

Engaging the Muslim World: How to Win the War of Ideas

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A critical pillar of success in the war on terrorism is restoring the world's trust in the word of the United States—in other words, winning the “war of ideas.” Fortifying this pillar, particularly in the Muslim world, should be a top priority of our federal government. To win the “war of ideas” against those advocating violence directed at the United States (“U.S.”) and its citizens, we must act quickly to rebuild the shattered foundations of understanding between our nation and predominantly Muslim states and communities. Central to winning the “war of ideas” globally are: preserving our civil liberties at home in an age of terror; living up to those values on the global battlefield, be it in Guantánamo Bay or in Abu Ghraib; and, in particular, being viewed as treating our own Muslim population here in the U.S. respectfully.

For our efforts in the “war of ideas” to be effective, the U.S. government must move beyond understanding the problem as simply a global popularity contest. The very success of our foreign policy depends on how the United States can engage with, and help shape the views and attitudes held by, foreign populations. Both how and with whom our government speaks create the environment in which our policies flourish—leading to greater security—or fail. Furthermore, central to the struggle in the global “war of ideas” is how the United States addresses constitutional liberties at home.

I. THE COLD WAR MODEL

Analysts on both sides of the political aisle often describe the current terrorism-related challenge to the United States as a long-term conflict, akin to the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. That conflict, like the current one,

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was waged both in the realm of ideas and in the realm of national security.¹ Whereas national security measures during the Cold War era mirrored those of traditional warfare, including the use of intelligence and military tools, the “war of ideas” provided an extensive framework, employing public diplomacy—U.S. government-sponsored, strategically targeted communication and cultural exchange programs—to stamp out communist ideology and ignite the spread of our constitutional values and democratic ideals. This U.S.-based initiative “carried out a sophisticated program of overt and covert activities designed to shape public opinion behind the Iron Curtain, within European intellectual and cultural circles, and across the developing world.”²

Our efforts to defeat the Soviet Union in the war of ideas during the Cold War were largely aided by our domestic efforts to confront directly the problem of racism at home. As Professor Mary Dudziak writes:

The focus of American foreign policy at this point was to promote democracy and to “contain” communism. However, the international focus on U.S. racial problems meant that the image of American democracy was tarnished. The apparent contradictions between American political ideology and practice led to particular foreign policy difficulties with countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. U.S. government officials realized that their ability to sell democracy to the Third World was seriously hampered by continuing racial injustice at home. Accordingly, efforts to promote civil rights within the United States were consistent with, and important to, the more central U.S. mission of fighting world communism.³

By the time we passed through the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and emerged on the other side with increased civil rights, we were a beacon of hope, freedom, and justice to the world, particularly for Eastern Europe, stuck on the other side of the Iron Curtain. This subsequent transformation in our domestic policy at home greatly contributed to our foreign policy successes overseas defeating communism.⁴ Applying this successful Cold War “war of ideas” model to the present national security challenge in the Middle East could effectively drive out extremist ideology that may give rise to terrorist behavior while strengthening the United States’ stature in the international community.

II. APPLYING THE COLD WAR MODEL AND GETTING IT RIGHT

The current National Security Strategy of the United States, issued by President Bush in March 2006, recognizes that winning the “war of ideas” is crucial to the long-term success in the War on Terrorism. Unfortunately, we are now struggling against credibility and image problems similar to those of the former Soviet Union, so memorably characterized by President Reagan as “The Evil Empire.”

¹ Eliot A. Cohen, *World War IV: Lets call this conflict what it is*, WALL ST. J., Nov. 20, 2001; James Woolsey, *At War for Freedom*, THE GUARDIAN, July 20, 2003.

² WILLIAM ROSENAU, MCGRAW-HILL HOMETLAND SECURITY HANDBOOK 1137 (2005), available at www.rand.org/pubs/reprints/2006/RAND_RP1218.pdf.

³ Mary Dudziak, *Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative*, 41 STAN. L. REV. 61, 62-63 (1988).

⁴ P.W. Singer, *American goodwill, in shackles*, SALON.COM, June 26, 2007, available at http://www.salon.com/opinion/feature/2007/06/26/war_of_ideas/.

During the past few years, U.S. standing across the world in general and in the Muslim world in particular has sustained a deep and rapid deterioration. According to the Pew Global Attitudes Survey, 80% of the citizens of predominantly Muslim countries hold solidly negative views of the United States. Negative ratings are even higher in the key moderate countries of Jordan, Morocco, and Turkey.⁵ Yet, inexplicably, out of an already small federal budget of about \$1.5 billion for core public diplomacy, only about 9.5% (\$140 million) is devoted to the Near East and South Asia—core areas of the Muslim world.⁶ Meanwhile, 16% (\$240 million) was spent on the U.S.-mouthpiece television and radio stations Al Hurra and Radio Sawa, which have a limited following and limited impact.⁷

Importantly, the anger is not directed at our cultural values; rather, U.S. policy is identified as the main cause of the negative sentiments, ranging from the conduct of the war in Iraq to the abandonment of civil liberties in U.S. detention centers at Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib.⁸ In an August 2007 *Washington Post* article, Brookings Senior Fellow Philip Gordon highlighted how critical it is for U.S. conduct to be aligned with U.S. communications strategy in order to marginalize and root out violent extremism, writing, “Bush may speak as though he believes we’re in a battle of ideas, but he wages the “war on terror” as if it were a traditional conflict, in which military force matters more than moral authority and allied support.”⁹ As then-Senator John F. Kennedy once recommended, we need to “practice what we preach.”¹⁰

By any measure, U.S. efforts at communicating with Muslim-majority nations since 9/11 have not been successful. The efforts have relied on informational programming that has lacked energy, focus, and an overarching, integrated strategy. Our efforts have also lacked nuance in dealing with diverse and sensitive issues and have failed to reach out to the key “swing” audiences.

In today’s digitally interconnected world, however, our behavior within the U.S. is even more closely monitored by people around the globe. Many of those in the Muslim world—who are unsure whether to love us for our ideals of equality and freedom, or loath us for our practices at Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib—have increasing access to the Internet and satellite television. They are watching carefully. And in years to come, they could either move to becoming supporters of those who resist U.S. policy in the form of terrorism or supporters of those who embrace the United States in free trade and political cooperation.

⁵ SHIBLEY TELHAMI, 2008 ANNUAL ARAB PUBLIC OPINION POLL: SURVEY OF THE ANWAR SADAT CHAIR FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND (2008), available at <http://sadat.umd.edu/surveys/2008%20Arab%20Public%20Opinion%20Survey.ppt>; PEW GLOBAL ATTITUDES PROJECT, AMERICA’S IMAGE SLIPS, BUT ALLIES SHARE U.S. CONCERNS OVER IRAN, HAMAS (2006), available at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=252>.

⁶ U.S. GOV’T ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE, GAO-06-535, U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: STATE DEPARTMENT EFFORTS TO ENGAGE MUSLIM AUDIENCES LACK CERTAIN COMMUNICATION ELEMENTS AND FACE SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES 10 (2006), available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06535.pdf>.

⁷ *Id.* at 7.

⁸ PEW GLOBAL ATTITUDES PROJECT, AMERICAN CHARACTER GETS MIXED REVIEWS: U.S. IMAGE UP SLIGHTLY, BUT STILL NEGATIVE (2005), available at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/247.pdf>.

⁹ Philip H. Gordon, *Take Some Cues From the Cold War, Mr. President*, WASH. POST, Aug. 19, 2007, at B03, available at http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2007/0819forceandlegitimacy_gordon.aspx.

¹⁰ See Senator John F. Kennedy and Vice President Richard M. Nixon Second Joint Radio-Television Broadcast (1961), available at <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/JFK+Pre-Pres/1960/Senator+John+F.+Kennedy+and+Vice+President+Richard+M.+Nixon+Second+Joint+Radio-Television+Broadcast.htm>.

Indeed, we find ourselves in a crucial period, when enduring attitudes are being formed. Getting our communications right is critical to overall national security now and will continue to be critical in decades to come. Much of the threat we face comes from terrorists around the globe, often acting in a decentralized, self-inspired fashion. However, our security concerns extend beyond terrorism and suggest a long-term need for a grand strategy to prevent or wage a wider conflict in the future. The United States—and the world—may be standing on the brink of a “Clash of Civilizations,” as Samuel Huntington once warned.¹¹ The widely held view among Muslims that the U.S. war on terrorism is a “war on Islam” illustrates the vast gulf in understanding and perceptions.

The prevailing view in the Muslim world of a “war on Islam” impedes our success not only in mounting a viable grand strategy in our overall foreign policy, but also in confronting localized terrorist threats. The global war on terrorism, after all, is not a traditional military conflict made up of set-piece battles; it is a series of relatively small conflicts and insurgencies in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt—and even in some neighborhoods, in places such as Britain. In each case, the United States must sway a population from hostility to support in order to oust terror cells and shut down recruiting pipelines. The U.S. Marine Corps *Small Wars* manual, which details tactics and strategies for operations combining military force and diplomatic pressure, and on which the “Global War on Terror” is based, famously notes that such “wars are battles of ideas and battles for the perceptions and attitudes of target populations.”¹²

More than merely a lost popularity contest, the deepening divide between the United States and Muslim nations and communities around the world poses a huge barrier to our success on a breadth of vital issues, from running down terrorist groups to expanding economic development and political freedom. Progress on these issues will steer individuals toward or against militant radicalism.

III. CREATING THE STRATEGY

For the last six years, the United States has all but conceded the field in the war of ideas to the extremists, whether they be Taliban members in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda forces in Pakistan or instigators of sectarian violence in Iraq. To win this war, the next president must clearly recognize the importance of America’s voice and good standing as elements of its power and influence in the world. Indeed, Joseph Nye acknowledges the importance of wielding soft power, writing that “soft power...comes from being a shining ‘city upon a hill’.... Our leaders must make sure that they exercise our hard power in a manner that does not undercut our soft power.”¹³ As a matter of the highest national security importance, the next president should undertake a major, integrative initiative in public diplomacy and strategic communications to reach Muslim states and communities from the United Kingdom to Indonesia, including Muslim minority communities in Europe and India.

¹¹ SAMUEL HUNTINGTON, *THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS AND THE REMAKING OF WORLD ORDER* (1998).

¹² U.S. MARINE CORPS COMBAT DEV. COMMAND, *SMALL WARS/ 21ST CENTURY* 79 (2005).

¹³ JOSEPH NYE, JR., *THE PARADOX OF AMERICAN POWER: WHY THE WORLD’S ONLY SUPERPOWER CAN’T GO IT ALONE* 141 (2002).

Winning the war of ideas and creating better relations with the Muslim world require more than tired tactics, immobility, and budgetary pocket change (the current \$50-million cost is less than 1/10,000th of our Iraq-related expenditures).¹⁴ The next president should designate this effort as a matter of the highest national security importance. The campaign as a whole should be self-critical, regularly evaluating its own performance and ready and willing to change in response to evaluation results.

There are six broad principles that should guide our strategy to improve U.S. security through winning the war of ideas and broadening and deepening relationships between U.S. citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad. These overarching principles include:

Confronting who we are. Harkening back to the civil rights era and the Cold War, unless we take a zero-tolerance stand against anti-Muslim statements and bias both in government and among our political elite, we risk being cast as undertaking a “war on Islam” instead of a “war on terror.” America must clearly confront its civil liberty concerns at home—and in our military campaigns—if we are to be able to inspire the Muslim world to support our vision of “liberty and justice for all” in the world.

Engaging in dialogue. Instead of just producing propaganda, communication efforts should be audience-centered and designed to build dialogue, assure mutual respect, forge partnerships, and place a premium on joint participation and planning. The structure of the National Model United Nations event sponsored by the National Collegiate Conference Association could be used as an example. This annual conference in New York brings together thousands of students from over 30 countries to discuss global concerns. Such forums, where the United States is viewed as an evenhanded partner, are the only way to restore and secure damaged credibility. This dialogue should be two-way—emphasizing “listening” and “learning” as much as “talking.”

Reaching out. Rather than merely “preaching to the choir,” the United States should engage a varied set of regional players and constituencies, including Islamists and other social conservatives who may sometimes be controversial, but who carry the greatest influence within the target populations. Beyond traditional vehicles for discussion, which target government counterparts and standard news media, U.S. communications strategy should engage leaders in a variety of forums, including universities, the arts, business and professional associations, labor groups, and non-governmental organizations. This worked well in the Cold War,

¹⁴ The Pentagon reports the cost of the Iraq War has already reached about \$600 billion and the Congressional Budget Office estimates that it is likely to end up costing \$1–2 trillion, depending on troop levels and the amount of time the U.S. maintains its presence in Iraq. See David M. Herszenhorn, *Estimates of Iraq War Were Not Close to Ballpark*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 19, 2008, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/19/washington/19cost.html>.

when the U.S. government sponsored the Congress for Cultural Freedom, an international association of artists and thinkers opposed to totalitarianism.¹⁵

Integrating. Diverse U.S. agencies should develop a coordinated goal-oriented, two-way communications approach to maximize effectiveness and resources and to speak with a single, credible voice. For example, the United States Agency for International Development should coordinate its activities more closely with the Office for the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs to better communicate the depth of involvement of U.S. development assistance across the Muslim world.¹⁶

Responding nimbly and quickly. Strategies and programs should be flexible and responsive to changing events, findings, and trends. For example, three years after 9/11, only 27% of U.S. public diplomacy resources were deployed in the 1.4 billion person Muslim world, which makes up 20-22% of the global population.¹⁷ Just as the U.S. focused the majority of such programs on the Soviet Bloc during the Cold War, so too should it focus the majority of today's resources on the current ideological battleground in the Muslim world. The U.S. should also use new technologies and tactics to reflect these changes, such as increasingly embracing the use of Internet platforms like blogs and Facebook.

Investing. The financial investment in public diplomacy should reflect the very high strategic priority of the war of ideas in ensuring U.S. security. The United States can start by increasing funding for Near East and South Asia programs. We have seen this work in post-World War II when the U.S. invested millions of dollars in creating American centers in Germany. The United States needs to do the same thing in Iraq, and across the Arab world.¹⁸

IV. CENTRAL VISION OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY PROGRAMS

The success of any program begins with a central vision. The Administration should order a reexamination of public diplomacy and strategic communications goals and programs at the senior levels of the National Security Council and at affected departments and agencies, especially the State Department. This effort should include seeking and integrating input from legislative bodies, universities, think tanks, and friends in the Muslim world. Good advice should be welcomed, not cast aside. In

¹⁵ Rosenau, *supra* note 2, at 1137.

¹⁶ HADY AMR, THE NEED TO COMMUNICATE: HOW TO IMPROVE U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD 36 (2004), available at http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2004/01islamicworld_amr/amr_2004_0101.pdf.

¹⁷ *The President's FY 2006 International Affairs Budget: Hearing Before the S. Subcomm. On State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs*, 109th Cong. (2005) (statement of Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State of the United States).

¹⁸ Hady Amr, *American Public Diplomacy: Some Lessons From Germany*, THE DAILY STAR, July 15, 2005, available at <http://www.spinwatch.org/content/view/1475/9/>.

the past, policymakers have ignored reports on the issue from groups as varied as the congressionally mandated Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Center for the Study of the Presidency. In order to ensure both high-level support and durability, the main findings and recommended core strategies should be embodied in a National Security Presidential Directive, presenting an agenda for building positive relations with Muslim countries and communities, using public diplomacy and strategic communications.¹⁹

Once the strategic goals are established, policymakers can develop a more systematic approach to ascertain how far short the United States falls from its target, and what exactly is required to attain it. This analytical and planning process will also identify tangible courses of action in the most important issue areas, *e.g.* alleviating the intensity of anti-Americanism in key countries and increasing levels of cooperation on anti-terrorist activity. The objective is to create not only a methodological approach to evaluating our successes and failures, but also a guide to steer the right course in the future.

As important as the substance of the strategy is in rebuilding the shattered foundations of trust, it is time to get the structural components of those messages in shape. Many Muslims say they find the style and tone of communications used by senior U.S. officials arrogant, patronizing, and needlessly confrontational. Simply returning the *art* of diplomacy to our *public* diplomacy could have an immediate impact. It is important to demonstrate respect: The empathic and measured tone that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice used after the alleged Koran desecration incident in 2005 was all too rare and should serve as a model of appropriate diplomacy. Senior leaders need to avoid cultural insensitivity, boasting, and finger-wagging. Similarly, U.S. leaders should avoid displaying an openly hostile attitude toward the major Arab media outlets such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, as they have done in the past.²⁰ Al Jazeera still commands the largest portion of the Arabic news market. In a poll taken in 2008, 53% of respondents identified it as their first choice for news. Al-Arabiya also continues to make gains with Arab audiences.²¹ Like it or not, these channels are the means of conveying our message to the broader community, and attacking them only undermines our efforts.

V. SPECIFIC WAYS TO WIN THE “WAR OF IDEAS”

In applying the six broad principles that should guide our public diplomacy strategy presented above, our Administration can make significant progress towards winning the “war of ideas” and improving U.S. relations with the Muslim world through many interrelated initiatives. The following is a list of ten immediate suggestions that can be easily implemented so as to win the “war of ideas.” There are, of course, many more suggestions for improving and fortifying the “war of ideas.”

¹⁹ Jim Hoagland, *How to Respond*, WASH. POST, Sept. 18, 2001, at B07. The focus here is on public diplomacy and strategic communications involving the Muslim world. However, it can serve as a model for more broad efforts at restoring America’s leadership and credibility on a global basis.

²⁰ For example, former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld called the network “vicious, inaccurate and inexcusable.” See Sarah Baxter, *Rumsfeld’s Al-Jazeera outburst*, TIMES ONLINE, Nov. 27, 2005, available at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article597096.ece>.

²¹ Telhami, *supra* note 5, at 3.

1. STAND TALL AGAINST CURTAILMENT OF CIVIL LIBERTIES AND ANTI-MUSLIM BIGOTRY

In an age of globalized technology and communication, the world is watching to see if we live up to our ideals of civil liberties and constitutional values, and is waiting to see if we stamp out anti-Muslim bigotry at home. A series of anti-Muslim statements made by various policymakers and close Administration supporters have undercut President Bush's post 9/11 message that Islam was not to blame for the attacks.²² Even though media in the Middle East give extensive coverage to these sorts of statements, the Administration has usually failed to condemn them or separate itself from the speakers. Bigotry in our midst is not just distasteful; in the age of globalization, it directly undermines our security. We live in an era where the world constantly watches to see whether we actually live up to our ideals. At a time when many in the world expect the worst of us, such positions only support the enemy's propaganda and recruiting efforts. Efforts on this front alone will determine if we have the moral authority to build multi-government coalitions and can inspire other countries to follow suit.

2. CREATE A U.S. VOICE CORPS

Several recent reports have revealed the persisting deficit in the foreign language skills needed to communicate to the citizens of Muslim-majority countries, especially in Arabic.²³ Indeed, perhaps one of the most shocking findings in the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy's 2005 report was that only 54 Department of State employees have tested for high ("Level 4") Arabic or above and only 279 for all levels.²⁴ Even in June 2007, the Office of the Spokesman at the State Department reported only ten of the Foreign Service officers (including the ambassador) working at Embassy Baghdad as having "general professional fluency" in Arabic.²⁵ Presidential support is needed for the rapid recruitment and training of at least 100 fully fluent Arabic speakers—five highly trained individuals in each Arab country—with public diplomacy skills. Respected corps members could also become the top experts or "go-to" people on Arabic-language talk shows and news analyses. Further, it is equally important to train speakers in other languages spoken by more than 500 million Muslims in strategically important countries like Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey.

²² For example, Lt. General William Boykin set off a firestorm of attention in 2003, when, comparing his faith with a Muslim's, he said, "I knew that my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real God and his was an idol." Boykin was then promoted to Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, a position that he held from June 2003 until August 2007. See *US is 'battling Satan' says general*, BBC NEWS, Oct. 17, 2003, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/3199212.stm>.

Similarly, Christian Coalition founder and Bush administration associate Pat Robertson's called Islam a "violent religion." See Sonja Barisic, *Pat Robertson describes Islam as violent religion that wants to dominate, destroy*, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, Feb. 22, 2002, available at https://www.synapsenow.com/synapse/news/fullstory_public.cfm?articleid=6316&website=israelfacts.org. Likewise, Franklin Graham called Islam a "very evil and wicked religion." See *Franklin Graham conducts services at Pentagon*, CNN.COM, Apr. 18, 2003, available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/04/18/graham.pentagon/>.

²³ U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: STATE DEPARTMENT EFFORTS TO ENGAGE MUSLIM AUDIENCES LACK CERTAIN COMMUNICATION ELEMENTS AND FACE SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES, *supra* note 6, at 37.

²⁴ ADVISORY GROUP ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN THE ARAB AND MUSLIM WORLD, CHANGING MINDS WINNING PEACE: A NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR THE U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN THE ARAB AND MUSLIM WORLD 28 (2003).

²⁵ See Press Release, U.S. Dep't of State, Arabic Speakers- Embassy Baghdad (Taken Question) (June 19, 2007), available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2007/jun/86792.htm>.

3. ESTABLISH AMERICAN CENTERS ACROSS THE REGION

Young people are the most critical audience in a war of ideas that may last for generations. This is all the more important since many of the countries involved have a higher than normal percentage of their population under the age of 25. The frustration that Muslim youth feel with the *status quo* could be harnessed into a demand for progressive reforms. U.S. foreign policy must be deeply engaged not only in developing a real sociopolitical alternative to offer this next generation but also in articulating this alternative through strategic communications. The centers should provide not just a window into U.S. life, but also enable open and critical dialogue on issues of local and international concern, such as U.S. policy in the Middle East, thereby demonstrating the value of free discourse so essential to democracy. Otherwise, pent-up rage will continue to focus on us. There is a historical model to emulate in reaching foreign youth, and citizens of all ages. After World War II, the United States launched dozens of “America Houses” across Germany as focal points to build democracy and form a bond with the German people. Located in city and town centers, “America Houses” also served as community hubs. After 40 years under U.S. stewardship, many of these centers evolved into German-American institutes under private German control.²⁶ The British Council serves as another example. The Council seeks to build bridges among the United Kingdom and other countries through initiatives in the arts and sciences.

4. IMPLEMENT A U.S. KNOWLEDGE LIBRARY INITIATIVE

The Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy also pointed out the dearth of Arabic translations of major works of literature and political theory coming out of the United States. While certain U.S. embassies do undertake translations of books into Arabic, the scale of these efforts is miniscule compared with the potential market. The lack of translated material means that many Arabs are cut off from the history of the United States, political ideas, literature, and science. An expeditiously run project to translate a variety of books and journals would soon make such works widely and inexpensively available.

5. PRIVATIZE AL HURRA AND RADIO SAWA

One of the few major U.S. public diplomacy initiatives in the last five years was the launch of U.S. government-sponsored satellite TV and radio stations, Al Hurra and Radio Sawa, which broadcast in Arabic and are intended to supplement, or even supplant, indigenous media in the region. Despite the massive launch costs, which ate up most of the public diplomacy budget, neither station has found its footing, nor has any credible study has found them to be influential among the populace. Former ambassador to Yemen William A. Rugh explained as much in his testimony given before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Radio Sawa and Al Hurra television, noting that the first impression of Radia Sawa has “disappointed many viewers.”²⁷ An article in the Spring 2004 *National Interest* also concludes that Radio Sawa wielded little

²⁶ Amr, *supra* note 18.

²⁷ For Ambassador Rugh’s full statement see, *Comments on Radio Sawa and al Hurra Television, Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Intl. Relations and Terrorism of the S. Comm. on Foreign Relations*, 108th Cong. (2004) (statement of William A. Rugh, Ambassador), available at www.senate.gov/~foreign/testimony/2004/RughTestimony040429.pdf.

influence in the “street.”²⁸ Clearly, their problem is not the lack of funding but rather their overt association with the U.S. government, which effectively de-legitimizes these media outlets in the eyes of the Arab population. Al Hurra and Radio Sawa actually undermine broader reform efforts, as the United States is in no position to challenge Arab government control of media while running its own government-funded media there. The U.S. should have a voice in the region, but this voice will more likely be listened to and believed, if people understand that it is being transmitted through a non-government and unbiased source.²⁹ More collaboration is needed with the private sector, which, as the Defense Science Board has noted, can often be a more credible messenger than the U.S. government. Privatization of Al Hurra and Radio Sawa is a good place to start.

6. LAUNCH “C-SPANS” FOR THE MUSLIM WORLD

Sources of unfiltered information are sorely lacking throughout the Muslim world, even though there is a palpable appetite for them. For example, during the Abu Ghraib crisis, the public in the Middle East watched live coverage of U.S. congressional hearings on Arabic news channels with great interest. Scenes of U.S. policymakers and military leaders directly answering the probing questions of legislators and reporters presented a powerful illustration of democracy in action as well as a sharp contrast to the authoritarian practices predominant in the viewers’ home regions. Through collaboration with local organizations, unfiltered Arabic channels showing the democratic processes of our federal government will eliminate the credibility gap that has undermined Radio Sawa and Al Hurra. Similar opportunities exist for public affairs channels targeting speakers of other Muslim languages in Iran, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Turkey, and elsewhere.

7. BOLSTER CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS AND IMPROVE THE VISA PROCESS

As in the Cold War, when U.S. outreach programs created allies around the world, we should enlarge educational and cultural exchange programs, increase exchanges of youth and young professionals, and support investments in development, technology, and science initiatives in the Muslim world. The media can multiply the effects of these exchanges through television, print, and the Internet. Not only should exchange initiatives like the Fulbright and Humphrey programs be dramatically expanded in Muslim-majority countries, but virtual youth exchanges, harnessing Internet and video-conferencing, should also be initiated. Current visa procedures impose onerous requirements and delays that humiliate, rather than welcome, Arabs and Muslims from abroad; in turn, the cumbersome procedures subvert efforts to reach out to our natural ambassadors—namely, visitors and students who can then attest to the depth and reality of our goodwill.³⁰ Special attention should also be given to integrating official visitor

²⁸ Derk Kinnane, *Winning Over the Muslim Mind*, NATIONAL INTEREST, Spring 2004, available at http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2751/is_75/ai_n6077656.

²⁹ Stephen Cook, *Hearts, Minds and Hearings*, N.Y. TIMES, July 6, 2004, available at http://www.cfr.org/publication/7168/hearts_minds_and_hearings.html.

³⁰ John N. Paden & Peter W. Singer, *America Slams the Door (on its Foot): Washington’s Destructive New Visa Policies*, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, June 2003, available at <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20030501facomment11216/john-n-paden-peter-w-singer/america-slams-the-door-on-its-foot-washington-s-destructive-new-visa-policies.html>.

programs across agencies. All too frequently, high-profile visa delays, and, in particular, the erroneous detention of officially invited leaders and representatives from the Muslim world, have proved embarrassing and detrimental to our country's image.³¹

8. HARNESS THE DIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES BY ENGAGING ARAB-AMERICANS AND AMERICAN MUSLIMS

At a time when the U.S. government lacks both credibility abroad and fluent speakers to represent our views, the distance between our government and *domestic* Arab and Muslim communities is stunningly wide. The State Department's office for public diplomacy, for example, did not include a single American-Muslim on its staff until 2006 when the Office for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs appointed its first four American Muslim "civilian ambassadors" to travel to Southeast Asia, the Middle East and the South Pacific.³² The Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Justice, and State should examine how they can better tap into the programming and recruiting strengths of these communities and move beyond symbolic respect for Muslim rituals, such as convening annual Iftar dinners during Ramadan, to substantial initiatives. To offer one example, just as political donors and corporate executives often join official travel delegations, Arab-Americans and American Muslims could also help brief and even accompany officials when they visit the broader Middle East.

9. INVOLVE THE WHOLE FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY IN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Leaders in the executive branch should conduct regular interviews with the foreign press and engage in genuine dialogue, even with media outlets that hold negative views of our government. In other words, public diplomacy must go beyond "preaching to the converted." For example, visits by senior U.S. officials to the region should include meetings not merely with government officials, but also with local students, civil society leaders, reformers, and even conservative religious or social leaders. They should follow the Cold War model of a wide engagement strategy to expand and deepen relationships with U.S. allies and counterparts in what were then considered "battleground states" in the developing world.

10. EXERT PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The role of presidential leadership is critical and cannot be emphasized enough. The U.S. president is a world leader. His style and manner of public diplomacy are crucial to winning the "war of ideas." Much of our recent decline in credibility and standing in the Muslim world has focused on the actions of the current Administration, with President Bush cited by name in various regional public polls, as well as

³¹ For example, Ejaz Haider, the editor of one of Pakistan's most moderate newspapers, was arrested in Washington, DC, in 2003 by Immigration and Naturalization Service agents on visa charges, even though he was in the United States at the direct invitation of the State Department to build goodwill. Those sympathetic to the United States could only charitably conclude that one American hand did not know what the other was doing. Unsurprisingly, those less favorably inclined took a darker view, and made sure to publicize their conspiracy theories in regional media.

³² For more on this, see Heather Maher, *Islam: Muslim Americans to Improve U.S. Image Abroad*, RADIO FREE EUROPE/ RADIO LIBERTY, June 16, 2006, available at: <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/06/b47f318d-dcef-4b59-ac09-9a9d33a70805.html>.

conversations with key leaders.³³ Fair or not, this focus on President Bush does present a limited window for his successor. The next president will have a unique opportunity to personally “reboot” the relationship between the United States and Muslim populations worldwide.

Indeed, according to the Pentagon’s Defense Science Board, “only White House leadership ... can bring about the sweeping [communications] reforms that are required,” and “nothing shapes U.S. policies and global perceptions ... more than the president’s statements.”³⁴ To demonstrate the importance of a strong relationship, the next president should consider including stops in Muslim states in his first international trip. There, the president could deliver a major policy address, outlining goals and revealing a vision of future relations between the United States and the Muslim world, and could meet with forward-looking leaders, civil society reformers, and youth. Given the importance of the “war of ideas” to the battle against terrorism and the risks of a greater, long-term rift between the United States and the Islamic world, efforts should be made to bring the president into personal contact with reformers and civil society leaders. These efforts include hosting delegations at the White House to demonstrate respect and bolster both parties’ standing, as well as to increase mutual understanding. In addition, the President should schedule time for regular interviews with news media outlets from the Muslim world.

Furthermore, the President should use the bully pulpit to condemn hate speech. Shortly after 9/11, President Bush took the compelling personal step of visiting the Islamic Center of Washington, the capital’s leading mosque, to show Americans U.S. citizens and the world that the administration understood that Islam was not to blame for the attacks. Unfortunately, the clarity of this message was quickly lost, as was discussed above. The next president must not repeat this failure of leadership, as it weakens our moral standing.

VI. CONCLUSION

In no area could the Bush Administration’s foreign policy be described as meek, except in public diplomacy and strategic communications—its efforts to win the war of ideas. The Administration’s combination of an aggressive foreign policy and a feeble effort to maintain our voice and credibility in the world leaves the next president with a historic challenge. The next president will inherit a series of complex and difficult decisions about engaging with Muslim states and communities, along with only a short window of opportunity to “reboot” the relationship. After all, these decisions are at the heart of the war on terrorism.

Simply put, there is a glaring need for the United States to undertake a proactive strategy aimed at restoring long-term security through the presentation of our principles as part of U.S. foreign policy. The tools of public diplomacy and strategic communications are the most valuable weapons in America’s arsenal. It is not too late to wield them.

³³ For example, see June 27, 2007 Pew Research Center Poll taken in Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Territories, Israel asking respondents how much confidence they had in certain leaders to do the right thing regarding world affairs. With the exception of those interviewed in Israel, over 40% of respondents answered that they had “no confidence at all” in President Bush. PEW GLOBAL ATTITUDES PROJECT, RISING ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN IN 47-NATION SURVEY: GLOBAL UNEASE WITH MAJOR WORLD POWERS 61-62 (2007).

³⁴ U.S. DEP’T OF DEFENSE, OFFICE OF THE UNDER-SEC’Y OF DEF. FOR ACQUISITION, TECH. AND LOGISTICS, REPORT OF THE DEFENSE SCIENCE BOARD TASK FORCE ON STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION 3 (2004), available at http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2004-09-Strategic_Communication.pdf.