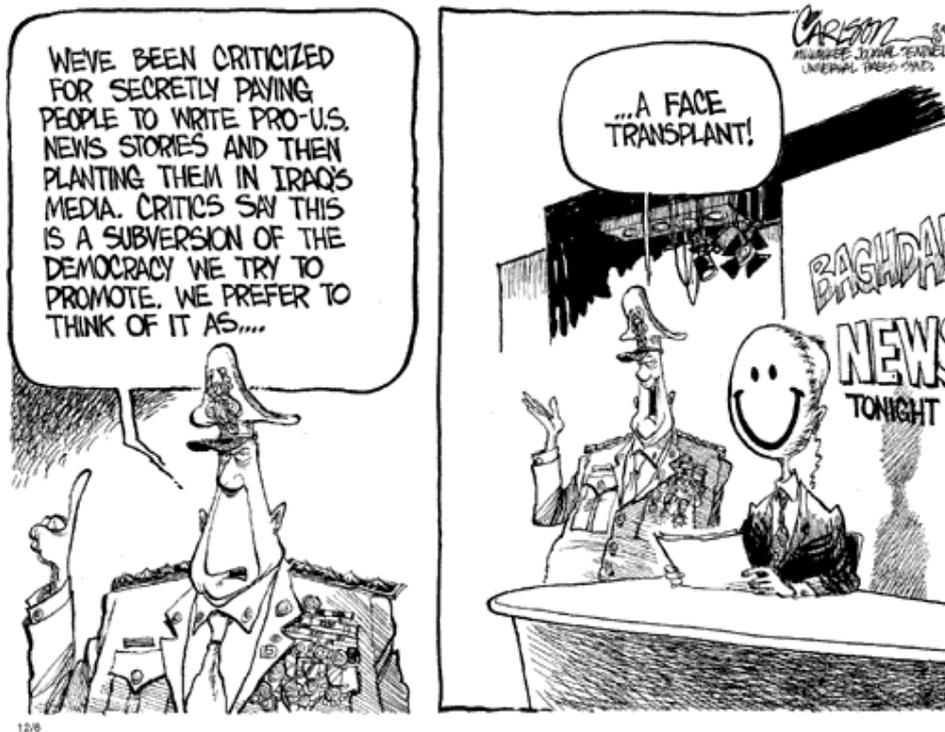


THE AMERICAN CHALLENGE OF WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

An analysis of the influence of post-Cold War developments on the conditions for successful deployment of soft power and the consequences of the U.S. government's failure to sufficiently adjust its public diplomacy strategies



Cartoon by Stuart Carlson

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Abstract

The United States has a long history of using soft power as a foreign policy tool to secure American interests. In the post-Cold War period, several developments within the international system significantly altered the conditions for successful deployment of soft power. 21st century U.S. public diplomacy has been shaped by three particular factors: the substantial shifts occurring within the global world order, the rise of the Information Age, and the Bush administration's approach to foreign policy. While its relevance was growing, the U.S. government did not sufficiently adapt its public diplomacy strategies. U.S. administrations clung to the idea of an enduring liberal world order dominated militarily and ideologically by the United States, and continued to use the framework of the United States as the global guardian of freedom, democracy, peace, and liberalism as the core message of U.S. public diplomacy. However, these two concepts became significantly less relevant in the post-Cold War era. Therefore, public diplomacy initiatives were badly targeted and hypocritical in relation to hard power use. This resulted in discrepancies between words and deeds, a decline in credibility, and a deteriorating image of the United States abroad. To improve public diplomacy achievements, the U.S. government could practice a smarter balance of hard and soft power, target strategies well by critically analyzing the audiences they tend to influence, and reconstruct the core message of U.S. public diplomacy to make it match foreign policy actions.

Keywords: public diplomacy, American Studies, U.S. foreign policy, soft power, smart power, Information Age, global world order, Bush administration, War on Terror

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Introduction

Efforts to attract the hearts and minds of foreign publics affect our everyday lives, whether it regards student exchange programs, Hollywood movies, or broadcasting services directed at audiences abroad. For decades, states have integrated soft power into their foreign policy strategies to influence foreign publics and promote a political climate in which their interests would flourish best: a practice that is called public diplomacy. The United States provides for a particularly interesting case, as the country has a long and rich history in terms of public diplomacy initiatives. However, within the slowly establishing academic field of public diplomacy, scholars have pointed at signs of governmental disregard towards the role and use of U.S. public diplomacy starting in the 1990s, while global developments following the end of the Cold War have been influencing its conditions for success significantly.

This thesis investigates the influence of three major post-Cold War developments; shifts within the global world order, the rise of the Information Age, and the foreign policy approach of President George W. Bush; on the relevance of and conditions for successful U.S. public diplomacy, and examines to what extent U.S. public diplomacy strategies were adapted to these important developments. Following my research, I argue that, between the end of the Cold War and the end of Bush's second presidential term in 2009, the U.S. government did not fully acknowledge the significance of well thought-out public diplomacy strategies in a postwar world, nor did it recognize the effects of the three post-Cold War developments on the conditions for successful deployment of soft power. In this context, the U.S. government did not successfully adjust its public diplomacy policies and was often unable to effectively use soft power, which contributed to a deteriorating image of the United States among publics abroad.

In the context of all three mentioned developments, there is one central theme to the policies that negatively affected the success of public diplomacy in these two decades, namely the tendency of U.S. administrations to continue to use what had been the ‘‘essence of America’s public diplomacy campaign’’¹ since its establishment: the notion of the United States as the bringer and guardian of freedom, democracy, peace, and liberalism. This message correlated well with the often simultaneously made assumption that a post-Cold War liberal world order, dominated by the United States, would endure, but in fact undermined the rapid developments that were significantly changing the international system. In the post-Cold

¹ Laurien Alexandre, ‘‘In the service of the state: public diplomacy, government media and Ronald Reagan,’’ *Media, Culture and Society* 9, no. 1 (1987): 37.

War world, the United States' reputation as the guardian of all these ideals became less powerful: with the disintegration of the Soviet empire, the United States lost its main scapegoat, and substantial shifts in the global balance of power significantly weakened the position of the United States within the international system. In addition, U.S. foreign policy actions, especially under the Bush administration, often contradicted the core message of U.S. public diplomacy, and these incongruities were easy to uncover as a result of the communication revolution.

To construct a corresponding theoretical framework, I will draw from existing research conducted by various scholars. According to American political scientist Joseph S. Nye Sr., a dominant actor in the academic field of soft power and public diplomacy, public diplomacy is a means to promote a country's soft power, which is the "ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment."² Nye states that a party will have greater success in achieving its goals by ensuring that people are persuaded instead of forced to act in a certain way. In international politics, a country's soft power "rests primarily on three resources:"³ its culture, its political values, and its foreign policy. The more attractive these are, the greater the soft power of a country will be. In this context, public diplomacy includes all the ways in which a government uses soft power to influence a foreign public: it serves as a tool to mobilize virtues and values "to communicate with and attract the publics of other countries"⁴ instead of only targeting their governments.

Nye argues that the success of public diplomacy initiatives depends on reputation and credibility: the message that is conveyed by a government to a public has to match the government's concrete actions, or public diplomacy will be counterproductive. Although the terms continue to be used interchangeably,⁵ public diplomacy is not equal to propaganda, which is often misleading and lacks credibility.⁶ Public diplomacy goes beyond propaganda in the sense that it does not only involve persuading foreign publics to endorse American views and ideals by projecting a positive image onto them, but also focuses on creating "an enabling environment for government policies"⁷ through long-term relationships, which requires more than a superficial poster campaign.

² Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 94.

³ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁵ Eytan Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 56.

⁶ Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," 101.

⁷ *Ibid.*

British historian Nicholas Cull confirms this dependency on credibility. Describing it as the “process by which international actors seek to accomplish the goals of their foreign policy by engaging with foreign publics,”⁸ Cull states there are five elements that together shape the practices of public diplomacy: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting. The so-called ‘subfields’ of public diplomacy all aim to influence a foreign public, but they differ significantly in the way they work towards this mutual goal: they require varying strategies in order to flourish, as their sources of credibility are based on their apparent relationship with the government. For this thesis, the two most relevant constituents are advocacy; actively promoting a “particular policy, idea, or that actor's general interests in the minds of a foreign public;”⁹ and listening; “collecting and collating data about publics and their opinions overseas and using that data to redirect its policy or its wider public diplomacy approach accordingly.”¹⁰ Within U.S. foreign relations, advocacy is generally dominant, whereas the aspect of listening could do with more attention;¹¹ a fact that accounts for a significant share of the problems regarding U.S. public diplomacy that will be discussed in this work.

While I am stressing the growing importance of soft power to realize foreign policy objectives, it is important to note that a government cannot rely on soft power alone: a country should not simply abandon its “coercive tools.”¹² In order for U.S. foreign policy to succeed, a fair balance between hard power and soft power is necessary. In U.S. politics, conservatives tend to rely on hard, military power “as the main tool of statecraft,”¹³ as they believe in the realist notion that the ultimate goal of any state is to maximize its power, which makes military conflict evident. In contrast, progressives stress the importance of soft power from their perspective of liberal internationalism, which promotes the idea that “a global system of stable liberal democracies would be less prone to war.”¹⁴ Yet, U.S. interests would be served best if advocates of soft power and proponents of hard power both accepted the relevance of

⁸ Nicholas J. Cull, “Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618, no. 1 (2008): 31.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Nicholas J. Cull, “The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0: The Internet in US Public Diplomacy,” *International Studies Review* 15, no. 1 (2013): 125.

¹² Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, Jr, *CSIS Commission on Smart Power: A Smarter, more secure America* (Washington D.C.: CSIS Press, 2007), 6.

¹³ Suzanne Nossel, “Smart Power,” *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 2 (2004): 132.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 131.

each other's approach to power, and adequately integrated "their positions into a single framework"¹⁵ of 'smart power.'

In this context, I have made the liberal assumption that, as Cull and Nye imply, public diplomacy is a useful tool for American foreign policymakers to secure U.S. interests, and that its relevance is growing. There are scholars who contradict the claim that public diplomacy can still play an important role in U.S. foreign policy: Robin (2002), for example, argues that public diplomacy appears "terminal"¹⁶ and states that soft power cannot overcome "the fallout from the present-day use of hard power."¹⁷ Yet, although I agree with Thorne (1992) when he states that the strength and range of soft power is sometimes overstated by advocates of public diplomacy such as Nye,¹⁸ I do believe in its growing relevance. Due to globalization and increasing economic and political interdependence worldwide, hard power is becoming a less attractive tool as an independent means to achieve goals with, for it is expensive, time-consuming, and leads to "mounting international hostility."¹⁹ Other important players in the international political system, such as China, already show more sophisticated strategies regarding their instruments of power,²⁰ which indicates that the United States should closely follow and keep up with global developments concerning soft power and public diplomacy.

In order to continue to realize foreign policy objectives in this transforming international system, foreign policy makers have to reconsider their balance of smart power, and find a new balance in which the use of soft power will play a more dominant role. In other words, U.S. public diplomacy is far from terminal. In addition, its conditions and deployment deserve academic attention in the field of American Studies because of its large contribution to the achievement of U.S. foreign policy goals by spreading American ideals and values, which reach far beyond American and international politics. Analyzing the developments following the end of the Cold War and the U.S. government's reaction to them, which together shaped U.S. public diplomacy in the 21st century, can provide an overview of the current state of affairs regarding U.S. public diplomacy, explain how this situation

¹⁵ Ernest J. Wilson, "Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 110.

¹⁶ Ron Robin, "Requiem for Public Diplomacy?" *American Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2005): 351.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Christopher Thorne, "American Political Culture and the End of the Cold War," *Journal of American Studies* 26, no. 3 (1992): 326.

¹⁹ Nossel, "Smart Power," 142.

²⁰ Wilson, "Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power," 111.

emerged, and give insight into what changes to U.S. public diplomacy will be necessary in order to secure its success today and in the future.

This thesis consists of four chapters: an introductory chapter, and three chapters that each cover one of the post-Cold War developments that significantly influenced U.S. public diplomacy. To explain how U.S. public diplomacy developed over time and to delineate the context in which the U.S. government responded to the post-Cold War developments influencing the conditions for successful public diplomacy, the first, introductory chapter provides a historical overview of the emergence and development of U.S. public diplomacy, starting with Roosevelt's presidency and stretching until the end of the Cold War. In this chapter, I conclude that since World War II, the U.S. government has consistently used the framework of the United States as the guardian of freedom, democracy, peace, and liberalism as a basis for their public diplomacy policies to reach foreign policy goals and secure American interests. As will be elaborated on in the chapters that follow, this framework continued to be used by the U.S. government for post-Cold War foreign policy objectives as the core message of public diplomacy initiatives, a decision that undermined the developments rapidly influencing the international system that posed challenges to the conditions for successful public diplomacy in the future.

The second chapter describes the first of these post-Cold War developments: the shifts occurring within the global world order from the 1990s onwards. In addition, it investigates to what extent the U.S. government acted upon these changes. In this chapter, I argue that the United States failed to respond effectively to changes within the global world order due to a strong tendency to hold on to Fukuyama's "end of history" theory. As briefly mentioned before, the U.S. government generally assumed that, after the end of the Cold War, the international system had arrived at a final liberal world order in which the United States, including its liberal values, would prevail as the dominant actor. It therefore regarded public diplomacy strategies as less relevant, and did not take the urgency of changes within the global world order, which were actually happening, seriously. As a result, the U.S. government did not recognize that these changes had a significant effect on the relevance of and conditions for successful public diplomacy, and therefore did not adjust their strategies.

The third chapter discusses the second important development, the rise of the Information Age in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and elaborates on the manner in which the U.S. government responded to this phenomenon. In this chapter, I state that although the U.S. government did recognize the importance and opportunities of public diplomacy in relation to communication revolution, the State Department still failed to see the urgency of adapting

American public diplomacy strategies in order for these to be successful. The communication revolution initially seemed to correspond well with the American ideal of a liberal world order, and was expected to result in a worldwide online community endorsing American values of freedom and democracy. In addition, digital communication channels were seen as new tools for public diplomats to spread their ideas and influence foreign publics. However, I argue that the U.S. government underestimated the effects of the Information Age on the conditions for successful public diplomacy: the availability of enormous amounts of information posed challenges to the outdated U.S. public diplomacy strategies, which were not designed to withstand the urge for openness and transparency that accompanied the communication revolution.

The fourth and final chapter zooms in on post-9/11 America under Bush's presidency and his War on Terror, and explains how Bush's attitude towards American foreign policy resulted in failing public diplomacy strategies and led to a deteriorating image of the United States abroad, especially in the Middle East. In this chapter, I argue that the Bush administration's policies negatively affected public diplomacy outcomes mostly due to excessive use of hard power and an administrative culture of hypocrisy and secrecy. In this context, the deterioration of the image of the United States abroad under Bush's presidency was caused for at least a significant part by a combination of bold use of hard power and the enormous reality gap between the American ideals spread through public diplomacy initiatives and Bush's actual actions.

Finally, in the conclusion, I will shortly list my findings, comment briefly on the state of affairs since the start of Obama's presidency in 2009, and look at the future of U.S. public diplomacy by discussing possible answers to the question of how to tackle the problems U.S. public diplomacy is experiencing and making suggestions for further research. However, especially in the light of the 2016 presidential elections, the future of U.S. public diplomacy remains quite unpredictable.

Chapter 1: The origins of U.S. public diplomacy

Although the term is fairly new, public diplomacy had been a well-established constituent of U.S. foreign policy for decades by the time the Cold War came to an end.²¹ In order to understand U.S. public diplomacy in the 21st century and examine the effects of the developments taking place after the Cold War that shaped it, it is important to be familiar with the context in which U.S. public diplomacy emerged, and comprehend the role of public diplomacy in American foreign policy until the end of the Cold War. This chapter provides an overview of the relevant historical events, analyzes the advances within the field of American public diplomacy, and focuses on the influence of its history on American public diplomacy in the 21st century. In this chapter, I will also stress the importance of the key concept of U.S. public diplomacy that developed during World War II, namely the United States framing itself as global guardian of freedom, democracy, peace, and liberalism. This framework continued to play a large role in post-Cold War U.S. foreign policy as the core idea behind public diplomacy initiatives, while simultaneously becoming problematic in relation to the changes occurring within the international system.

The United States stepped into the field of public diplomacy relatively late.²² In the late 19th century, countries like France, Italy, Britain, and Germany had already started using information and culture for the purposes of diplomacy in order to improve their image and achieve military goals,²³ but the concept was not implemented in American foreign policy until the mid- and late 1930s. Some scholars, like Bruce Gregory (2008), argue that the history of U.S. public diplomacy started during World War I with Woodrow Wilson's military intervention,²⁴ but isolationism continued to dominate American politics after the war was over. Therefore, it is more plausible to state that, as Hart (2013) claims,²⁵ the start of the history of U.S. public diplomacy is marked by Roosevelt's foreign policies in Latin America, which were the start of a radical political shift towards interventionism.

On the eve of World War II, Joseph Goebbels's propaganda was highly active in Latin American countries.²⁶ Hostile intervention so close to the American border alarmed the Roosevelt Administration and led to the establishment of the Division of Cultural Relations in

²¹ Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories," 31.

²² Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," 96-97.

²³ Ibid. 96.

²⁴ Bruce Gregory, "Public Diplomacy: Sunrise of an Academic Field," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 276.

²⁵ Justin Hart, *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.

²⁶ Allan M. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information 1942-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 11.

1938 and the Office of Inter-American Affairs in 1940,²⁷ two governmental organizations that ‘actively promoted about America and its culture to Latin America’²⁸ through radio broadcasts in an attempt to counter German propaganda programs. Essentially, Latin America served as a ‘laboratory’²⁹ for American foreign policy experiments, which were slowly directed more and more towards a world-wide scale.³⁰ Regarded as an extension to Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy,³¹ the U.S. government actively engaged in cultural diplomacy in order to expand American cultural and political influence. Although proposals made at the Buenos Aires Conference of 1936, initiated by the United States to ensure Pan-American peace in the context of political chaos in Europe, turned out to be rather inconsequential over the course of history, the conference laid the foundations for U.S. cultural diplomacy to become ‘a key component of a strategy to extend the influence of the United States throughout the world.’³²

Meanwhile domestically, Roosevelt was developing a new narrative about America’s role in the world.³³ He knew that the effects of the European war could cause problems for U.S. interests, and therefore tried to gain the public’s support for American aid to Britain. However, U.S. foreign policy of the 1930s had been dominated by isolationism,³⁴ and the American public was engaged in the ‘great debate’³⁵ over whether the United States should interfere in the war in Europe. In this context, Roosevelt persuaded the American public of the necessity of U.S. intervention by ‘appealing to the public’s desire for personal security’³⁶ and stressing the threat that the European war was posing to the United States. Roosevelt presented his program ‘primarily as a way to protect America spreading its virtues throughout the world’³⁷ and carefully directed his rhetoric towards the idea that ‘fighting would determine whether the freedoms Americans held dear would prevail.’³⁸

Roosevelt’s new narrative laid the foundations for a radically different American approach to foreign relations that is still dictating U.S. foreign policy today. With the

²⁷ Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 21.

²⁸ Nye, ‘Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,’ 98.

²⁹ Hart, *Empire of Ideas*, 3.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 18.

³² Ibid., 21.

³³ Ira Chernus, ‘Franklin D. Roosevelt’s narrative of national security,’ *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 11, no. 2 (2016): 135.

³⁴ Jeffrey A. Engel, *The Four Freedoms: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Evolution of an American Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Chernus, ‘Franklin D. Roosevelt’s narrative of national security,’ 137.

³⁷ Ibid., 138.

³⁸ Engel, *The Four Freedoms*, 3.

government shifting from taking an isolationist stance to being globally oriented, Roosevelt had defined a new role for the United States within the international system as “vital defender of freedom and civilization throughout the world.”³⁹ It marked the beginning of the so-called “American century.”⁴⁰ a period in which the United States enjoyed superiority in terms of economic, political, and cultural power. Although the United States had been a powerful player before World War II had started, Roosevelt gave the nation a sense of duty to the rest of the world, and paved the path for American interventionism. With this “globalization of the New Deal,”⁴¹ he caused the formulation of certain American values and interests that would continue to shape U.S. foreign policy up until today. Roosevelt “offered a language of hope and change”⁴² by actively promoting a liberal world order in which the American values of freedom and democracy would prevail and U.S. interests could flourish: inspiring to many of his successors, this came to be the essential motive for U.S. public diplomacy throughout the 20th century.

An example that illustrates this move away from isolationism towards interventionism in the American era was Roosevelt’s declaration of the Four Freedoms, which he introduced in his Annual Message to Congress in January 1941. According to Roosevelt, “four essential human freedoms;”⁴³ freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from fear, and freedom from want; should universally apply for every human on earth. The proclamation of the Four Freedoms clearly relates to Roosevelt’s earlier rhetoric about ensuring national security by spreading American values, but also focused on the more positive aspect of American exceptionalism instead of negatively emphasizing the threat to national security. The Four Freedoms gave “a sense of mission to the war”⁴⁴ by concentrating on what an ideal postwar world should look like. In other words, the message of the Four Freedoms delineated a postwar image of the American value of freedom as the leading morale in all corners of the world.⁴⁵

Contrary to what is often implied, Roosevelt’s introduction of the Four Freedoms was neither an immediate success nor an exceptionally memorable moment: the statement was

³⁹ Chernus, “Franklin D. Roosevelt’s narrative of national security,” 135.

⁴⁰ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Is the American Century Over?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 6.

⁴¹ William Hitchcock, ““Everywhere in the World”: The Strange Career of the Four Freedoms since 1945,” in *The Four Freedoms: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Evolution of an American Idea*, ed. Jeffrey A. Engel (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 193.

⁴² Engel, *The Four Freedoms*, 9.

⁴³ Elizabeth Borgwardt, “FDR’s Four Freedoms as a Human Rights Instrument,” *OAH Magazine of History* 22, no. 2 (2008): 8.

⁴⁴ Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 5.

⁴⁵ Engel, *The Four Freedoms*, 13.

largely ignored by the popular media and Members of Congress.⁴⁶ The Four Freedoms were only fully brought to life in the public eye when Norman Rockwell illustrated them for the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1943,⁴⁷ as Rockwell's gripping paintings provided "something tangible to associate that which we are fighting for."⁴⁸ The U.S. government soon noted their enormous success: the Treasury Department published four million poster copies of the paintings for distribution to raise funds for the war.⁴⁹ The Four Freedoms made an excellent example of successful use of soft power, as they were presented to the public in a convincing way. Rockwell was not ordered to paint the Four Freedoms, nor was he a spokesman of the government.⁵⁰ In this case, the distance between Rockwell and the government worked in Roosevelt's favor, underlining Cull's theory regarding credibility and the importance of the perceived relationship between the initiative and the government in order to be effective.

The Roosevelt administration also made a proper distinction between propaganda and public diplomacy. Convinced that "America's security depended on its ability to speak to and win the support of people in other countries,"⁵¹ the Roosevelt administration used information and culture as tools to build "long-term relationships,"⁵² aiming to create an environment in which government policies could flourish successfully. Roosevelt's initiatives to win the hearts and minds of foreign public "came to represent the war being fought,"⁵³ and were well-targeted. Whereas in times of American isolationism the maintenance of an enduring positive image abroad had not been regarded as a priority, diplomats and policymakers had recognized the "importance of a unified [...] strategy"⁵⁴ in the context of interventionism and the emergence of the American century.

An illustrative example of such an initiative to win the hearts and minds of a foreign audience is *Voice of America*, a shortwave broadcasting program founded in February 1942 to provide news about the war to foreign publics, which had reached "global presence"⁵⁵ by the time the war ended. The Office of War Information, the dominant agency in America's World

⁴⁶ James J. Kimble, "The Illustrated Four Freedoms: FDR, Rockwell, and the Margins of the Rhetorical Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (2015): 47.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁴⁹ Engel, *The Four Freedoms*, 27.

⁵⁰ Kimble, "The Illustrated Four Freedoms," 48.

⁵¹ Richard Pells, *Not Like Us* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), quoted in Joseph S. Nye Sr., "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 97.

⁵² Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," 101.

⁵³ Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 157.

⁵⁴ Hart, *Empire of Ideas*, 3.

⁵⁵ Wilson P. Dizard, *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 24-25.

War II propaganda campaign,⁵⁶ is another interesting case in point. Established in June 1942, the agency commanded a major program to inform both American and foreign audiences about military activities and communicate ideals that ‘‘could give rise to a peaceful, democratic world,’’⁵⁷ aiming at securing U.S. interests by influencing publics abroad through the promotion of a positive image of the United States.

As illustrated by *Voice of America* and the Office of War Information, World War II policymakers laid the foundations for a transformation of their so far limited use of propaganda in Latin America into ‘‘a global project for attracting hearts and minds’’⁵⁸ shaped by public diplomacy initiatives. An important step in this process was the creation of the United States Information Agency in 1953, only one week after ‘‘an armistice ended U.S. involvement in the Korean War,’’⁵⁹ to which all control over public diplomacy initiatives was transferred.⁶⁰ The establishment of a governmental agency that was directly responsible for the maintenance of a positive image of the United States abroad marked the beginning of a new phase for U.S. public diplomacy,⁶¹ which would soon be dominated by international political tensions caused by a powerful player within the international system that challenged American hegemony: the Soviet Union. During the postwar years, public diplomacy was subject to the debate of whether it should remain an inherent part of U.S. foreign policy, but the Cold War gave it a new mandate.⁶² Although the conditions for the Cold War and World War II were substantially different, the ‘‘driving force of external threats’’⁶³ remained the same, and ‘‘safeguarding the image of ‘‘America’’’’⁶⁴ became an important political goal: the U.S. government realized that apart from being tough on the Soviet Union in terms of hard power, it also had to ‘‘champion self-determination, democracy, and human rights.’’⁶⁵

The most imminent threat was posed by the ‘‘ideological appeal of communism.’’⁶⁶ The Soviet Union was associated with peace after having liberated large parts of Europe from the Nazis, whereas American liberalism and capitalism was stained by war and violence as a

⁵⁶ Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, 1.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Hart, *Empire of Ideas*, 3.

⁵⁹ Nancy Snow, ‘‘International Exchanges and the U.S. Image,’’ *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 199.

⁶⁰ Hart, *Empire of Ideas*, 3.

⁶¹ Ibid., 5.

⁶² Ibid., 109-110.

⁶³ Gregory, ‘‘Public Diplomacy: Sunrise of an Academic Field,’’ 279.

⁶⁴ Hart, *Empire of Ideas*, 108.

⁶⁵ Nossel, ‘‘Smart Power,’’ 133.

⁶⁶ Hart, *Empire of Ideas*, 109.

result of U.S. military involvement in Korea.⁶⁷ Although the Marshall Plan seemed to work well in western European countries, where public opinion on the United States was measured to become increasingly positive, the United States could not prevent numerous countries outside the western world from adopting a communist system, like China in 1949.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, the Soviet Union enjoyed the advantage of a superior propaganda program: the Kremlin had a monopoly on control over information flows, which disabled any reality checks from the outside world reaching the peoples under Soviet rule.⁶⁹ As a democratic, liberal nation, the United States could not engage “in the level of deception and information management of the Soviet Union,”⁷⁰ which meant the U.S. government had to find other ways to win the hearts and minds of foreign publics.

In order to do so, many soft power initiatives were launched between the early stages of the Cold War around the 1950s and its ending towards the late 1980s. Radio Free Europe, for example, was a transnational radio service established in 1949 to broadcast news and information to Soviet satellite states to “prevent integration of the Iron Curtain countries into the Soviet Union,”⁷¹ to be a voice for the domestic opposition, and to “sustain the morale of captive nations.”⁷² Radio Liberty, which started broadcasting in 1953, targeted citizens of the Soviet Union with a similar motive.⁷³ Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty reached millions of listeners from all kinds of backgrounds.⁷⁴ Interestingly, both radios attempted to bring about the “peaceful demise of the Communist system”⁷⁵ by airing news about the targeted countries instead of the United States.⁷⁶ Although the broadcasting services also received criticism; Radio Free Europe was widely condemned for falsely promising the imminence of Western support to the rebels of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956;⁷⁷ Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty made important contributions to the peaceful downfall of Soviet communism.⁷⁸

⁶⁷ Cull, “Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories,” 39.

⁶⁸ Liam Kennedy and Scott Lucas, “Enduring Freedom: Public Diplomacy and U.S. Foreign Policy,” *American Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2005): 312-315.

⁶⁹ Snow, “International Exchanges and the U.S. Image,” 202.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Johanna Granville, “Radio Free Europe and the international decision-making during the Hungarian crisis of 1956,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 24, no. 4 (2004): 590.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Lowell H. Schwartz, *Political Warfare against the Kremlin: US and British Propaganda Policy at the Beginning of the Cold War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 6-7.

⁷⁴ Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), xiii.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 5-6.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 313.

Other public diplomacy initiatives focused less on advocacy through radio broadcasting news and ideals, but engaged in cultural diplomacy by realizing more subtle projects that actively promoted a positive image of the United States. In a photographic exhibit called *The Family of Man*, for example, photographer Edward Steichen covered human life ‘‘in all its diversity,’’⁷⁹ portraying important aspects of life such as courtship, birth, parenting, work, and more. Between 1955 and 1963, the exhibit toured the world and became enormously popular. It was a successful act of cultural diplomacy because it did not directly advertise American values and ideals, but displayed many cultures and emphasized what people had in common: *The Family of Man* exhibit served as a ‘‘testament to the eclecticism and diversity of American culture that would prove the foundation of the country’s ‘‘soft power,’’’’⁸⁰ challenging the advantageous position in humanism Moscow so far had enjoyed.

Next to advocacy and public diplomacy, international exchange was increasingly deemed an important tool of soft power in the postwar years. An important example is the Fulbright program, established in 1946, which was a scholarship for American and foreign teachers, students, and specialists to encourage the exchange of their knowledge, cultures, ideas, and values.⁸¹ According to its founder, J. William Fulbright, the program was to encourage greater and more widespread understanding of each other’s societies and to create ‘‘a climate of public opinion in which the actions, motives, and policies of the United States would be fairly interpreted abroad.’’⁸² In the 1960s, international education received a particular boost under President John F. Kennedy, whose sophistication and international mindset encouraged many Americans to ‘‘consider the larger role of the United States in the world.’’⁸³ Through programs such as Fulbright and Kennedy’s Peace Corps, which was launched in 1961 and sent young Americans to development countries to aid the local people and promote American ideals, approximately 1.5 million civilian Americans lived abroad in the mid-1960s and were actively involved in ‘‘defensive measures to counter Communism’’⁸⁴ and efforts to use citizens and students to positively affect the perception of the United States abroad.

⁷⁹ Cull, ‘‘Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories,’’ 40.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ James W. Fulbright, ‘‘The First Fifteen Years of the Fulbright Program,’’ *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 335, no. 1 (1961): 21.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Snow, ‘‘International Exchanges and the U.S. Image,’’ 206.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 208.

All in all, the Fulbright program and the Peace Corps were important tools of soft power for the U.S. government which still remain active today. However, these programs did suffer major setbacks, especially in the late 1960s and 1970s, as the result of U.S. intervention in the Vietnam War.⁸⁵ Whereas soft power deployment so far had turned out generally successful for the U.S. government, the Vietnam War heavily affected America's image abroad. U.S. public diplomacy expenditure marked an all-time high,⁸⁶ but the main problem lay in the fact that public diplomacy campaigns undermined "the wider reality of the war."⁸⁷ severe bombings, search-and-destroy missions, and rising numbers of civilian casualties lay in sharp contrast with the message of freedom and peace that the U.S. government preached to justify their actions in Vietnam.

Following this period of public diplomacy failure, President Ronald Reagan took a different approach to soft power in the 1980s and managed to renew the ideological battle with the Soviet Union.⁸⁸ Stressing that "the ultimate determinant in the struggle now going for the world will not be bombs or rockets but a test of wills and ideals,"⁸⁹ Reagan focused on restoring trust in the strength and motives of the United States in clever ways. In 1983, for example, Project Democracy, which included numerous activities targeting to counter communism and advocating American interests and values by "financially supporting groups committed to these ideals,"⁹⁰ was established. This financial support was granted by a quasi-private corporate body, the National Endowment for Democracy, which gave the program an independent reputation even though it was linked to the state.⁹¹ Through this construction, the U.S. government was able to fund all sorts of projects, both commercial and cultural, that actively fought for American interests and against the spread of communism.

The 1980s would further be known as a period of political success for the United States, eventually ending in a 'victory' for the American ideology with the demise of Soviet communism and the dissolution of the Soviet empire in 1991. Although the end of the Cold War is controversial and many academics disagree about the true factors that led to its remarkably peaceful resolution, it can be stated that public diplomacy played a substantial role in U.S. foreign policy during this tense conflict and formed a crucial soft power tool that helped improving the American image abroad. What started as Roosevelt's justification for a

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories," 44.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Kennedy & Lucas, "Enduring Freedom," 316.

⁸⁹ Alexandre, "In the service of the state," 37.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Kennedy & Lucas, "Enduring Freedom," 316.

radical shift in foreign policy developed into an intrinsically American message of freedom, democracy, peace, and liberalism that became the essence of U.S. public diplomacy, enabling the U.S. government to secure American interests through soft power.

This message would continue to dominate U.S. public diplomacy in the post-Cold War era. As the failure of public diplomacy during the Vietnam War had already pointed out, however, congruency between the message that a government spreads and the reality of its actual deeds is of great importance for achieving success. Although in that sense Vietnam had served as a warning that public diplomacy initiatives must always be well-adapted to the situation in which it serves a purpose, the U.S. government neither intended on adjusting its core message nor its policies after the end of the Cold War: an interesting decision given the fact that global developments were rapidly influencing the international system. As will be further elaborated on in the upcoming chapters, this had notable negative consequences for the success of U.S. public diplomacy and the image of the United States abroad in the 21st century.

Chapter 2: Shifts within the global world order and U.S. public diplomacy

With the end of the Cold War, the United States had become “the sole power in a unipolar world.”⁹² The ideological conflict between the two powerful blocs had lasted for decades, and suddenly this bipolar system disintegrated. The Soviet Union fell apart, and the United States was perceived as the victor: the Western ideology of liberal democracy had defeated Soviet communism. With the cease of Soviet power, many people believed that U.S. national security would no longer be threatened.⁹³ Although George H.W. Bush contested the idea of the United States being immune to future foreign threats by stating to make the prevention of “the re-emergence of a new rival”⁹⁴ a priority, foreign policy adjustments within the U.S. government suggested otherwise. On Capitol Hill, public diplomacy supporters were “a rarity”⁹⁵ once the confrontation with the Soviet Union had reached an end: it was no longer deemed necessary to convince foreign publics of the righteousness of U.S. ideals, values, and motives, as these publics were already on the American side. However, this turned out to be a rather ignorant assumption.

This chapter examines the fundamental shifts occurring in the global world order after the end of the Cold War, and evaluates how the United States government anticipated and adapted to these changes in terms of public diplomacy measures. First, an overview of developments will be provided as examples to illustrate the shifts within the global balance of power. Then, the general attitude of the U.S. government towards public diplomacy will be screened by looking at specific policies and the way in which they correspond with the ongoing changes worldwide. Based on this analysis, I will stress that the necessity of public diplomacy has grown since the end of the Cold War, mainly due to the further diffuse of power among a growing number of international actors. Contrarily, the behavior of the State Department suggests that the U.S. government regarded soft power as a redundant foreign policy tool that had been useful during the Cold War, but was not expected to serve a significant purpose in a new postwar world. Although the main justification for U.S. foreign policy actions and basic notion behind U.S. public diplomacy initiatives; the United States as the global guardian of freedom, democracy, peace, and liberalism; was much less powerful after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the U.S. government did not adjust its policies

⁹² Nye, *Is the American Century Over?* 2.

⁹³ William M. Reisman, “Editorial Comments: In Defense of World Public Order,” *The American Journal of International Law* 95, no. 4 (2001): 833.

⁹⁴ Kennedy & Lucas, “Enduring Freedom,” 316.

⁹⁵ Cull, “The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0,” 129.

according to the shifts within the global balance of power, even though they increasingly pressed the need for careful reevaluation of public diplomacy strategies.

In order to understand the context in which this contradiction could occur, it is useful to look at Francis Fukuyama's theory of the international system having arrived at the "end of history."⁹⁶ According to Fukuyama, the American victory over the Soviet Union had confirmed that Western liberal democracy would be the "final form of human government"⁹⁷ and would pose as "the endpoint of mankind's ideological revolution."⁹⁸ As many Americans, including government officials, believed to have arrived at the liberal world order in which it ideologically and economically took the lead, public diplomacy was deemed less relevant, and not many attempts were made to continue redesigning and adapting its features to a postwar world that might require a different foreign policy approach.⁹⁹ Bluntly stated, it was simply assumed that the United States' hegemonic position in the global world order would be final, and that the country would not need other nations to secure its interests.

Fukuyama's assumption is largely build on the assumed duration of the "American century." The "American century," which started with World War II when the United States became increasingly involved in international affairs, is the period in which the United States holds a globally dominant position within the international system in terms of politics, economics, and culture.¹⁰⁰ The concept of the "American century" supports the idea of the United States as superpower and global hegemon after the Cold War had come to an end. However, the "American century" is not infinite like Fukuyama claimed. Since the end of the Cold War, fundamental forces have been influencing and changing the global world order that hosted the "American century," and that the administrations of the 1990s have not recognized and responded to this phenomenon and its consequences sufficiently. Like Thorne (1992) already predicted in the early 1990s,¹⁰¹ power has been further diffusing throughout the world since the Cold War ended.¹⁰² In this context, as stated by Nye (2015), it is important to note that the United States has not so much been in absolute decline, but other nations and non-state actors are merely on the rise.¹⁰³ As a result, more parties have a claim at a share of power in the world, which has been leading to a relative decrease in U.S. influence.

⁹⁶ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Macmillan, Inc., 1992), xi.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), ix.

¹⁰⁰ Nye, *Is the American Century Over?* 2-3.

¹⁰¹ Thorne, "American Political Culture and the End of the Cold War," 326.

¹⁰² Nye, *Is the American Century Over?* 23.

¹⁰³ Nye, *Is the American Century Over?* 23.

While it would be difficult to completely surpass the United States, countries like Brazil, Russia, India and China (all part of the BRICS-group) experience rapid economic growth and their political power is increasing accordingly, to the relative detriment of U.S. influence.¹⁰⁴ Although European countries are dealing with serious problems regarding issues such as the economy, unity, and birth rates, the European Union also forms a powerful alliance that, in terms of economic and political power, has been becoming more and more able to compete with the United States.¹⁰⁵ The effect of these states or blocs becoming more powerful is reinforced by the process of globalization: global economic and political interdependence has been increasing over the past decades,¹⁰⁶ and this has also been affecting the autonomy and worldwide influence of the United States.

Apart from the fact that the international system is now multipolar and consists of many individual parties, the nature of these parties has also changed in certain ways. Whereas in the 20th century states still “dominated international relations,”¹⁰⁷ the number of non-state actors has proliferated, and their influence is increasing. Armies, for example, are no longer strictly national and a new paradigm of warfare between state and non-state contestants has emerged. Next to this, non-governmental organizations and private institutions increasingly provide goods and services to the satisfaction of human needs, and social and political networks are operating transnationally.¹⁰⁸ These are all developments that challenge existing hierarchies and transform the “old world order”¹⁰⁹ that the U.S. government built its public diplomacy strategies on.

Another development influential on the global balance of power is the proliferation of countries that have adopted a democratic political system. After the end of the Cold War, many formerly authoritarian states have become democratic: today, nearly half of the nations worldwide are democracies.¹¹⁰ These democracies play a different role in the international system than authoritarian states, as not only its leaders but also their publics have influence and power regarding a state’s political issues. Contrary to the belief of those who undermined the relevance of soft power in a postwar era, the increasing number of democracies in the international political system creates a higher need for well thought-out public diplomacy

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 23-43.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 23-29.

¹⁰⁶ Stewart Patrick, “Irresponsible Stakeholders? The Difficulty of Integrating Rising Powers,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2010): 45.

¹⁰⁷ Gregory, “Public Diplomacy: Sunrise of an Academic Field,” 282.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 283.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” 99.

strategies. When leaders are tied to public opinion within their country, managing a positive image abroad becomes complicated: gaining the support of an entire public is more difficult than only having to persuade a political leader or some government officials.

It could be argued that an increasing number of democracies would lessen the need for public diplomacy: after all, it would not be necessary to win the hearts and minds of foreign publics living in liberal, democratic states, as they inherently should already be in line with American ideals and values. However, this argument is flawed: not all democracies automatically side with the United States, or approve of American dominance in the international system. Whereas earlier the United States could fall back on justifying American intervention to fight communism when countries oppressed by Soviet rule still yearned for liberation,¹¹¹ it has lost this monopoly on being the guardian of democracy with the end of the Cold War: in the absence of a common enemy, the American ideological message used to influence foreign publics has become less convincing. This forms a problem when attempting to secure U.S. interests abroad, considering the dramatic economic growth and competing worldviews of rising powers such as China are ‘transforming the geopolitical landscape and testing the institutional foundations of the post-World War II liberal order.’¹¹²

Another consequence of the postwar changes within the global balance of power is best explained by elaborating on what Robin (2005) calls the ‘monster metaphor.’¹¹³ Caught by the ‘Iron Curtain Syndrome’¹¹⁴ established during the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union focused their use of propaganda and soft power on defining the other as the sole diabolic entity; the ‘monster.’ After the Cold War had ended, the United States lost an important enemy with which to do battle, but this mentality of good versus evil continued to mark U.S. foreign policy throughout the 1990s. For example, President Bill Clinton’s rhetoric when trying to convince the American public of the legitimacy of his interventions in Somalia and Haiti was dominated by generalizing, vilifying, and derogative terms. In this sense, it was not understood that successful diplomacy in a rapidly developing multipolar system required listening to and holding peaceful conversation with other parties instead of demonizing those who hold differently ideologies. As Patrick (2010) argues, ‘global governance requires collaboration among the unlike-minded.’¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Robin, ‘Requiem for Public Diplomacy?’ 348.

¹¹² Patrick, ‘Irresponsible Stakeholders?’ 44.

¹¹³ Robin, ‘Requiem for Public Diplomacy?’ 347.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Robin, ‘Requiem for Public Diplomacy?’ 48.

As the examples of developments discussed above show, the need for public diplomacy did not go away in the 1990s: on the contrary, it grew. The forces influencing and changing the global balance of power insinuated the necessity of integrating public diplomacy into U.S. foreign policy, demanding radical changes in its practice as well.¹¹⁶ Yet, public diplomacy “did not initially flourish.”¹¹⁷ The urgency of the discussed developments could not count on much attention from the government, which failed to make necessary adjustments to existing public diplomacy strategies. After the Soviet Union had collapsed, the U.S. government started to cut funds, which stalled further development of public diplomacy policies. Although the federal budget had grown over the years, the budget for the United States Information Agency (USIA) had not, and the number of employees dropped significantly from 12,000 in the mid-1960s to roughly 7,000 when the USIA was taken over by the U.S. State Department in October 1999.¹¹⁸ The disintegration of the USIA as the most important public diplomacy institution, followed by a period in which the State Department as its successor was neglected,¹¹⁹ proves the lack of confidence the U.S. government had in its relevance for securing U.S. interests.

While “ignoring the reality of global networks and multiple identity politics,”¹²⁰ Americans had become “complacent,”¹²¹ believing the United States could not be challenged by any other nation. As a result, on the eve of the new millennium, U.S. public diplomacy was in a neglected state, and its outdated established strategies were still based on achieving Cold War-related goals. The events of 9/11, however, turned out to be a wake-up call:¹²² the sudden outburst of extremely destructive violence on American soil and the national chaos that followed, hitting Wall Street and the American economy especially hard, made clear that the assumed nonexistence of foreign threats to U.S. national security and other interests was an illusion. The terrorist attacks also implied that the world had not arrived at Fukuyama’s end of history: Al Qaida, a religious extremist terrorist group condemning important values the United States stands for, had boldly attacked the American ideology of liberalism, interventionism, and democracy, which proved that forces supporting substantially different beliefs were powerful enough to target the United States on their own soil.

¹¹⁶ Rosaleen Smyth, “Mapping U.S. Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 55, no. 3 (2001): 421.

¹¹⁷ Cull, “The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0,” 129.

¹¹⁸ Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” 98.

¹¹⁹ Cull, “The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0,” 124.

¹²⁰ Robin, “Requiem for Public Diplomacy?” 347.

¹²¹ Nye, *The Paradox of American Power*, ix.

¹²² Cull, “The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0,” 129.

All in all, U.S. public diplomacy was ill-prepared for the consequences of the ‘transition from a binary arena of international relations’¹²³ to the chaotic world order of the 21st century, and this has raised many questions regarding to which extent the American century was still a fact or not. It had become clear that the U.S. government had to recognize the fact that the global balance of power was fragmenting, and would accept that the United States had gone from a dominant position in an originally bipolar system to a position within a multipolar system that involved an increasing number of ideologically differing states. The 9/11 attacks also indicated that the biggest challenge for American public diplomats to maintain a positive image of the United States in this new world order at that moment lay within the Middle East, where U.S. foreign policy had sparked particularly negative sentiments.

In the aftermath of 9/11, when so many Americans asked themselves the question of ‘why do they hate us,’ the U.S. government saw the importance of a positive reputation among the people of foreign countries, and recognized the potential of soft power to reach this important foreign policy goal. Yet, the U.S. government made no specific effort to critically reevaluate their public diplomacy strategies or to determine what changes were necessary to ensure successful deployment of public diplomacy in the future. With the threat of Soviet communism gone, the essential ideals behind American public diplomacy strategies were not as plausible as they had been, and needed to be adapted to the new post-Cold War situation in order to be successful. However, as will be further illustrated in the upcoming chapters, the U.S. government continued to reason from Cold War-paradigms and the idea of the United States as sole guardian of freedom, democracy, peace and liberalism, which led to badly targeted public diplomacy campaigns that negatively affected U.S. credibility and the American image abroad.

¹²³ Robin, ‘Requiem for Public Diplomacy?’ 346.

Chapter 3: U.S. public diplomacy in the Information Age

As explained in chapter 2, the U.S. administrations of the postwar period expected the status quo of liberal democracy to be the final episode in history, and believed that the United States would maintain their hegemonic position within the international system. Ironically, right at the moment that the United States was looking away from the threat the changing world order was posing to American hegemony, another important global development was being ignored. In the early 1990s, a ‘‘quantum leap in web technology’’¹²⁴ crucially changed the way in which information was transferred. This information revolution caused the creation of ‘‘virtual communities and networks that cut across national borders’’¹²⁵ which quickly started to diminish relative distances across the world. The internet evolved from a technology used as a ‘‘mechanism of display’’¹²⁶ into a hub for ‘‘interactivity, social connection, and user-generated content.’’¹²⁷ the Information Age was born.

With the introduction of social media and the establishment of websites like YouTube and Wikipedia, the rapid developments of the Information Age took another drastic turn in the 2000s. In what Simmons (2001) calls the Global Information Age, individuals are increasingly able to ‘‘create, transfer and access information globally’’¹²⁸ extremely fast, through popular platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Meanwhile, the technologies being used to operate such programs have become widely available and are more and more decentralized.¹²⁹ The commercialization of these technologies caused a shift in terms of who controlled them. From the start in the 1940s, Americans understood the ‘‘value of technology in projecting their national image an influence overseas’’¹³⁰ and made use of technological advancement where possible, but in the 1990s the State Department lagged behind in terms of engagement in digital diplomacy and stayed ‘‘locked in a traditional approach.’’¹³¹ Moreover, the United States had to compete over control over online information flows; with other nations, but also with private companies and institutions not confined to any state.

¹²⁴ Cull, ‘‘The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0,’’ 124.

¹²⁵ Nye, *The Paradox of American Power*, xiii.

¹²⁶ Cull, ‘‘The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0,’’ 124.

¹²⁷ J.P. Singh, ‘‘Information Technologies, Meta-Power, and Transformations in Global Politics,’’ *International Studies Review* 15, no. 1 (2013): 5-29, quoted in Nicholas J. Cull, ‘‘The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0: The Internet in US Public Diplomacy.’’ *International Studies Review* 15, no. 1 (2013): 124.

¹²⁸ Beth A. Simmons, ‘‘International Studies in the Global Information Age,’’ *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (2011): 589.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Cull, ‘‘The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0,’’ 126.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 128.

The rise of the Information Age is a major transformational development occurring after the end of the Cold War that had an enormous impact on the power and influence of the United States worldwide. It also significantly affected the conditions for successful deployment of foreign policy, particularly regarding public diplomacy strategies.

Understanding the way in which online information flows work and what the effects are of not being able to control them became more and more important for the U.S. government to manage a positive image, which is a significant factor that affects national security risks (as demonstrated by the events of 9/11) and helps creating an ‘enabling environment’¹³² in which government policies can succeed. In order to do so, maintaining the status quo would simply not be sufficient, and radical foreign policy measures were necessary. In other words, the relevance of effective U.S. public diplomacy was growing.

During this transitional period, however, the U.S. government did not immediately recognize the urgency of the information revolution and the serious consequences it could have if not appropriately acted upon, neglecting the importance of adjusting public diplomacy strategies accordingly. Most American policymakers saw the evolution of the web as ‘the ultimate triumph of modernization’¹³³ that would lead to a free flow of information and result in a worldwide online community that would endorse the American values and ideals of liberalism and democracy. Yet, rather the opposite happened: the emergence of an online global network provided a tool for ‘subnational communities to advance their own geopolitical interests’¹³⁴ and allowed transnational forces ‘to impose conflicting constructions of identity.’¹³⁵ In this manner, instead of homogenizing all cultures into one, the web revolution developed an environment in which more divisions between subnational, national, and international actors could emerge.

In order to understand where the American view on the relation between the information revolution and public diplomacy went wrong, this chapter examines the new challenges the Information Age posed to U.S. public diplomacy strategies and looks at the extent to which the U.S. government responded to these challenges. In this chapter, I argue that while the U.S. government started to engage more actively in public diplomacy and recognized the effect of the communication revolution after 9/11, soft power deployment was still badly targeted and based on Cold War-paradigms that were no longer applicable.

¹³² Nye, ‘Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,’ 101.

¹³³ Robin, ‘Requiem for Public Diplomacy?’ 349.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

Additionally, an administrative culture of secrecy and hypocrisy clashed heavily with the fact that the values of freedom and democracy lay at the basis of public diplomacy initiatives and the important justification for interventionist foreign policies. Altogether, this had a negative impact on American credibility and therefore undermined the conditions for successful public diplomacy in the Information Age.

To support these statements, I will use Nye's discussion of the "paradox of plenty," a theoretical concept dealing with the consequences of the web evolution for public diplomacy first described by Herbert Simon (1998). In addition, I will draw upon a theoretical framework provided by Cull (2013), who also focuses on the specific changes the internet demands of public diplomacy strategies. Cull argues that what he calls "Public Diplomacy 2.0"¹³⁶ has three key characteristics: 1) the "capacity of technology to facilitate the creation of relationships around social networks and online communities,"¹³⁷ 2) the growing dependence on user-generated content, and 3) the dispersal of information within "horizontally arranged networks of exchange"¹³⁸ instead of a vertical, one-way system.

A first important factor that fits well within this framework is that, as a result of the web evolution, the amount of information available has become almost infinite, which has led to the phenomenon defined by Simon (1998) and Nye (2008) as the "paradox of plenty."¹³⁹ Wide availability of plenty information leads to "scarcity of attention,"¹⁴⁰ which makes reputation all the more important: politics have become a competition in which actors fight over who has credibility and who has not. Despite this complicating development, a Cold War-approach continued to be used as a basis for the design of U.S. public diplomacy strategies in the 1990s and early 2000s. U.S. public diplomacy "still adheres to a defunct theory of information paucity,"¹⁴¹ as the main job of public diplomats of the Cold War was to target audiences that were deprived from any access to information by their authoritarian regimes.

However, this strategy has become redundant, as publics are no longer hungry for information: on the contrary, the situation has reversed. As stated earlier, the majority of countries worldwide are now democracies, and more and more people are freely surfing the

¹³⁶ Cull, "The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0," 125.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Herbert A. Simon, "Information 101: It's not what you know, it's how you know it," *Journal for Quality and Participation* July-August (1998): 30-33, quoted in Joseph S. Nye Jr., "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 99.

¹⁴⁰ Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," 99.

¹⁴¹ Robin, "Requiem for Public Diplomacy?" 349.

web: according to a report published by the UN-directed International Telecommunication Union, 11 percent of the population in the developed world had internet access in 1997, and this percentage had increased to 62 in 2007. Although the developing world clearly stayed behind in terms of internet access in this decade, the number of people with access grew significantly as well, and went from 0 percent in 1997 to 17 percent in 2007.¹⁴² With the number of people worldwide having access to an enormous amount of data growing rapidly, attention and ‘hunger’ for information quickly declined.

Yet, whereas adjustments focusing on creating a sphere of credibility were necessary to attract the scarce attention of foreign publics, the American public diplomacy mechanism was ‘‘still wedded to Voice of America/Radio Free Europe clones’’¹⁴³ targeting ‘‘information-hungry publics’’¹⁴⁴ that had ceased to exist. Especially U.S. public diplomacy initiatives directed towards publics in the Middle East demonstrate this: an interesting example of such a ‘‘clone’’ is Al-Hurra, a 24-hour Arabic-language satellite network launched in 2004 by the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which worked alongside the State Department and was responsible for all American international radio and television programs.¹⁴⁵ Broadcasting a mix of international news, music, talk shows, and current affairs, Al-Hurra was designed to protect and promote ‘‘America’s image in a hostile media environment,’’¹⁴⁶ and served as a counterprogram against similar, anti-American formats such as Al Arabiya or Al Jazeera.¹⁴⁷ Despite considerable efforts and budget expenditures, Al-Hurra was criticized for not delivering an objective, free debate, and was perceived as propaganda by most publics in the Arab and Islamic regions.¹⁴⁸ Apart from not conveying a convincing message, Al-Hurra failed because it interfered in a media environment that was dominated by well-established, respected satellite networks already satisfying the public’s hunger for information. In addition, people in the Middle East wanting to keep up to date with Western news could already follow international broadcasters such as CNN through the internet or cable television:¹⁴⁹ Al-Hurra essentially brought nothing new to the table.

¹⁴² ITU World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database, ‘‘ICT Data and Statistics (IDS),’’ *International Telecommunication Union*, 2008, accessed June 10, 2016, <http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/statistics/ict/>.

¹⁴³ Robin, ‘‘Requiem for Public Diplomacy?’’ 349.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ R. S. Zaharna, *Battles to Bridges: U.S. Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy after 9/11* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 37.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 39.

¹⁴⁷ Penny M. Von Eschen, ‘‘Enduring Public Diplomacy,’’ *American Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2005): 337.

¹⁴⁸ Zaharna, *Battles to Bridges*, 39.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

The growing importance of credibility as both a source and a goal of public diplomacy brings us to another influential development: after the ‘‘explosion of information’’¹⁵⁰ that took place in the 1990s, the question of which medium to use has become crucial. New technologies of the Information Age have not only been changing our ways of communicating, but they also determine how we ‘‘construct identities, consciousness, and culture,’’¹⁵¹ and how people ‘‘create and interpret meaning.’’¹⁵² Whereas U.S. public diplomats are still focused on what message to convey, not much attention is being paid to the choice of medium, which is often equally or even more important.¹⁵³ The medium largely determines how far the message can reach, and the manner in which it is delivered significantly affects how the credibility of the source is perceived: not choosing the correct technologies can mean ‘‘falling out of touch with one’s audience, becoming distant from one’s market.’’¹⁵⁴

Another factor, which is relevant to all three of Cull’s characteristics of Public Diplomacy 2.0, is the empowerment of non-state actors as a result of the web evolution, leading to a decline in the ability of the U.S. government to control how the country was perceived. The internet did not only enable governments, but also non-governmental organizations and powerful individuals to address publics worldwide. Through using online platforms, these non-state actors were able to build up large communities that were crossing national borders.¹⁵⁵ This is where American public diplomats entered unknown territory: before the rise of the internet, traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television had been fairly easy for the government to control or influence,¹⁵⁶ which was no longer possible with free-flowing online content. Due to their growing global networks, certain non-state actors gained enormous political power, and many of them have become more and more able to set ‘‘the pace for international diplomacy.’’¹⁵⁷

Take NGOs, for example. NGOs have three crucial resources that governments do not own or have direct access to: credibility, expertise and appropriate networks.¹⁵⁸ Whereas

¹⁵⁰ Nye, ‘‘Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,’’ 99.

¹⁵¹ Robin, ‘‘Requiem for Public Diplomacy?’’ 350-351.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 351.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 350.

¹⁵⁴ Monroe E. Price, Susan Haas, and Drew Margolin, ‘‘New Technologies and International Broadcasting: Reflections on Adaptations and Transformations,’’ *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 157.

¹⁵⁵ Nye, *The Paradox of American Power*, xiii.

¹⁵⁶ Simmons, ‘‘International Studies in the Global Information Age,’’ 589.

¹⁵⁷ Mark Leonard, ‘‘Diplomacy by Other Means,’’ *Foreign Policy* no. 132 (2002): 48.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

governmental authority is increasingly mistrusted by postmodern publics,¹⁵⁹ non-governmental organizations are often perceived as independent, which grants them credibility (if they manage to maintain this image for a longer period of time). Next to this, large NGOs such as Greenpeace or Amnesty International have the knowledge and capability to “exert pressure in a given policy area”¹⁶⁰ to an extent a state, domestically or within an international system, has not. As NGOs are not bound to neutrality like most diplomats are, they have more freedom in terms of lobbying for a case, or launching a campaign: like Leonard (2002) states, a diplomat would simply not get away with or achieve much by organizing a street demonstration.¹⁶¹

Large NGOs have played important roles in the international political system for a long time, but the rise of the Information Age gave their influence and capabilities an enormous boost. The internet made it extraordinarily easy to connect with people worldwide and raise awareness about a certain case, or mobilize a community to become active in a campaign. However, besides NGOs, there are other non-state actors capable of influencing political discourse. The process of globalization and the web evolution have given certain powerful individuals with the ambition to influence political affairs “new resources of power that allow for novel non-state and non-collective agency.”¹⁶² Whereas the U.S. government would initially involve famous people as a public diplomacy strategy to attract public attention, celebrities are increasingly politically committed in a neutral way, and often “report social demands to governments and international organizations”¹⁶³ instead of serving them. Take actor Leonardo DiCaprio, for example, who became UN Messenger of Peace and Climate Change in 2014, and is using his fame to spread awareness about the causes and consequences of climate change and what to do about it.¹⁶⁴ In these situations, celebrities sometimes criticize a state’s behavior, and since they can reach such big audiences this can form major problems for a government’s reputation.

Another phenomenon relevant in this context is the fact that the internet has made it much easier to leak and spread confidential information that is possibly harmful to the image of the United States, and to the legitimacy of its public diplomacy initiatives. The emergence of the world wide web gave whistleblowers a new tool to “publish information regarding the

¹⁵⁹ Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” 105.

¹⁶⁰ Leonard, “Diplomacy by Other Means,” 54.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Lena Partzsch, “Powerful Individuals in a Globalized World,” *Global Policy* 8, no. 1 (2017): 5.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 9.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

unethical behavior or mishandling of governments, civil servants, public office holders, the police, etc.,”¹⁶⁵ which enabled people to easily detect any incongruities between public statements and deeds. The online platform *WikiLeaks*, for example, which was established in 2006, has been functioning as an important starting point for whistleblowers and has published millions of secret documents full of controversial information, easily accessible to anyone with an internet connection. Another, more specific example concerning the damage a whistleblower can do would be the case of sergeant Joseph M. Darby in early 2004, who decided to hand over photographs of American soldiers humiliating, torturing, and abusing Iraqi detainees in Abu Graihb prison to the Army’s Criminal Investigation Division for inquiry. The pictures were leaked to the media, where they caused a “massive blogstorm”¹⁶⁶ on the internet that soon had reached all corners of the world. As the U.S. government had consistently been justifying its foreign policies by portraying itself as the great guardian of justice and freedom, this disclosure of serious human rights violations by the American forces heavily “undermined the legitimacy of the Bush war administration.”¹⁶⁷

The increasing power and influence of whistleblowers demonstrated the importance of transparent American foreign policy, and of synchronizing words with deeds. In order to maintain a position in which credibility is preserved, U.S. public diplomacy had to be as transparent as possible, because a culture of secrecy “undermines diplomacy by shuttering up windows diplomats need to keep open,”¹⁶⁸ and advocates for a public diplomacy culture in which information-sharing is an important value. The U.S. government is generally scared and suspicious of the digital landscape, where individuals can disclose classified and damaging information in a manner that can never be fully controlled.¹⁶⁹ Yet, a covert, secretive attitude towards information-sharing is detrimental to American credibility: if the United States refuses to share a piece of information, the primary conclusion of the public is that they have something to hide. In addition, a culture of secrecy disables successful deployment of soft power, as public diplomats can only shape and direct their policies well if they are up-to-date on relevant current affairs.¹⁷⁰ When diplomats cannot access each other’s

¹⁶⁵ Tapio Häyhtiö and Jarmo Rinne, “LITTLE BROTHERS AND SISTERS ARE WATCHING,” *Information, Communication & Society* 12, no. 6 (2009): 840.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 848.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Alexis Wichowski, “‘Secrecy is for losers:’ Why diplomats should embrace openness to protect national security,” in *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, ed. Corneliu Bjola and Marcus Holmes (New York: Routledge, 2015), 55.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

information, the risks of hypocrisy grows,¹⁷¹ because leaks can disclose information of which a diplomat might not have been aware that it contradicts a certain statement or policy. As the infamous events surrounding Abu Graihb showed, hypocrisy is highly damaging to the American public image, calling ‘’into question whether the ideas on which a nation is built actually matter.’’¹⁷²

In conclusion, the U.S. government did not fully recognize the urgency of the consequences of the Information Age for the effectiveness of U.S. public diplomacy strategies. While the web evolution had made it more difficult to maintain a credible, positive image of the United States abroad and demanded a revision of public diplomacy strategies that would actively respond to these technological advances, the U.S. government remained reluctant to do so. After the 9/11 attacks, when the Bush administration had no other option than to engage in public diplomacy to ensure foreign public opinions would become more positive, new attempts, such as Al-Hurra, were still badly targeted and followed a Cold War mentality that was no longer applicable. In addition, a culture of secrecy and (self-)censorship was maintained, which reflected the discomfort the U.S. government felt towards transparent disclosure of information in an online, hardly controllable environment. This fact particularly clashed with the values of freedom and democracy that the U.S. government used as the core message of public diplomacy initiatives. Overall, this had a negative impact on American credibility and undermined the conditions for successful public diplomacy in the Information Age.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid., 68

Chapter 4: Bush's approach to American foreign policy and its effects on U.S. public diplomacy

The events of 9/11 served as a brutal wake-up call to those who so far had not recognized the importance of a clear public diplomacy strategy. They pointed out to the United States, and to a certain extent also to the Western world in general, that the Western ideology of liberal democracy and U.S. unipolarity had not been absorbed nor accepted worldwide, especially not in the Middle-East. With unconditional, militant words, newly elected president George W. Bush promised this act of terror would not go unpunished, and declared the War on Terror. In this context, Bush was mostly aiming at military actions, but he also became “increasingly concerned with perception of its policies abroad,”¹⁷³ indicating that the Bush administration had realized the undesirable effects a negative image of the U.S. in the Middle-East could have on the success of future policies. In other words, the declared War on Terror could not be won without winning hearts and minds.

Shortly after the terrorist attacks, the Bush administration put forward several public diplomacy initiatives to engage with this “new” problem. These initiatives were optimistic attempts to improve the Middle-Eastern perception of the United States, but they mostly failed to do so.¹⁷⁴ The Bush administration made classic mistakes by undermining the basic requirements for successful public diplomacy. Regarding some of these mistakes, a clear link can be made to the two important developments discussed in chapter 2 and chapter 3; the changing world order and the rise of the Information Age; and how the Bush administration did not recognize the crucial public diplomacy changes they required. However, Bush's presidency was an important independent development affecting the conditions for successful deployment of public diplomacy as well. Although it is difficult to speculate about what would have been the effects of Al Gore's foreign policy on U.S. public diplomacy had he won the elections of 2000, Bush's approach to foreign policy specifically resulted in counterproductive public diplomacy strategies and contributed significantly to growing negative sentiments towards the United States in the Middle East.

Bush's approach to foreign policy and public diplomacy provides for an interesting case study of the effects of the developments occurring after the Cold War that changed and shaped U.S. public diplomacy in the 21st century. In this chapter, I will examine what specific

¹⁷³ Benjamin E. Goldsmith and Yusaka Horiuchi, “Spinning the Globe? U.S. Public Diplomacy and Foreign Public Opinion,” *The Journal of Politics* 71, no. 3 (2009): 864.

¹⁷⁴ Jeremy Pressman, “Power without Influence: The Bush Administration's Foreign Policy Failure in the Middle East,” *International Security* 33, no. 4 (2009): 149.

public diplomacy mistakes the Bush administration made, while specifically zooming in on the Middle East. The chapter evaluates the administration's general attitude towards the use of public diplomacy to win the War on Terror, and determines how this attitude translated into the failing attempts to improve the U.S. image in the Middle East. While doing so, I argue that the Bush administration's policies negatively affected public diplomacy outcomes mostly due to excessive use of hard power and an administrative culture of hypocrisy and secrecy. In addition, I state that the declining image of the United States among audiences abroad was the result of a combination of bold use of hard power and the enormous reality gap between the American ideals of freedom and democracy used in public diplomacy initiatives and Bush's actual policies.

In the wake of 9/11, the Bush administration introduced several public diplomacy initiatives aimed at improving the image that people in the Middle East on the United States, which indicated that some awareness had started to spread among U.S. officials about the importance of a strong, coherent public diplomacy strategy. Next to ensuring national security by fighting terrorism and preventing the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), a third important goal of the Bush administration was to spread the intrinsically American values of freedom and democracy, which was to be done by persuading people of the Middle East of the good nature of the United States' intentions.¹⁷⁵ This led to multiple noteworthy public diplomacy initiatives over a relatively brief period of time.

However, these initiatives failed spectacularly in achieving their goals, as the U.S. government did not succeed to 'crack the code for how to effectively communicate with publics in the Arab and Islamic regions.'¹⁷⁶ Despite the worldwide empathy the country received because of 9/11, approval rates of the United States in the Middle East dropped further in the period after the attacks, and American foreign policy was perceived as the main source of these increasingly negative sentiments.¹⁷⁷ Interestingly, while it is sometimes argued that there has only been little public diplomacy in U.S. foreign relations,¹⁷⁸ it seems that this failure was not due to a lack of effort, but mostly to the Bush administration's non-reflective attitude in terms of the U.S. position within the international system and the scope of American ideological power. Bush seriously undermined the complexity of nationalism, ethnic identity, and nation building in the Middle Eastern countries that were affected by the

¹⁷⁵ Pressman, "Power without Influence," 152.

¹⁷⁶ Zaharna, *Battles to Bridges*, 2.

¹⁷⁷ Hady Amr and P.W. Singer, "To Win the "War on Terror," We Must First Win the "War of Ideas,"" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618, no.1 (2008): 213.

¹⁷⁸ Von Eschen, "Enduring Public Diplomacy," 336.

War on Terror.¹⁷⁹ In addition to this unproductive attitude, factors such as flawed leadership, inappropriate funding, credibility issues, and poorly targeted, half-hearted strategies all contributed to Bush's failing foreign policy. Post-9/11 public diplomacy was not unsuccessful in providing enough information, but "failed to deliver information convincingly."¹⁸⁰

An important observation in terms of public diplomacy mistakes is that the Bush administration seemed to overvalue the power of military force while simultaneously undermining the importance of public diplomacy when fighting the War on Terror. As explained in the introduction, successful foreign policy depends on a careful balance between the use of hard and soft power, and this balance is called "smart power." However, the Bush administration had difficulty developing "meaningful smart power strategies."¹⁸¹ In order to be "sticky," smart power strategies have to be reflexive, credible, and contextualized,¹⁸² otherwise their effects will not sustain. Yet, the impatient Bush administration was too often seduced to use hard power where a more well-adjusted balance of smart power might have been a more appropriate and effective approach.

The attitude described above is directly related to the strong intention of the Bush administration to depend on "old paradigms of ideological warfare"¹⁸³ in terms of U.S. foreign policy during the War on Terror. Whereas the conditions for successful enactment of public diplomacy changed significantly due to the developments discussed in chapter 2 and 3, Bush largely ignored the urgency of these changes and relied upon the obsolete idea that the United States still enjoyed its superpower status of the early 1990s. As a result, the Bush administration was arrogant and non-reflective in its actions, basing foreign policy surrounding the War on Terror on "orientalist tropes" that portrayed "American national identity as democratic, modern, and free and the Middle East as primitive, barbaric, and oppressive."¹⁸⁴ In this context, the Bush administration stayed in line with the "monster metaphor"¹⁸⁵ approach, portraying the enemy as an inherently evil force that actively opposed everything the United States was standing for. This also facilitated the idea that the War on Terror was actually a War on Islam, which logically sparked negative connotations regarding the United States among Muslims all over the world.

¹⁷⁹ Pressman, "Power without Influence," 178.

¹⁸⁰ Leonard, "Diplomacy by Other Means," 51.

¹⁸¹ Pauline Eadie, "Counter-terrorism, Smart Power and the United States," *Global Policy* 7, no. 3 (2016): 324.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Kennedy & Lucas, "Enduring Freedom," 322.

¹⁸⁴ Evelyn Asultany, "Selling American Diversity and Muslim American identity through Nonprofit Advertising Post-9/11," *American Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2007): 594.

¹⁸⁵ Robin, "Requiem for Public Diplomacy?" 347.

The unreflective, aggressive attitude of U.S. officials, also labeled American ‘haughtiness’¹⁸⁶ or the ‘macho approach,’¹⁸⁷ resulted in a negative image of the United States in the Middle East. Many Muslims indicated to find the American tone and style of communication ‘arrogant, patronizing, and needlessly confrontational.’¹⁸⁸ statements like Bush’s aggressive line ‘you are either with us or you are with the terrorists’ definitely added to this sentiment. Next to this, cultural insensitivity made public diplomacy initiatives unproductive and far-fetched: ‘listening,’¹⁸⁹ as already discussed in this thesis, is an extremely important aspect of public diplomacy, but the Bush administration seemed clueless about the Arab and Muslim cultures of the Middle East. In terms of successfully deploying public diplomacy, for example, it was not helpful that as of 2006, the State Department had only five Arabic speakers that were able to communicate with the Arab world on behalf of the U.S. government through television broadcasting.¹⁹⁰

Cultural insensitivity and the unwillingness to learn and adapt led to several badly executed media campaigns. An illustrative example is the *Shared Values*-initiative, launched by Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Charlotte Beers to ‘rebuild America’s relationship with the Arab world.’¹⁹¹ The initiative, dubbed by the American media as the ‘Muslim-as-Apple-Pie’ campaign,¹⁹² included ads with the stories of various Muslims living a good life in the United States, suggesting that Muslims were actively part of the American community and had nothing to fear from the United States. The campaign was initially aimed at Muslim audiences in the Middle-East, and was released soon after 9/11 in multiple Arab countries. However, the campaign received a lot of criticism, and was banned in countries like Egypt and Jordan.¹⁹³ The most important reason the campaign turned out unsuccessful was that it was not directly relevant to its initial goal:¹⁹⁴ implying that Muslims and Americans shared values and coexisted peacefully amid tolerance undermined the fact that Muslim hostility was caused by U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, and not by American citizens at home.¹⁹⁵ In this context, a quickly constructed advertisement campaign

¹⁸⁶ Peter van Ham, ‘War, Lies, and Videotape: Public Diplomacy and the USA’s War on Terrorism,’ *Security Dialogue* 34, no. 4 (2003): 432.

¹⁸⁷ Stephen Van Evera, ‘Assessing U.S. Strategy in the War on Terror,’ *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 607, no. 1 (2006): 17.

¹⁸⁸ Amr & Singer, ‘To Win the ‘War on Terror,’’ 217.

¹⁸⁹ Cull, ‘Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories,’’ 32.

¹⁹⁰ Amr & Singer, ‘To Win the ‘War on Terror,’’ 217.

¹⁹¹ Cull, ‘The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0,’’ 129.

¹⁹² Asultany, ‘Selling American Diversity,’’ 611.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Cull, ‘Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories,’’ 43.

¹⁹⁵ Amr & Singer, ‘To Win the ‘War on Terror,’’ 213.

would not solve “problems rooted in foreign policy.”¹⁹⁶ Therefore, most people in the Middle East perceived the initiative as propaganda¹⁹⁷ and pointed out that only changes in U.S. foreign policy could truly improve public opinion.

Simultaneously, the U.S. government made another mistake by wasting the opportunity to cooperate with CAIR, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, undermining the important role of non-state actors within the new world order. Trying to “enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, [...] and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding,”¹⁹⁸ CAIR could serve as a useful resource for public diplomats because of their independence that provided credibility, and their experience in stimulating the spread of a positive image of Islam and Muslims in the United States through “media relations, lobbying, education, and advocacy.”¹⁹⁹ Like the State Department, CAIR had already aired several campaigns after 9/11, which were meant to improve U.S.-Arab relations by denouncing terrorism and creating a distance between Islam and extremism.²⁰⁰ However, CAIR was regularly accused of creating ground for terrorism by conservative government officials, who refused to work with them. This is a rather incorrect claim: according to Asultany (2007), CAIR officials have stated that these accusations are directly related to the fact that CAIR had “different perspectives on particular issues.”²⁰¹

The refusal of the Bush administration to cooperate with promising non-state actors such as CAIR once more confirms that arrogance and narrow-mindedness, characteristics that strongly relate to the “Iron Curtain Syndrome” as explained in chapter 2, work counterproductively in terms of successful deployment of public diplomacy strategies. Next to the *Shared Values*-campaign, there are more initiatives, like Al-Hurra, that did not succeed in shaping public opinions according to the State Department’s wishes: they were simply dismissed as propaganda attempts. The superordinate reason behind the failure of all these initiatives is the fact that the United States did not possess the credibility it needed to persuade publics of the legitimacy of their messages and goals, for U.S. officials displayed quite hypocritical behavior.²⁰² For public diplomacy to be successful, it is of utmost importance that

¹⁹⁶ Asultany, “Selling American Diversity,” 617.

¹⁹⁷ Von Eschen, “Enduring Public Diplomacy,” 337.

¹⁹⁸ Asultany, “Selling American Diversity,” 599.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 599-600

²⁰² Pressman, “Power without Influence,” 163.

a state's words are compatible with its deeds, and yet "the militant imperiousness of the Bush administration is fundamentally inconsistent with the ideals they claim to invoke."²⁰³

According to Goldsmith & Horiuchi (2009), who examined whether U.S. public diplomacy after 9/11 successfully improved the view foreign publics had of the United States by focusing on the effect of high-level visits, the actor using public diplomacy can either be seen as credible, controversial, or non-credible.²⁰⁴ If the actor enjoys a certain credibility, public diplomacy will have a positive effect on the perception of American policies. In a controversy scenario, however, there will be no effect, and in the case of an incredible user public diplomacy will have a negative and therefore counterproductive effect. In this context, Goldsmith & Horiuchi argue that Bush went from being a relatively credible leader before the U.S. invasion of Iraq to a controversial one after, eventually ending up becoming incredible when reports of war atrocities at the responsibility of the U.S. army reached foreign publics through the internet in 2004.²⁰⁵

The big problem here was the fact that the U.S. government continued to promote the values and ideals of democracy, human rights, and freedom through public diplomacy, while simultaneously disturbing news about prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib prison had reached all corners over the world.²⁰⁶ The Bush administration acted hypocritically when it came down to the ideals of democracy and freedom: Bush frequently cooperated with dictators in Egypt and Saudi-Arabia, where efforts of democratization were "watered down or dropped altogether."²⁰⁷ In addition, the U.S. government was selective in acknowledging democracies: the Hamas government, which was democratically elected, could not count upon support, for their views were not pro-American.²⁰⁸

This is also a point where the impact of the Information Age on successful deployment of public diplomacy comes in. In the early 2000s, the Bush administration had finally recognized the opportunities the web evolution provided for public diplomacy strategies, and increasingly started to make use of new technologies. As part of the *Shared Values*-campaign, for example, Charlotte Beers launched an "innovative interactive digital component in the shape of a web site called *www.opendialogue.org*,"²⁰⁹ which was meant to give Muslims all

²⁰³ Nossel, "Smart Power," 132.

²⁰⁴ Goldsmith & Horiuchi, "Spinning the Globe?" 865.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 866.

²⁰⁶ Häyhtiö & Rinne, "LITTLE BROTHERS AND SISTERS ARE WATCHING," 848.

²⁰⁷ Neil King Jr. and Yasmine el-Rashidi, "Mixed Message: In Volatile Mideast, U.S. Finds a Use for Old Autocrats," *Wall Street Journal*, August 8, 2006, quoted in Jeremy Pressman, "Power without Influence: The Bush Administration's Foreign Policy Failure in the Middle East," *International Security* 33, no. 4 (2009): 163.

²⁰⁸ Pressman, "Power without Influence," 163.

²⁰⁹ Cull, "The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0," 129-130.

around the world the opportunity to “share their experiences with the United States.”²¹⁰ However, innovative attempts like these could not outweigh the failure of badly targeted public diplomacy initiatives and the hypocrisies discovered, published, spread, and read online. In addition, the tendency of the Bush administration to maintain a “secretive”²¹¹ culture based on self-censorship in a world in which information “wants to be free”²¹² did not help gaining credibility.

All in all, the Bush administration’s counterproductive public diplomacy strategies significantly contributed to a declining image of the United States among foreign publics, especially in the Middle East. Bush’s arrogance and preference for hasty military action in combination with the administration’s tendency to rely on Cold War-paradigms while failing to acknowledge changes brought forward by various international developments led to a substantial loss of credibility and a decrease in American soft power. However, it should not be ignored that public diplomats under the Bush administration faced many difficulties in attempting to win the hearts and minds of publics in the Middle East. After all, deploying soft power becomes ineffective or even counterproductive if hard power is used too dominantly, as “the best advocacy in the world cannot offset a bad policy.”²¹³

It would also be inappropriate to blame Bush entirely for the failures of U.S. public diplomacy to maintain a positive image of the United States abroad during his presidency: the events of 9/11 required a quick, fierce response, and according to Bush’s neoconservative views and ideals the use of unconditional hard power would simply suffice best. In this context, it was extremely difficult to prevent growing dissent in the areas affected. Yet, if public diplomacy initiatives would have been more congruent with the reality of Bush’s hard power actions, the loss of credibility and decrease in American soft power might have been less considerable. In other words, the substantial reality gap between Bush’s policies and the message of freedom and democracy that public diplomacy initiatives entailed is for a significant part responsible for the United States’ inability to deploy soft power successfully and win the hearts and minds of foreign publics, especially those in the Middle East.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 130.

²¹¹ Von Eschen, “Enduring Public Diplomacy,” 338.

²¹² Alexis Wichowski, “‘Secrecy is for losers,’” 57.

²¹³ Cull, “Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories,” 45.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that U.S. public diplomacy in the 21st century has been influenced by three particular post-Cold War developments that significantly altered the conditions for successful deployment of soft power, and shaped by the U.S. government's reaction to these developments. In the first chapter, I provided an overview of the history of public diplomacy in the United States and discussed how Roosevelt's radical shift in foreign policy during World War II developed into a United States embracing the position of the global guardian of freedom, democracy, peace, and liberalism: a message that became the essence of U.S. public diplomacy and was used to secure American interests by helping to reach foreign policy goals for decades.

In chapter 2, the discussion of the first development, the occurrence of substantial shifts within the global world order, pointed out that the State Department was unprepared for the consequences of the shift from the "binary arena of international relations"²¹⁴ of the Cold War to the fragmented world order of the 21st century. Grasped by the superseded concepts of the enduring "American century" and Fukuyama's "end of history," the U.S. government neither acknowledged the increase in power other actors within the international system experienced nor the rise of different world views challenging the superiority of American liberalism. While the conditions for successful deployment of soft power were affected significantly and the relevance of public diplomacy in the rapidly changing international system was growing, the U.S. government saw public diplomacy as a redundant aspect of foreign policy now that the Cold War had come to an end and made no effort to consequently adapt its policies.

Concerning the second development in chapter 3, the rise of the Information Age, the U.S. government failed to recognize the urgency of the consequences of technological advances for the conditions for and effectiveness of U.S. public diplomacy strategies. The communication revolutions was regarded as a development that would bring the American ideal of a global liberal world order closer, but in reality only resulted in more divisions. In addition, the availability of incredible amounts of information and the scarcity of attention posed difficult challenges to the way American public diplomats were used to work. Although the 9/11 attacks were a wake-up call that spread awareness about the importance of managing a positive image of the United States abroad, new attempts at digital public diplomacy were badly targeted and still adhered to a Cold War-mentality that was no longer appropriate.

²¹⁴ Robin, "Requiem for Public Diplomacy?" 346.

Meanwhile, a culture of secrecy and self-censorship was maintained in a world in which it was becoming increasingly easy to uncover controversialities, which negatively affected American credibility.

U.S. public diplomacy under the Bush Administration, my third point of focus, demonstrates that Bush's attitude towards U.S. foreign relations centered around excessive use of hard power, which made it difficult for public diplomats to successfully convey a message of peace and democracy where foreign policy actions clearly contradicted these ideals. Meanwhile, an administrative culture of hypocrisy and secrecy continued. Although one has to bear in mind that Bush's neoconservative views made some damage to American credibility unavoidable, Bush's arrogance and ill-considered use of hard power did create an unnecessarily large reality gap between American words and deeds, which is for a large part responsible for the further deteriorating image of the United States among publics abroad, especially in the Middle East.

In conclusion, while the relevance of public diplomacy was growing, the U.S. government did not sufficiently adapt its public diplomacy strategies to a changed international environment. While holding on to Cold War-paradigms and the idea of an enduring "American century" or liberal world order, the State Department was reluctant to consider the possible effects of drastic global developments on the conditions for successful deployment of soft power. A culture of stubbornness, secrecy, and hypocrisy negatively affected American credibility, which resulted in a deteriorating image of the U.S. abroad and a decline in American soft power. Yet, the "global reputational decline suffered by the United States during President's George W. Bush's "war on terror""²¹⁵ also spread awareness about the urgent necessity of adjustments to public diplomacy strategies in this transformed international environment. President Barack Obama, whose victory had "created a general buzz around social media,"²¹⁶ seemed to pick up Public Diplomacy 2.0 quite fast. His speech in Cairo in June 2009 was regarded as "an attempt to reframe the relationship between the US and the Muslim world,"²¹⁷ and was followed by many new initiatives that introduced digital

²¹⁵ Corneliu Bjola and Lu Jiang, "Social Media and Public Diplomacy: A comparative analysis of the digital diplomatic strategies of the EU, US and Japan in China," in *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, ed. Corneliu Bjola and Marcus Holmes (New York: Routledge, 2015): 73.

²¹⁶ Cull, "The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0," 132.

²¹⁷ Lina Khatib, William Dutton, and Michael Thelwall, "Public Diplomacy 2.0: A Case Study of the US Digital Outreach Team," *Middle East Journal* 66, no. 3 (2012): 454.

innovations. In addition, newly appointed undersecretary of state Judith McHale pledged to ‘‘listen more’’²¹⁸ to the foreign publics the State Department aimed to influence.

However, Obama’s Public Diplomacy 2.0 was no ‘‘quick technical fix’’²¹⁹ that magically solved the problem of a negative image of the United States abroad. Despite some efforts as described above, the State Department as a whole still did not take ‘‘the relational aspects of the social media’’²²⁰ seriously, and Obama’s tendency to act firmly against whistleblowers, such as Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning, proved that Bush’s culture of secrecy still had not made room for an open, transparent, information-sharing attitude to U.S. foreign policy. In other words, although Obama managed to distance himself from Bush’s emphasis on hard power and took a more multilateral approach to U.S. foreign relations, he continued to struggle with the changed conditions for successful employment of public diplomacy caused by post-Cold War developments.

Although there is more than one plausible answer to the question of why it proves so difficult to construct U.S. public diplomacy strategies so that they achieve success, an explanation might lie in the fact that the regularly insensitive, hypocritical, and rather aggressive nature of American foreign policy simply does not match with the core message of public diplomacy initiatives, which ironically promotes the United States as the guardian and bringer of freedom, democracy, peace, and liberalism. In the discussion of the three developments central in this thesis, this obvious reality gap reoccurs continuously: it can be recognized in the U.S. government’s tendency to hold on to Fukuyama’s ‘‘end of history’’ in the shape of a liberal world order that is militarily and ideologically dominated by the United States, in the general reluctance to adapt public diplomacy strategies to changes within international system caused by shifts within the global balance of power and the communication revolution, and in Bush’s propensity to excessively use hard power while still attempting to portray the United States as the global guardian of peace and democracy.

As stated many times, successful deployment of soft power relies for an essential part on credibility, and public diplomacy strategies that clearly contradict what is happening in reality are therefore only counterproductive. In this sense, an important condition for smarter public diplomacy is that the State Department starts listening more to the foreign publics they want to influence. Understanding how foreign publics view your country and why is necessary to know what has to be done to influence that view, and is therefore the primary

²¹⁸ Cull, ‘‘The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0,’’ 133.

²¹⁹ Khatib et al., ‘‘Public Diplomacy 2.0,’’ 471.

²²⁰ Cull, ‘‘The Long Road to Public Diplomacy 2.0,’’ 133.

step towards a well-informed and well-targeted public diplomacy strategy. However, it might be even more helpful to carefully reconsider and sophisticate the core message behind U.S. public diplomacy in relation to the reality of American foreign policy, since the often occurring discrepancy between words and deeds in U.S. foreign policy is the main cause of the decline of American credibility abroad. Finding a smarter, more credible balance between soft power and hard power should therefore be a first priority.

Of course, this is easier said than done, for successful deployment of soft power will always be dependent on the extent to which and the way in which hard power is used. It is also important to mention that the terms of soft power and public diplomacy are still somewhat ambiguous. As the contradictive statements of Nye (2008) and Robin (2002) already pointed out, academics have not come to an agreement on the extent to which the influence of soft power reaches and to what extent public diplomacy can help reach foreign policy goals. These disagreements translate into practical politics, as politicians have different views on this matter as well. So far, I have explained the theoretical conditions for successful deployment of soft power, provided examples of public diplomacy initiatives that were successful or not, and emphasized the importance of a well-balanced smart power strategy in which soft power should make up a larger part than it presently does. Yet, my conclusions have not touched upon the exact features this perfect balance is to include. Therefore, in order to determine what steps are necessary to fully adapt U.S. public diplomacy to the conditions in which its contribution to successful U.S. foreign policy is maximized, future research could focus on how far American soft power reaches in reality, and what the ideal balance of American smart power must be for public diplomacy initiatives to be able to construct a positive image of the United States among publics abroad.

That being said, the future of U.S. public diplomacy has recently become very unclear given the outcome of the 2016 presidential elections, which might have drastic consequences for U.S. public diplomacy and its corresponding academic field. In the past months, President Donald J. Trump has radically moved away from his predecessors' foreign policy approach and promotes the isolationist ideal of "America First:" claiming to prioritize American citizens over others, Trump is contesting the position of the United States as the global guardian of freedom, liberalism, and democracy in the world. Although his election is so recent and not much academic research has yet been published, it is clear that Trump, or at least his rhetoric, marks the first radical break with interventionism since World War II, and with this break he is essentially challenging the core message of U.S. public diplomacy that has prevailed for decades. Thus, it will be highly interesting to see whether Trump's

presidency will significantly alter the foundations of U.S. public diplomacy in the future, and if so, whether this radical shift in American foreign policy will be a long-term development.

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