trained, time must be allocated to maintain and improve language proficiency. Of the 279 Arabic speakers in the State Department in 2003, only 56 were fluent speakers.<sup>24</sup> Reassigning functions and personnel within the State Department to maximize available funding and expertise was a necessary first step. However, resource shortfalls continue to hamper the State Department's ability to fully develop a diverse and complementary range of programs necessary to fully implement the President's war of ideas. Therefore funding, human resources, and training time constitute the third set of metrics for assessing the effectiveness of public diplomacy.

The comparative framework and corresponding metrics described earlier enable an objective examination of the policy implementation of the war of ideas. Perhaps more

importantly, this approach will provide insight into whether the programs, objectives, and resources that comprise the broader policy actually: (1) facilitate understanding by multiple foreign publics and non-state actors, (2) emphasize listening versus talking in order to better understand the benefits and consequences of U.S. policies, and (3) are properly enabled by the resources (funding, personnel, and training) presently available. These insights will serve as a baseline for an objective assessment of the effectiveness of the war of ideas.

### Assessing the Effectiveness of Public Diplomacy

#### *Attitudinal Survey Results*

Over a year after the conclusion of the ground war in Iraq, discontent with America and its policies has generally intensified, suggesting that programs (ways) under-pinning the war of ideas are largely ineffective. A six-nation survey conducted in June 2004 by Zogby International found that attitudes of Arabs in Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt toward U.S. policies in Iraq and Palestine were extremely low (single digits). In the case of each country, U.S. policies on Iraq, terrorism, and the Israel-Palestine conflict were cited as the major factors contributing to unfavorable ratings.<sup>25</sup> When participants were asked open ended questions on their thoughts about America, the responses in all six countries were overwhelmingly negative at a rate of almost 80%. Most respondents frequently cited concerns over unfair foreign policy or how the U.S. deals with the Arab world and its people as their principal grievance. When asked the best things that come to mind about America, the top response in three of the six countries surveyed was "nothing at all."<sup>26</sup> Finally, when queried about their principal source of received information about the US, one-fourth to one-third of the respondents in four of the five countries cited seeing or hearing Arab commentaries on Arab media. In the fifth country, Saudi Arabia, two-thirds of the respondents replied Arab media. In Morocco, Jordan, and the UAE, over half (>50%) of the remaining respondents reported receiving their ideas about America from movies and watching American television.<sup>27</sup>

#### *Programs (Ways)*

Although it is commonly understood that the speed and reach of modern communications has increased the influence and sophistication of propaganda, public diplomacy programs have been slow to adapt to this environment. The overwhelmingly negative survey results referenced earlier suggest problems communicating the purpose and rationale for U.S. policies, inconsistencies with tailoring themes for Arab and Muslim audiences, and issues with the

integration of public diplomacy into foreign policy. This occurs in part because of an over-reliance on state-to-state diplomacy to influence the opinions of people in other countries. Alternative approaches such as complementary programs of formal diplomacy and regionally tailored public diplomacy initiatives are more effective at promoting understanding and dialogue but are much less common. Predictably, the September 2003 U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) report on public diplomacy documented that although Egypt is the second-largest recipient of U.S. assistance in the world, only a small percentage of the population are aware of this fact. Not surprisingly, 94% of Egyptians hold negative opinions of the United States.<sup>28</sup> Each of these communication shortcomings align almost completely with four of Ross's public diplomacy pillars described earlier as defining the first metric in the assessment framework. Given the overwhelmingly negative attitudinal survey results, it is reasonable to conclude that existing public diplomacy programs are ineffective in facilitating understanding of U.S. policies by multiple foreign publics.

The second metric in the assessment framework, emphasizing listening versus talking, also appears to be in conflict with the views of almost 80% of the respondents who voiced concerns over how the U.S. deals with the Arab world and its people. The majority of the survey respondents are getting their information about America from Arab media sources, films, and U.S. television. This strongly suggests an incomplete understanding of the benefits and consequences associated with the programs (ways) selected to implement the war of ideas. The results of Zogby's Six-Nation Survey, *Impressions of America 2004*, clearly reinforce the Arab perception that our preference is to talk versus listen, to impose solutions rather than seek compromise. Unfortunately this only perpetuates the cycle of misunderstanding, strengthening cultural bias, and confirming U.S. arrogance.

Although it is increasingly clear that existing public diplomacy programs are ineffective, it is useful to look at these programs from the perspective of resources, the final metric in our assessment framework. As suggested earlier, the type and effectiveness of public diplomacy programs currently resourced is only one aspect of the problem. A second and perhaps more important consideration is the breadth of public diplomacy programs available to inform foreign publics and promote understanding. One needs only to look at the success of Islamic extremists in neutralizing U.S. attempts at public diplomacy to understand the significance of a range of complementary programs these groups use to get their message out. One of their primary and very effective strategies has been to produce and disseminate propaganda online. This is accomplished by selectively culling western web sites in order to obtain and manipulate multi-media content to satisfy their objective to unify disparate extremist campaigns and erode

the morale of soldiers, government leaders, and the public.<sup>29</sup> Therefore it is reasonable to conclude, from a resource perspective, that the absence of a breadth of complementary public diplomacy programs (ways) has constrained implementation of the war of ideas.

#### *Objectives (Ends)*

The Pew Research Center conducted a similar altitudinal survey in March 2004 focused on predominantly Muslim countries that also suggests anger toward the U.S. remains pervasive. Majorities in six of nine countries surveyed questioned the motives of the U.S.-led war on terrorism with greater than 61% believing that U.S. anti-terrorism efforts are driven by a desire to control Middle East oil. High percentages of those sampled believed that U.S. motivations included world domination, targeting unfriendly Muslim governments, and protecting Israel.<sup>30</sup> Disturbingly, almost one-third of the respondents in the four Muslim countries (Turkey, Pakistan, Jordan, and Morocco) believe that suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilian targets are justified. Over 53% of the respondents in the same four countries believe suicide bombing is justified against Americans and other westerners in Iraq and over 58% believe it is justifiable for Palestinians against Israeli civilians.<sup>31</sup>

When these attitudes are cross-walked against the stated U.S. objectives (ends) of the war of ideas, they are unquestionably at odds with three of the four declared themes: reversing the spread of extremist ideology, reaffirming America's commitment to an independent Palestine co-existing in peace with Israel, and de-legitimizing terrorism through international norms of non-tolerance. When reviewed in relation to the first set of metrics (promoting understanding by multiple foreign publics and non-state actors), the stated objectives of the policy are clearly not being achieved. Although these objectives are both reasonable and achievable from the standpoint of enabling the U.S. to prevail in the on-going war of ideas, the incongruence between the effectiveness of existing public diplomacy programs and the resources necessary to fully implement them has rendered the larger policy ineffective.

Listening versus talking in order to understand and mitigate the unintended consequences of U.S. policies, the second set of metrics in the assessment framework, exposes additional program shortfalls when applied against the stated objectives of the war of ideas. For example, when asked whether the U.S. takes into account the interest of other countries in making foreign policy decisions, over 68% of those surveyed in 8 of 9 countries responded negatively; only those surveyed in the U.S. (70%) responded positively to same question.<sup>32</sup> The message here is clear, the U.S. must become less parochial and more sensitive to perceptions and cultures abroad if they expect to engage these countries in constructive two-way dialogue.

When the third set of metrics (resources) are applied to the incongruence between the effectiveness of public diplomacy programs and the stated objectives of the war of ideas identified earlier, the solution becomes clear. Assuming no increase in the near term availability of resources, either the programs (ways) must be revised and broadened to support the stated objectives or the objectives (ends) must be realigned to account for the limitations and shortfalls in extant public diplomacy programs. Alternatively, if the administration increases the funding available to the State Department to wage the war of ideas, existing programs can be revised or expanded and new programs can be implemented to enable the objectives for the war of ideas to be met. Ultimately which direction the State Department chooses will be driven by the availability of resources (funding, personnel, and training time).

#### *Resources (Means)*

Immediately following 9/11 the State Department prudently reallocated funds to target predominantly Muslim populations in the South Asia (63% increase) and the Near East (58% increase), however this was done at the expense of large Muslim populations in Africa and East Asia where funding increases were a meager 18% and 9% respectively.<sup>33</sup> This is a direct consequence of immature public diplomacy programs and the absence of measurable indicators of progress toward designated objectives such as the war of ideas. Although an argument can be made that public diplomacy is significantly under funded in relation to the Department of the Defense given the missions assigned in the President's *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, no data exists to quantify or forecast the financial resources required. Much work is still required to realign the development of public diplomacy programs with the budget cycle so that requirements can be developed and validated in sufficient detail to forecast financial requirements.

Trained personnel are another significant point of friction. Since 9/11, the number of Foreign Service officers involved in public diplomacy overseas increased 11% to 539 officers. The greatest change in authorized numbers of Foreign Service officers occurred in the Muslim-majority countries in South Asia (15%), Africa (18%), and the Near East (27%).<sup>34</sup> Although some progress has been made in assigning officers into key public diplomacy positions in these regions, there are simply not enough of them to man all of the required coordination and advisory positions in the Middle East. Furthermore, many of these officers lack the specialized training, in-depth knowledge of Arab and Muslim cultures, and the corresponding language skills to function effectively. For example, only 21% of the 332 Foreign Service officers filling language designated public diplomacy positions on December 31, 2002 actually met the

language proficiency requirements for their positions.<sup>35</sup> As a result, their ability to design, implement, and assess the effectiveness of critical public diplomacy programs is limited.

Training time is the other immediate challenge. The September 2003 GAO report highlighted the fact that 58% of the Foreign Service officers surveyed reported that inadequate time was devoted to attend public diplomacy training. This prompted the State Department to increase public diplomacy training from 3 weeks to 19 weeks.<sup>36</sup> Although this is a step in the right direction, an insufficient pool of trained officers exists to enable new officers to complete the required training. Furthermore, many officers lack the formal language training necessary to speak the country-specific dialects of Arabic required to achieve fluency in the host country's language; a prerequisite for demonstrating respect for a country's people and culture. Unfortunately, flexibility in training Foreign Service officers is inextricably linked to the State Department's ability to recruit and retain sufficient personnel to offset recurring staffing shortfalls.

#### *Risk*

In Lykke's three legged stool metaphor for the formulation of strategy, the incongruence between programs (ways), resources (means), and objectives (ends) equates to risk. However, there is no documented evidence of any formal discussion or consideration of the risks associated with implementing the policy by the State Department, Under Secretary of State for Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy, the Office of Global Communication, or academia. A simple intellectual cross-walk of programs and resources against the policy objectives (ends) would have identified several potential points of friction where implementation of the war of ideas produces risk. For example, no allowances were made to account for factors such as the affect of nationalist resentment of foreign intervention in the Middle East, the impact of limited access to local media, the impact of extremist propaganda, or the impact of having no formal process to assess the effectiveness of public diplomacy initiatives. Each of these factors were over-looked in strategy formulation, yet surfaced as points of friction during analysis. The net effect of this friction constrained implementation of the policy, as currently constructed, increasing the risk associated with successful execution of the President's war of ideas.

#### The Way Ahead: Alternatives to the Current US Policy

Although much has been written on public diplomacy initiatives and reform since 9/11 by academics, diplomats, government studies, and non-profit think tanks, the public opinion data presented strongly suggests a continuing decline in the effectiveness of public diplomacy in waging the war of ideas. Joseph S. Nye, the Dean of the John F. Kennedy School of

Government at Harvard University, has succinctly described a comprehensive approach to reforming public diplomacy by developing strategies for short, medium, and long terms. In the short term, he argues that the U.S. must become more agile in responding to and explaining current events, in the medium term it must develop strategic public diplomacy themes, and in the long term it must build upon cultural exchanges.<sup>37</sup> His approach stands out amid a plethora of conflicting solutions to the shortfalls with public diplomacy. His arguments suggest a set of potential solutions to the increasing crisis in U.S. diplomacy.

Agility in responding to and explaining current events requires that we develop and use a multifaceted, rapid response capability. One alternative is to simply empower ambassadors with both the means and authority to identify and respond to misinformation or one-sided commentary in real time. This would significantly enhance their ability to quickly tailor responses to misinformation to specific foreign audiences, creating opportunities to emphasize policy context and ensure message consistency to more effectively inform and engage foreign publics. This coupled with increased use of Arab-Americans to explain and promote U.S. policy, improved use and access to media in the Arab and Muslim world, and cultivation and use of foreign opinion leaders (e.g. columnists, writers, academics, and former government officials) provide a broad and complementary response to deliberate misinformation.<sup>38</sup> These simple, high impact alternatives are more likely to positively affect our ability to inform, engage, and influence foreign publics in the short term.

In the medium term, the most pressing and high payoff initiative requires that we develop a comprehensive Department of State public diplomacy strategy that consolidates diverse and sometimes divergent public diplomacy activities in support of the war of ideas. This, coupled with the increased use of private sector public relations techniques such as opinion research, will greatly assist in measuring the effectiveness of public diplomacy programs in order to better inform and influence target audiences.<sup>39</sup> A natural extrapolation of this initiative is the integration of public diplomacy officials into cabinet level meetings where foreign policy is formulated in support of a comprehensive interagency public diplomacy strategy.<sup>40</sup>

The long term public diplomacy initiatives advanced by Nye are necessarily focused on expanding educational and cultural exchanges. This, coupled with institutional reforms such as strengthening efforts to train Foreign Service officers in languages and developing formal training programs in public diplomacy, illuminates the way ahead.<sup>41</sup> This long term strategy produces informed citizens, Foreign Service officials, and diplomats who can present U.S. policies to foreign audiences with empathy as they engage, inform, and influence others in support of U.S. goals and objectives.

Risks are inherent in these and other alternatives. Although not an alternative unto itself, a comprehensive strategy for public diplomacy must include a formal process to identify, quantify, and align risks with programs (ways) during policy formulation. Properly implemented, a structured methodology for assessing risk enables policy makers to identify programs (ways) and resources (means) that are incongruent with stated objectives (ends). Once internalized, this simple process will improve both the efficiency and productivity of short, medium, and long term public diplomacy alternatives which ultimately enable the war of ideas.

Notwithstanding the considerable work that has been accomplished to date in waging the war of ideas, this effort has been largely uncoordinated, fragmented, and ineffective. However, many of the suggested alternatives previously discussed hold great promise in building upon the work already accomplished. Therefore, the President should direct the Secretary of State to develop, communicate, and implement a fully integrated strategy for America's public diplomacy effort in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the September 2003 GAO report on *U.S. Public Diplomacy*. This is absolutely essential to achieving synergy between public diplomacy and foreign policy in order to establish a clear purpose, direction, and objectives (short, medium, and long term) to refocus the war of ideas in support of the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*. Concurrently, the President's National Security Advisor should lead a comprehensive and parallel interagency review of the short, medium, and long term alternatives discussed earlier. The outcome of this cabinet-level, interagency review should be consensus on development of a coordinated interagency public diplomacy strategy that achieves unity of effort in the war of ideas under State Department lead. Finally, the President should direct inclusion of formal assessments of the risk embedded in short, medium, and long term strategies for waging the war of ideas. Properly implemented, these simple recommendations will add much needed unity and purpose to an otherwise uncoordinated and arbitrary war of ideas.

### Conclusion

Although the perception gap between the United States and Arab and Muslim states is potentially too wide to be bridged altogether, it can and must be reduced. The information component of national power, specifically public diplomacy and the war of ideas described by the President in the *National Security Strategy*, clearly illuminate the way ahead. Successful implementation of this strategy, however, requires the administration to immediately and fully address the program and resource shortfalls that currently hinder meaningful public diplomacy. The complex, dynamic, and continuously evolving global war of ideology requires a well thought

out and seamlessly executed interagency information campaign, one that integrates and coordinates the goals and objectives outlined in the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*. The war of ideas is the United States' to win, our determination to see it through to its successful conclusion will help determine the security, prosperity, and growth of the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. (Washington, D.C.: The White House, September 2002), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Dan Murphy, "Moderate Muslims Fear Fundamentalist Back Lash from War: Terrorist Leaders Recruit with Claims of a Global, US-Led "Crusade" against Islam", *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 March 2003, p. 7 [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 28 January 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 240-241.

<sup>4</sup> Zeyno Baran, "Fighting the War of Ideas," *Foreign Affairs*. New York: Nov/Dec 2005; Vol. 84, Iss. 6; 79.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, *Are We Winning in Iraq?: Hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, 108<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 17 March 2005, 4-5*. During his testimony, Andrew Krepinevich, the Executive Director of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, outlines three centers of gravity underpinning the war in Iraq: the Iraqi People, the American People, and the American Soldier. However, he acknowledges that only the first center of gravity applies to the insurgents. Therefore, if the insurgents can gain control over the population through fear, popular appeal or both, they increase opportunities to extend the conflict and eventually prevail.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Ackerman, Chair, International Center for Nonviolent Conflict, "Between Hard and Soft Power: The Rise of Civilian-based Struggle and Democratic Change," remarks to the Secretary's Open Forum, Washington DC, 29 June 2004, available from <http://www.state.gov/s/p/proc/34285.htm>; Internet: accessed 12 February 2006. Ackerman opens his remarks by succinctly defining hard and soft power for the purpose of exploring new policy options to promote democratic change. He defines hard power as military force and coercive economic measures often used in response to short and intermediate crises. Conversely, he defines soft power as those efforts designed to make America's ideas and society more attractive; generally applied over the long term to encourage cooperation and accommodation.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., "A Dollop of Deeper American Values: Why 'Soft Power' Matters in Fighting Terrorism," *Washington Post*, 30 March 2004, p. A19.

<sup>9</sup> Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, Report to U.S. Congress, House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, *Changing Minds and*

*Winning the Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World*, 108<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess., 1 October 2003, 26. The Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World was formed in June 2003 at the request of Congress. It is a subcommittee of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, a bipartisan panel created by Congress and appointed by the President to provide oversight of U.S. Government activities intended to understand, inform, and influence foreign publics. The Advisory Group members include: Ambassador David Abshire; Dr. Steve Cohen; Ambassador Diana Lady Dougan; Dr. Mamoun Fandy; Mr. James K. Glassman; Malik Hasan, M.D. ; Dr. Farhad Kazemi; Ms. Judy Milestone; Mr. Harold Pachios; Mr. George R. Salem; Dr. Shibley Telhami; and Mr. John Zogby.

<sup>10</sup> George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, D.C: The White House, February 2003), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Kathy R. Fitzpatrick, "U.S. Public Diplomacy: Telling America's Story," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, no. 13 (April 15, 2004): 413 [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 21 September 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Ross, "Pillars of Public Democracy," *Harvard International Review* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 22.

<sup>13</sup> Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Bush, *National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, 22-24.

<sup>15</sup> R.S. Zaharna, "The Unintended Consequences of Crisis Public Diplomacy: American Public Diplomacy in the Arab World," *Foreign Policy in Focus* 8, no. 2 (Jun 2003): 1.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret DeB. Tutwiler, "Public Diplomacy Activities and Programs" (Testimony before the House Committee on Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations on 10 February 2004); available from <http://www.state.gov/r/us/2004/29251pf.htm>; Internet; accessed 29 Sep 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Harold C. Pachios, "Communicating Public Diplomacy Objectives" (Remarks to the Committee on Government reform, Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives on 10 February 2004); available from <http://www.state.gov/r/adcompd/rls/29213pf.htm>; Internet; accessed 29 Sep 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy, *Changing Minds and the Winning Peace*, 25.

<sup>19</sup> General Accounting Office, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Report to the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives* (Washington D.C.: U.S. General Accounting Office, September 2003), 7-10.

<sup>20</sup> Arthur F. Lykke Jr., "Defining Military Strategy." *Military Review* 77, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 1997): 185.

<sup>21</sup> Ross, 22.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 22-25. Ross' remaining three pillars of public diplomacy: national and trans-national media, alliances and partnerships, and commitment to dialogue, extend beyond the category I have defined as promoting understanding of public diplomacy and were therefore omitted.

<sup>23</sup> Fitzpatrick, 415.

<sup>24</sup> Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy, *Changing Minds and the Winning Peace*, 26-28.

<sup>25</sup> James Zogby, *Impressions of America 2004* (Washington D.C.: Arab American Institute, 2004), 1-2. In June 2004, Zogby International surveyed almost 3,300 Arabs living in Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt in a follow-up to an earlier "Impressions of America" study conducted in 2002. The 2004 survey is focused specifically on how Arabs view America and how Arabs learn about America. It attempts to measure changes in attitudes that have occurred since the 2002 survey and identify the factors that account for that change. It also explores the sources of information that Arabs use to learn about America and how these sources impact overall attitudes. Attitudes are expressed as a percentage of respondents reporting favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward various U.S. policies, values, and products. Data is broken down by country, religion (Muslim/Christian), and demographics (male/female and under 30/over 30).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 5-7.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>28</sup> Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy, *Changing Minds and the Winning Peace*, 20.

<sup>29</sup> Jarret Brachman, "Internet as Emirate: Al-Qaeda's Pragmatic Use of the Virtual Jihad," *The Officer* 81, no. 10 (December 2005): 96-97.

<sup>30</sup> Carol Doherty, Elizabeth M. Gross and Andrew Kohut, *A Year After Iraq: Mistrust of America in Europe Ever Higher, Muslim Anger Persists* (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2004), 18-20.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>33</sup> GAO, 10.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 4, 9-10, 27.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph S. Nye Jr., "The Decline of America's Soft Power," *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 3 (May/June 2004): 17-18.

<sup>38</sup> Antony J. Blinken, "Winning the War of Ideas," *Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 107-110.

<sup>39</sup> GAO, 1-4.

<sup>40</sup> Blinken, 106.

<sup>41</sup> GAO, 30.