“THE DEMOCRACY VIDEO CHALLENGE:” THE RHETORIC OF POPULAR CULTURE IN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes the rhetorical changes in public diplomacy in the decades since the Cold War. Public diplomacy is the deployment of culture, a form of soft power, to shape public opinion overseas. In many ways, it has portrayed a consistent image of America in these decades: a multicultural meritocracy, where our strength is in our democratic values and the ability of anyone to contribute to society. However, public diplomacy has also changed in many ways in those decades, in particular its increased reliance on popular culture to reify that image of American multiculturalism and democratic values. My project contends that these shifts are largely due to the demands of globalization and neoliberalism, to a change in perceived external threats, and advances in information technology. Yet, as it responds to the demands of neoliberalism, public diplomacy of the past few decades also benefits American neoliberal empire. Increasingly, it advances America and its people as a brand, seeking to entice foreign publics into market-based relationships. It encourages its audience to buy into American ideas and economic structures. The first chapter will ground this dissertation in a series of intellectual conversations, examining rhetoric particular to American exceptionalism, cultural studies, postcolonialism, and neoliberalism. Then, I will chronicle these shifts in a series of case studies, focusing on the products of American public diplomacy -- including radio broadcasts, magazine articles, theatrical productions, and television commercials -- in the Cold War and continuing through today. Each chapter of this dissertation will examine texts from a particular era of public diplomacy -- the Cold War, the early War on Terror, Obama's administration, and, finally, under Trump -- and describe the continuities and discontinuities of this particularly elusive form of rhetoric.

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Introduction

America, like all twenty-first century nations, is not just a place, but an idea. Those ideas of twenty-first century nationhood are not fixed and only exist if they are continuously reified. As in all twenty-first century nations, especially relatively young ones, it has been important throughout its history for America to define its national character, to reconcile and explain what America "means." That question -- how America imagines itself -- is not a small one. On the contrary, that narrative will dictate how America is expected and allowed (both from within and without) to act in all of its transnational activities. It has sweeping consequences for when and how America goes to war, buys and sells products, reshapes otherwise sovereign governments, rescues those in conflict, exploits those with resources, and destroys those who oppose it. As I will explain, this dissertation will analyze the rhetoric of that American self-definition through its public diplomacy. First, it is important to explore the peculiar nature of American self-understanding and how it manifests itself in certain forms of transnational discourse.

America as an Exceptional Imagined Community

This struggle for American self-definition is visible as early as John Winthrop's Puritanical vision in "A Model of Christian Charity," where he anticipated that this country would be a "city upon a hill." Those attempts at definition of the American character have never been settled. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson describes a nation as a particular "imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and

sovereign" (6). For Anderson, culture is integral in forming that idea of nationhood: "Nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that world's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artifacts of a particular kind" (4). In his *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams discusses the slipperiness of the term "culture" and describes the tension among a series of understandings of the term. Throughout this dissertation, I will make use of Williams's differentiation between the "material production" of fields like cultural anthropology and the "signifying or symbolic systems" of fields like cultural studies[1] (91). In this context, the term "culture" describes the abstract symbolic processes by which groups of people communicate a shared understanding. However, often when used as a modifying adjective ("cultural artifacts") or a modified noun ("popular culture"), culture can also be understood as a discrete product (such as a magazine), one that creates a shared understanding of culture. That is, culture is both a process and a product. American culture, our set of collective understandings or myths, highlights values such abstractions as democracy, liberty, and freedom[2]. That abstract culture is reified through discourse[3] (the way we both discuss and recreate about our culture in speeches and documents) and through more tangible cultural products such as music, films, and publications, what we refer to as "popular culture."

[1] That is, the academic study of culture according to the complex definition here. Cultural studies pays particular attention to the ways that culture - through ideology, discourse, and material output, for example - creates and sustains power.

[2] For more context for these terms, see the discussion of ideographs, below.

[3] I am relying on Foucault's conception of discourse here, as described in *Archaeology of Knowledge,* noting that we must "no longer [treat] discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things." (54)

What we collectively understand as American culture informs our national identity. National identity is not something specific and concrete. It is an abstraction that is created by the collective understanding of that nation's people[4]. Rhetorical scholar Lloyd Bitzer, in his essay "Political Rhetoric," explains how a country's collective sense identity is created through language. He writes that Americans experience "a constant condition of both division and community; our efforts to bridge gaps, even when successful, sometimes create others; and some of our most exhausting labor towards cooperation only anticipates division, as when we take great pains to rally ourselves to war." For Bitzer, rhetoric is needed "to find common meaning, unifying symbols, and ways of acting together, and this promoting cooperation" (Bitzer 9). American symbols such as the flag or "The Star Spangled Banner," our national anthem, generally allow for our nation to cohere, to find a common ground.[5] Thus, throughout this dissertation, when I refer to "American national identity," I mean the shared (if often contested) understanding of abstract American values (such as democracy, freedom, liberty) that is reified through discourse (for example, speeches and essays) and cultural products (including national symbols such as the flag and "The Star Spangled Banner," but also other cultural products like film and music). These are the processes by which America becomes an "imagined community."

Tensions have pervaded our national discourse, the way that America talks about itself (and thus, imagines itself), throughout our history, such as those between those

[4] Louis Althusser writes that "ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." That is, we collectively imagine an ideology to explain our relationship to an abstraction like a country.

[5] Of course, these symbols are not always unifying. For example, notice the controversies around flag burning, particularly as stoked by George W. Bush in the 1980s, and Colin Kaepernick kneeling during the national anthem in the last few years. These events are particularly divisive because they seem to disrupt our collective national understanding.

Puritanical roots and secularism, between isolationism and interventionism, and inclusivity and exclusivity. So many of America's national myths are what rhetorician Michael Calvin McGee calls "ideographs," words that themselves become arguments for a particular ideology:

> An ideograph is an ordinary-language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable. (McGee)

Consequently, while terms like "democracy" and "freedom" are crucial to American rhetorical understanding of itself, they are difficult to attach tangible meaning to. Samuel Huntington, himself no stranger to controversial opinions about national values, writes in *American Politics*, "Americans divide most sharply over what brings them together" (111). Even a collective rhetorical understanding as crucial to our national mythology as the "American Dream" is a site for heated discourse. Is the American Dream dead? Did it ever exist? What does it mean, anyway?[6] Particularly beginning in the twentieth century, as America emerged on the world stage, those questions about national character, that self-definition became even more hotly contested. Once predominantly inward-facing, over the last century, over the last century, our nation started pursuing interests overseas. How would America's understanding of itself change as it emerged as a superpower?

[6] See, for example, Samuel J. Abrams in *The New York Times* February 5, 2019.

Key aspects of that imagined American identity, how we imagine our community, converge in the idea of American exceptionalism. American exceptionalism, as Seymor Martin Lipset describes, is the collective understanding that America has a unique set of values and obligations. America was formed by a republican revolution, advancing the values of liberty, egalitarianism, and self-determination. Those ideas become, not just our core values, but part of our national mythology. As a result, that national identity (how we incorporate those myths into our understanding of ourselves), especially in the years before World War II, was demonstrated by a nation that was isolationist, reluctant to go to war or interfere in another country's sovereignty.[7] However, since the 1950s, America has become increasingly interventionist, giving lie to what Andrew Bacevich refers to as the "myth of the reluctant superpower." The Cold War and the War on Terror, as well as the mandates of neoliberal economies, have challenged America's idea of itself as an exceptional country who rarely acts abroad in its own interests. Today, as throughout much of its history, the policies that America conducts do not always clearly follow its imagination of itself. For example, in 1971, *The New York Times* published the "Pentagon Papers," which delineated the ways that American armed forces secretly expanded roles in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos[8]. These documents were not just a crucial catalyst for America's popular disillusionment with the war, they caused an overdue reckoning with abuses of American military and political power (Abrams "The Pentagon Papers").

[7] Whether America was ever truly isolationist is contested by scholars. That idea's utility as a rhetorical strategy is much more apparent, however. For example, criticizing the myth of American isolationism in an article in the *LA Times* in 2006, Andrew Bacevich writes "Isolationism survives in contemporary American political discourse because it retains utility as a cheap device employed to impose discipline."
[8] The founding of WikiLeaks in 2006 is a more recent, if less damning, example.

Controversies like the Pentagon Papers indicate that American power must reconcile itself with America's imagination of itself. A key question lies behind all public diplomacy: Can we simultaneously be a free country who values democracy and liberty while still intervening overseas? This question is not merely liberal hand-wringing. To be a credible superpower, we must resolve any apparent hypocrisies between our collective imagination and our actions. Consequently, as I will indicate throughout this dissertation, governmental actors, who are most often tasked with representing American values, must find a way to clearly articulate occasionally dissonant policies to the public. Public diplomacy and other foreign policy communications must often justify policies that are often at odds with perceived national values. An early, famous example of this articulation is Woodrow Wilson's request to Congress for a declaration of war in 1917, leading America into World War I. Wilson argued, "The world must be made safe for democracy." This elegant and resonant entreaty performs a neat trick. If America truly values democracy, then we have an obligation to put aside anxieties about intervention and help other nations achieve self-determination. This act is self-definition, when a nation purposefully describes themselves to transnational audiences. This important work is performed through rhetoric -- the project of defining our national identity in a way that justifies (or even requires) economic, political, or military interventions.

Transnational Rhetoric, Power, and the Increasing Role of Popular Culture

The American government defines itself in a way that helps to reinforce political, economic, and military power. That is, by creating a certain type of knowledge about itself,

the American government ensures its own power throughout the world. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault describes knowledge and power as interrelated, rather than separate entities:

> We should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (Foucault 445)

For Foucault, knowledge produces and reinvigorates power. Often, those messages are clearly created to serve economic interests and rely directly on propaganda[9]. More commonly, though, they are created with more subtlety. In all iterations, though, American messages about itself are intended to counteract or preempt conflicting ideas abroad.

Recalling the Woodrow Wilson example, that national definition is certainly productive and apparent when voiced by the executive branch, but it must also be taken up and distributed by actors throughout the government and nation. It must be more widely disseminated to become part of our culture. As Benedict Anderson writes, a nation's self-definition is performed through culture, an idea that clearly recalls Foucault's description of knowledge. Words, images, and ideas work in tandem to create, alter, or solidify our understanding of America. Also building on Foucault's description of knowledge and power, Edward Said notes that American self-definition helps feed hegemonic power relationships.

[9] For example, propagandist Edward Bernays represented the United Fruit Company, created misinformation about the government of Guatemala, a so-called "Banana Republic," and encouraged a coup in 1954 (Chapman).

In his classic text *Orientalism,* Said writes, "Self-definition is one of the activities practiced by all cultures: it has a rhetoric, a set of occasions and authorities… and a familiarity all its own. Yet in a world tied together as never before by the exigencies of electronic communication, trade, travel, environmental and regional conflicts that can expand with tremendous speed, the assertion of identity is by no means a ceremonial matter" (37). For Said, the very act of self-definition is a political act, one that is greatly facilitated by mass media. Said's extension of Foucault's conception of knowledge and power into the realm of mass media and popular culture crucial to the work of this dissertation. In Said's book after *Orientalism*, *Culture and Imperialism,* he describes the means by which the works of artists and intellectuals are deployed to reinforce representations and, consequently, transnational power structures. For Said, hegemonic tendencies of this assertion of identity are particularly true of America.

As America emerged as a superpower in the mid-twentieth century, particularly after World War II, it focused a great deal of energy on self-definition. As I will explain in the second chapter, a clear idea of America and her role in the world was presented in this era. Government actors (such as the Broadcasting Board of Governors, the State Department, and the Central Intelligence Agency) work deliberately through culture to shape the idea of America abroad. While this tactic comports with most formal definitions of propaganda,[10] it is more politely known as public diplomacy.[11] Over the decades, it has been enacted

[10] "A form of communication that attempts to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist" (Jowett & O'Donnell 1).

[11] While in use for decades before, the term "public diplomacy" was solidified by foreign service officer Edmund Gullion in 1965 to describe "the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job

historically through radio, print media, artistic exhibitions, touring theater productions, educational programs, and many other forms. The most storied examples of public diplomacy during the Cold War are entities like Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America. Their broadcasts of jazz and other programs are often credited with exposing Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to western popular culture and hastening the end of the Cold War.[12] For many involved in the production and study of public diplomacy, it is easy to forget that the work of intellectuals and artists is an important form of power, an aggression into world affairs. When compared with traditional military and political power, the work of culture can appear benign, even playful. In his essay, "The Aristocracy of Culture," Pierre Bourdieu writes, "The science of taste and cultural consumption begins with a transgression that is in no way aesthetic: it has to abolish the sacred frontier which makes legitimate culture a separate universe, in order to discover the intelligible relations which unite apparently incommensurable 'choices,' such as preferences in music and food, painting and sport, literature and hairstyle." All forms of cultural expression should be recognized as rhetorical texts. Similarly, Stuart Hall, the important early scholar of cultural studies, in his "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular" argues that popular culture is a crucial site for analysis:

> Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is also the stake to be won or lost in that struggle. It is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured. It is not a sphere where socialism, a socialist

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is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications." (quoted in Cull "'Public Diplomacy' Before Gullion").

[12] Despite the credit that diplomats give themselves (see Richard Arndt, *The First Resort of Kings* in particular) most contemporary scholars (such as Frances Stonor Saunders in *The Cultural Cold War*) are skeptical that popular culture was instrumental in the end of the Cold War.

> culture – already fully formed – might be simply 'expressed'. But it is one of the places where socialism might be constituted. That is why 'popular culture' matters. (239)

That is, we must be careful to take this popular culture seriously[13]. The allure is that these programs seem to not be about power, but instead about ideas. The truth is that all public diplomacy strives to create knowledge, a key element of twenty-first century soft power.

However, that understanding of public diplomacy has evolved dramatically from the Cold War to the War on Terror. In the Cold War, American public diplomacy primarily was concerned with asserting American ideals on an international stage. These messages primarily targeted the elites of Europe. A key piece of legislation enacted during this era suggested the intellectual discipline of the endeavor. The Smith-Mundt Act of 1948[14] was authored to ensure that American public diplomacy programs never be deployed in the United States itself, lest we commit the same sins of the totalitarian states we struggled against. That is, because of the fear of domestic propaganda, at the time, public diplomacy messages were constrained to international audiences. First and foremost, Cold War era messages deployed overseas were anticommunist, working to shore up political power in the region west of the Iron Curtain. In addition, they sought to illustrate the intellectual and

[13] In *Watching Dallas,* Ien Ang similarly warns against ignoring pleasure as a site of analysis: "Pleasure, however, is the category in the ideology of mass culture. In its discourses pleasure seems to be non-existent. In this way, the ideology of mass culture places itself totally outside the framework of the popular aesthetic, of the way in which popular cultural practices take shape in the routines of daily life. Thus it remains both literally and figuratively caught in the ivory towers of 'theory'" (116).

[14] The first and most important mandate of The U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 (Public Law 80-402), known as the Smith-Mundt Act, is as follows: "No funds authorized to be appropriated to the Department of State or the Broadcasting Board of Governors shall be used to influence public opinion in the United States."

artistic vibrancy of the United States. These messages advertised America's cultural independence as its strongest asset, casting Europe as stodgy and rooted in old ideas.

However, the messages that America produces about itself have evolved dramatically since then. Since 9/11 and the beginning of the War on Terror, the focus of public diplomacy has shifted to accompany a change in perceived audience (that is, our enemies, those that wish to limit our power) and an evolving understanding of ourselves as a nation. These messages also represent an evolving incorporation of advertising and public relation techniques to shape understanding of America. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the messages have also changed to reflect (and contribute to) neoliberal economic realities. The sum of these negotiations, the image that Americans project abroad becomes what is known in the twenty-first century as America's brand.[15] American public diplomacy increasingly sees America as a product to be sold to overseas consumers. Like other brands, the American brand is intended to coalesce a series of ideas around a central message, one that helps a public interact with a product. That brand is clearly informed by American exceptionalism but is gradually changing to meet twenty-first century challenges.

Even as they seem nostalgic for the moral clarity of the Cold War, public diplomacy messages since then have been largely intent on reaching a younger audience, one perceived to be disenfranchised by globalization. Public diplomacy of this era was designed to engage this particular audience, to address the common question attributed to the American public:

[15] I use the term "brand" to indicate a product to be sold. A brand is a means of differentiating a product from its competition. This terminology reflects an increased understanding of public diplomacy (in accordance with neoliberalization) in terms of products and consumers. For example, in one of the most crucial moments for public diplomacy, directly after 9/11, on October 2, 2001, prominent advertising executive Charlotte Beers was hired to head the State Department's State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (Department of State Archive).

"Why do they hate us?"[16] Messages of the George W. Bush and Obama years are deployed to combat the fear that the people of the United States pose a threat to the people of the Middle East and Muslim world. They are meant to alleviate concerns about American intolerance and hegemony. Consequently, this era's messages highlight America's multiculturalism as its strongest asset.[17] Public diplomacy of the fifteen years after 9/11 is intent on reminding its audience of the benevolence of the American project, selling the American Dream abroad.[18] These efforts work under the philosophy that if citizens of other countries admire us, then they will not wish us ill.

Just as the messages of these programs have shifted, so have the means by which they are disseminated. A thorough rhetorical analysis of American public diplomacy must not simply decode the messages but must also analyze the media through which they are enacted. As Marshall McLuhan reminds us in *Understanding Man*, "The medium is the message" (7). In the Cold War, high art carried these messages. The American government reinforced America's brand through intellectual journals, art exhibitions, theater productions, and broadcast media. Since the beginning of the War on Terror, America's public diplomacy has made a notable shift. It still retains a fondness for broadcast media. However, the emphasis has shifted to "lower" culture such as television commercials, teen magazines, and popular

[16] 9/11 made the plight of disenfranchised youth around the world much more palpable and threatening. See, for example, Fareed Zakaria in October 14, 2001's *Newsweek*, "The Politics of Rage: Why Do They Hate Us?"
[17] I use the term "multiculturalism" to describe the sense that America's strength lies in its ability to draw from many ideas, races, and cultures. One of the challenges facing public diplomacy is how to distill that message of multiculturalism into a monolithic understanding of culture, particularly when those messages are often undercut by the actions of the U.S. Government itself, as in the Civil Rights era, for example.
[18] In general, when I write about public diplomacy in the War on Terror or since 9/11, I will be describing the years 2001-2016. Public diplomacy under Trump is, in many ways, a departure from the policies of George W. Bush and Obama, a still-evolving development that I will explore in the conclusion.

music.[19] Also, there has been a pronounced shift to emphasize consumerism both in message and in the means by which those messages are deployed. In recent years, many aspects of public diplomacy are created outside of the government by corporations, reflecting the neoliberal moment. This shift in media can only partially be explained by the perceived change in audience. It also reflects a change in our understanding of our cultural strengths and existential threats. In the Cold War, the threat was perceived to be intellectual elites who needed persuading that capitalism was superior to communism. Today, that threat is perceived to be much more diffuse, encompassing disenfranchised young people all over the world.

The Work of This Dissertation

As expressed earlier, all public diplomacy must engage with a contradiction: Can a nation imagine itself to be the embodiment of democracy and liberty while simultaneously creating propaganda, preempting the voices of other, sovereign nations. While American approaches to this contradiction have evolved over the decades, the contradiction remains. In some eras, American public diplomacy is content with producing erudite articles to distribute to our allies. In other eras, it requires commercial televised advertisements to create images of itself. But always, public diplomacy must perform the trick that Woodrow Wilson perfected: It must make un-American actions seem American. With that contradiction as a frame, this dissertation will respond to the broad question: How has public diplomacy rhetoric changed since the War on Terror and what is the meaning of that change? To answer

[19] In his "On High and Low Culture," Raymond Williams argued against the false dichotomy between high and low culture. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will describe the pivot in audience from primarily educated elites to primarily undereducated youth.

this question, I will make sense of the evolving rhetoric of American public diplomacy from its adolescence in the Cold War, through the beginning of the War on Terror, to the neoliberal shifts of the last decade. In this dissertation, I will argue that the rhetoric evolves not only in the message, but also in the perceived audience and the way that message is transmitted. These changes not only benefit American political hegemony, they also support our economic goals.

In the messages encoded in these programs, America is invariably defined in a flattering light – as a stylish, multicultural sanctuary for technology and innovation. The aims of public diplomacy since the War on Terror are two-fold, but work in tandem to protect our country from perceived threats: First, they advertise American capitalism, its products and market system. Second, they remind their audience that America is a multicultural society where success is available to everyone. The consumerist aspects of public diplomacy exist to tie their targets into the American economic system. Once exposed to our ideas, the thinking goes, the people of those nations will desire our products and education. In *Orientalism,* Said describes the triumph of Orientalism as "the fact of consumerism in the Orient. The Arab and Islamic world as a whole is hooked into the Western market system" (324). That is, because we need each other as consumers and suppliers, countries tied together economically will naturally work together to solve conflicts. When tied into a common neoliberal market system,[20] the presumption is that our status as a trading partner precludes any need to go to

[20]*The Guardian's* George Monbiot's definition of neoliberalism is my starting place for this project: "Neoliberalism sees competition as the defining characteristic of human relations. It redefines citizens as consumers, whose democratic choices are best exercised by buying and selling, a process that rewards merit and punishes inefficiency. It maintains that 'the market' delivers benefits that could never be achieved by planning."

war.[21] To help meet these ends, public diplomacy messages are increasingly likely to highlight American products, technologies, media and communications platforms, and forms of entertainment. Neoliberal American public diplomacy[22] sees not just America, but its products and people as commodities to be sold. It also sees foriegn publics, not as free thinkers to engage intellectually, but as consumers to be pursued and potential markets to be exploited.

The reasoning for the multicultural aspects of public diplomacy is a little more difficult to reconcile. These programs conspicuously highlight the many races, religions, and cultures living within our borders. In *Hi International*, a State Department-funded teen magazine deployed in the Middle East, for a small example, the American celebrities profiled are almost always of mixed-, or at least non-white, background. The rhetorical benefits of a multicultural America are legion. They reinforce the American Dream – the idea that anyone from any background can find success here. However, in seeming defiance of that idea, the Smith-Mundt of 1948 was "modernized" in 2012. This significant change, enacted because of perceived threats from domestic Muslim populations, allows for public diplomacy programs to be deployed within our borders.[23] Clearly, the shift in public diplomacy programs since the beginning of the War on Terror advertises a particular understanding of America that is often in direct conflict with the ways in which those very programs are

[21] An idea which seems to echo Thomas Friedman's reductive (and disproven) observation from *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* that no two nations with McDonald's had ever gone to war against each other.
[22] I use the term "neoliberal public diplomacy" to describe public diplomacy that favors market relationships over personal ones. Neoliberal public diplomacy treats its country and people as a product or a brand to be sold overseas. Concurrently, it treats those overseas audiences as markets to be courted and tied into our economic system.
[23] In 2012, the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948 was "modernized" to allow for certain State Department communications to be deployed within the borders of the United States, effectively undoing the most important provision of the original Act. In discussing the act, Senator Mac Thornberry specifically cited the need to offer counterpropaganda to Somali expats living in the United States (Hudson).

deployed. How do we continue to reconcile these messages, even as they evolve in content, scope, and target, with supposedly static American values? That is, if America is indeed an imagined community, what are the consequences for that community as its messages about itself evolve? Or, put more explicitly, what happens to an imagined community when it becomes a brand?

The answer to this question – the work of this dissertation – should be more than a trite genealogy of hypocrisy. It will instead explore what has changed in public diplomacy programs since the turn of the century and why. It will perform a rhetorical critique of the messages of those programs and place them in their neoliberal cultural[24] context. In accordance with that neoliberal cultural context and because public diplomacy is not just the province of diplomats, this dissertation must analyze a host of primary sources across many genres. I will analyze the articles of *Hi International,* a series of State Department-sponsored commercials aired in predominantly Muslim countries called the *Shared Values Initiative*, policy statements by diplomats and politicians, the language of the Smith-Mundt Modernization Act, NGO-sourced foreign policy messages, Presidential Tweets, and other manifestations of public diplomacy rhetoric. I will explain that contemporary public diplomacy is a neoliberal technology[25] that portrays the United States as a multicultural meritocracy that serves market forces and creates new categories of citizenship. Throughout this project, while adopting a cultural studies approach and giving equal value to a wide array of cultural products, I will be conducting a close rhetorical analysis of the language embedded in these programs.

[24] Recalling Monbiot, a context in which individuals are valued as producers and consumers alone.
[25] That is, a tool that conveys knowledge to support neoliberal economies.

Chapter one of the dissertation will contain the theoretical underpinnings of my analysis of contemporary public diplomacy. I will explain the interdisciplinarity of the project in terms of the major conversations that I wish to join and connect. Namely, I will assert that 1) America is an empire, 2) that empire is sustained by culture, 3) that public diplomacy is propaganda that strives to create a certain type of knowledge, and 4) that neoliberal technologies incentivize market-based relationships and reconfigure citizenship. When united, these conversations will describe the means by which America can simultaneously imagine itself as an exceptional nation that only acts out of benevolence (a "reluctant superpower") *and* still act in a way that furthers its political and economic interest.

In chapter two, I will outline the history of public diplomacy rhetoric, from its beginnings after World War I to the present. I will pay special attention to the new philosophies and tactics, especially those that relied on mass media, deployed in the Cold War. I will also demonstrate how these programs used the products of high culture to influence foreign elites. Just as these programs voiced a particular understanding of America and her values, they also set the expectations for all future communications. In this era, we begin to see the beginnings of a neoliberal approach to public diplomacy, where American culture becomes a product to be sold.

Chapter three will undertake a close reading and rhetorical analysis of the programs of the early years of the War on Terror. First, I will describe *Hi International*, the teen magazine sponsored by the State Department. During its mid-2000s publication, it portrayed a benign, multicultural image of the United States. In addition, it encouraged a consumer relationship with the United States by highlighting American products and educational

opportunities. Then, other case studies will target broadcast media (radio stations and Al Hurra TV), commercial television advertisements, and even a group of South Asian American comedians that were sent by the State Department to tour Asia.

Chapter four will discuss changes in public diplomacy in the Obama administration, describing how they continue the shift begun in the George W. Bush administration. Particularly, I will look at how privatizing governmental programs and the rise in social media platforms have reshaped public diplomacy messages yet again. I will also discuss the recent "modernization" of the Smith-Mundt Act and the implications of using public diplomacy domestically. Here, I will bring the theory, the rhetorical analysis, and the recent history of these programs to argue that, not only do public diplomacy programs propagandize a foreign other, they have now been called upon to influence a domestic audience. This deceptively simple revision actually underscores the neoliberal goals of these programs: America and its people become a product and foreign nations become markets. At the same time that these programs portraying the United States as multicultural and meritocratic, public diplomacy programs are actively deployed inside the borders of the United States, creating different categories of citizenship for some people that seem to challenge America's conception of itself.

To conclude, I will analyze certain symptomatic activities undertaken by President Donald Trump and his administration. While we might expect his presidency to reflect a great departure from his predecessors, I will indicate some continuations. Though his foreign policy strategies are notoriously difficult to articulate, Trump's use of social media and a popular vocabulary suggest that he is merely extending the activities of Bush and Obama.

Finally, along with those continuations, I will also explain that these shifting messages seem to reflect a significant change in the American psyche. The change in messages from the Cold War to today reflects an increasing sense of vulnerability among Americans. During the Cold War, public diplomacy messages encouraged European powers to accept America as a vibrant superpower. Since 9/11, though, those messages have shifted to a much more defensive posture. Yes, they work to tie America to overseas markets. But they also represent a shift in our imagined community: More so than in previous years, public diplomacy messages from 2001 to 2015 were written as a justification of unfavorable American activities overseas, to justify the War on Terror. The solution to this anxiety in many cases is fostering economic partnership.

In part, the rhetorical shift can be understood as the difference in justifying a "cold" war for a "hot" one. Public diplomacy of the Cold War could be justified as meeting Soviet propaganda with our own. In the War on Terror, though, the conflict is both much more active militarily and must target a more diffuse enemy. So, in part, public diplomacy is still tasked with reconciling that old contradiction in American culture -- how can we reconcile American values with American actions -- only under more urgent circumstances. As consequential as that change is, it is not the whole story. These communications also changed dramatically to address changes in geopolitical power, neoliberal economic mandates, and media technologies. This dissertation will chronicle and analyze the continuities and discontinuities over these eras in the rhetoric of American self definition. Because this project must address so many aspects of politics and culture, the following chapter will ground the project in a variety of intellectual fields.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Foundations of this Project

This project is foremost a rhetorical analysis of public diplomacy. While each subsequent chapter will analyze that rhetoric in a series of case studies, this chapter will take a different approach. It will instead describe this project's theoretical foundations and describe how it draws from and contributes to a variety of fields of rhetoric. Because public diplomacy is a complex form of rhetoric, we must take care to understand the varied ways it conveys complicated ideas. After all, public diplomacy must accomplish a series of interdisciplinary tasks: It must define nationhood, which requires an understanding of history, propaganda, and geopolitics. It is enacted over mass media, which requires an understanding of communications studies. It exploits mass culture, which requires an understanding of cultural studies. Finally, public diplomacy promotes a particular worldview that benefits empire and certain economies, which requires an understanding of postcolonial hegemony and neoliberal studies. Even as it operates in this manner, public diplomacy must reconcile a contradiction in American national character: it must enable America to imagine itself as an exceptional nation that only acts out of benevolence, but it must also allow it to act in a way that furthers its political and economic interest. To demonstrate these activities and that contradiction, the primary sources of this project will draw from the rhetoric of politicians, diplomats, advertisers, lawmakers, writers, and historians. These texts will help explain the ways that public diplomacy tries to shape its world. To begin to interpret those

dissimilar texts, any study of public diplomacy must adapt an interdisciplinary approach, leveraging scholarship from multiple areas of research.

This chapter must join together the threads of many conversations and weave a coherent intellectual basis for this research. This discussion of the evolution of public diplomacy rhetoric occurs at the nexus of a variety of areas of research: American empire studies, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, and neoliberal studies. Those rough areas of scholarship are better understood as a series of four questions that explain the theoretical underpinnings for this project. Those questions are as follows: A) How is American empire unique? B) How are empires sustained (domestically and internationally) by culture, rather than mere political and military force? C) How does public diplomacy, a so-called "soft power," produce knowledge in international contexts and what type of knowledge does it produce? D) How does public diplomacy incentivize and nurture neoliberal market-based relationships? The answers to these questions make the case that culture is used to sustain American empire and begin to explain the means by which it can do so.

A. American Empire and the Myth of American Exceptionalism

As discussed in the introduction, the question of whether the United States is an empire hinges on the idea of American exceptionalism. In his definition of American exceptionalism, Seymour Martin Lipset describes the collective imagination that America is "qualitatively different" from other nations. Because America emerged from a revolution, it became what Lipset calls "the first new nation." America has developed a unique ideology, "Americanism," based on liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, republicanism, populism and

laissez-faire. If you believe that America is exceptional[26] (a democratic nation with egalitarian values), then, by definition, it cannot be guilty of hegemonic action. As a consequence, according to this understanding, then the United States' actions overseas, including public diplomacy, are those of a benevolent nation spreading its values. American exceptionalism follows the elegant circular logic that, because America is not an imperial country, none of our overseas activities could possibly be imperial. These activities fall into more anodyne categories like "stabilizing," "democratizing," and "nation building." We are not invading, we are making the world "safe for democracy" as Woodrow Wilson said. We are not occupying, we are "acting as the world's policeman" as John Steele Gordon writes in 2019. We are not propagandizing, we are "Telling America's Story," as Colon Powell writes in the months after 9/11.

However, a careful analysis of American foreign policy reveals that America is not as reluctant to spread influence as many maintain, that these interventions are not always selfless. While it may not seek direct control as empires of the past, American empire certainly exists. Scholars like Andrew Bacevich, William Appleton Williams, Chalmers Johnson, and Donald Pease[27] describe the ideology and methods of American foreign policy, deconstructing the myth of American exceptionalism and beginning to explain how America is indeed imperial. While not strictly rhetoricians, their work is crucial to understanding the actual motivations for and consequences of American power overseas. They clearly support

[26] America's exceptionalism has been taken for granted by writers from John Winthrop until today. See, for example, "What Makes America Exceptional" by John Steele Gordon in the March 2019 issue of *Commentary Magazine,* in which he justifies American interventions overseas: "If it has served as the world's policeman since [the end of World War II], it has done so only because no other nation has been capable of fulfilling that duty, and no country has ever fulfilled that duty so selflessly."

[27] Because, while Williams helps to destroy the myth of American exceptionalism, he more clearly articulates the material benefits of American empire. Consequently, I will discuss them more fully in the next section.

the notion that America is imperial and chronicle the benefits of our particular 21st century form of empire. As I will describe, public diplomacy enables this particular American empire.

Cicero teaches us that any thorough analysis of rhetoric must also ask the question *cui bono*[28], "to whom it had been any advantage?" Successful rhetoric has winners. If an audience has been persuaded, the speaker has accomplished their goal. Consequently, in the process of analyzing rhetoric, one must be careful to describe the advantages won by that rhetoric[29]. Public diplomacy cannot be benign, a necessary evil of an exceptional nation; instead, it works to create advantages for American interests overseas. Andrew Bacevich offers one of the clearest rebuttals of the idea that American exceptionalism works purely for the benefit of others. In *American Empire*, Bacevich delineates the contradictions between exceptional America and imperial America: "In practice, the myth of the 'reluctant superpower'—Americans asserting themselves only under duress and then always for the noblest purposes—reigns today as the master narrative explaining (and justifying) the nation's exercise of global power" (8). Instead, Bacevich writes, "These policies reflect a single-minded determination to extend and perpetuate American political, cultural, and economic hegemony--usually referred to as 'leadership'--on a global scale" (6). In his crucial *American Empire,* Bacevich deconstructs the idea of American exceptionalism and instead

[28] In his *For Sextus Roscius of Ameria*, Cicero cites judge Lucius Cassius asking, "to whom it had been any advantage?" in his decisions. Cicero continues to write, "The life of men is so directed that no one attempts to proceed to crime without some hope of advantage." This question is crucial for rhetorical analysis of propaganda.

[29] Of course, the skills at decoding rhetoric are elusive. Scholars like Walter Lippman, in his *Public Opinion*, warn against believing a fictional "omnicompetent citizen" who can decode mass media messages. In reality, we are often susceptible to political propaganda. Similarly, Kenneth Burke's "terministic screens" impede our ability to decode messages outside of our experience.

demonstrates the ways that American foreign policy rhetoric favors American economic expansion. This contradiction is represented both in the language of public diplomacy and in the ways it is deployed. Chalmers Johnson writes even more vehemently against the supposed benevolence of American foreign policy. His *Blowback* delineates the terrible ramifications of ostensibly "peaceful" military occupations in eastern Asia, identifying the ways that those efforts actually worked to further American interests, rather than out of benevolence. He writes, "It is time to realize, however, that the real dangers to America today come not from the newly rich people of East Asia but from our own ideological rigidity, our deep-seated belief in our own propaganda" (21). Johnson, like Bacevich, foregrounds the role that language, explicitly propaganda, has in reproducing American power.

Wherever America has interests, public diplomacy works to enable those interests. As I will indicate in the next chapters, public diplomacy has been crucial to enabling American political and economic power during the largest conflicts since World War II: the Cold War and the War on Terror. While on the surface, the creators of public diplomacy indicate that they are merely offering a narrative to combat misinformation, they are instead advancing American interests overseas, often disrupting local sources of information to privilege American ideas. Even in smaller conflicts with narrower geopolitical scope, it is clear that America is aggressive in its attempts to shape opinion. For example, in 2014, *The Guardian* reported that the USAID, in an effort to voice favorable messages in Cuba, worked through contractors to underwrite an arts and music festival there. While not explicitly covert, USAID clearly worked to obscure their involvement in the program. The group sponsored

Cuban rap artists who were willing to voice anti-Castro messages in their music. They also worked with local youth and activists to instill "the minds of festival organisers with new ideas" (Weaver) and disseminate them to their audiences. As part of this effort, which they dubbed ZunZuneo, USAID created a social network in Cuba to compete with Twitter, attempting to offer their own social media platform to organize local activists and artists against the government. This brief instance displays the hypocrisy of American exceptionalism. Rather than working as the "world's policeman" or "spreading democracy," USAID instead worked to disrupt the organic culture and communications of a sovereign nation, one that does not pose an existential threat to the United States. This example also illustrates the importance of culture to the work of public diplomacy and the spread of American empire.

B. How Culture and Language Enable American Empire

Once we understand that American works as an empire, we turn to the ways that public diplomacy works to maintain that empire. In its most overt forms, empire is enabled by political, economic, and martial forces. However, those three forces cannot sustain American empire alone. Public diplomacy works in concert with these forces – a soft power to supplement their hard power. As I will describe in this section, public diplomacy uses culture—soft power—to sustain American empire. For example, in 2012, the State Department sent a group of Indian American comedians to perform in a series of shows in India, called the "Make Chai Not War" tour (Blair). One of the participants, comedian Hari

Kondabolu, who describes himself as very American, describes the disconnect when sending Americans abroad to do this work:

> Part of what we do as comedians — or at least what I do — is to figure out where those boundaries are and see what I want to push, because I'm trying to make a point. And I don't really know where the boundaries are in another country. (Quoted in Blair)

Perhaps inadvertently, Kondabolu questions the logic of this public diplomacy program. If comedy is based in a particular culture and tasked with pushing the boundaries of that culture, what use is it when transported abroad? Is Kondabolu expected to push American boundaries or Indian ones? To what end? The ambiguity of these questions indicate the complexity of public diplomacy. Scholars of postcolonialism and empire like Edward Said, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, and others help explain the complex relationship between American culture and American empire. Again, while these writers are not strictly rhetoricians, they help explain the processes by which American ideas and means of communication benefit American economic and political hegemony. They will help keep Cicero's *cui bono* and McLuhan's "the medium is the message" at the forefront of this analysis, to explain how public diplomacy uses American cultural products and technologies to spread power.

Returning first to Anderson and *Imagined Communities*, it is important to remember that culture is integral in forming an idea of nationhood. If a nation is a product of imagination, its power is only brought into the world through language. While Anderson writes about how national communities imagine themselves, Edward Said writes about how

these imaginings can be deployed in the service of imperial hegemony. In *Orientalism* and later, in *Culture and Imperialism,* Said describes the means by which culture enables and sustains empire. Said also rejects the idea that America is exceptional, that it is fundamentally unlike empires of England or France. Instead, American empire is a continuation of those previous forms of empire. However, the use of mass culture makes American empire more pervasive:

> The twinning of power and legitimacy, one force obtaining in the world of direct domination, the other in the cultural sphere, is a characteristic of classical imperial hegemony. Where it differs in the American century is the quantum leap in the reach of cultural authority, thanks in large measure to the unprecedented growth of the apparatus for the diffusion and control of information. (*Culture and Imperialism*, 291)

Said explains that American empire depends on "cultural authority" to offer it "legitimacy." This authority is enabled by America's ability to disseminate information through media channels. Put simply, America controls the flow of information and can therefore propagandize more effectively. While I disagree with many of their assertions, Hardt and Negri[30] recognize the influence of American culture on contemporary global relationships: "The contemporary idea of Empire is born through the global expansion of the internal U.S. constitutional project" (182). Here, Hardt and Negri do not just stress the importance of culture in the creation of empire; they also imply that American culture is (or perhaps should

[30] Hardt and Negri, because they are skeptical about the ability of a single national government to form the center of an imperialist project in the late 20th century, seem almost to buy into the idea of American exceptionalism. They favor a globalization model, one that neoliberal economists point out favors American interests.

be) privileged in the international sphere. Even if Said and Hardt and Negri disagree about some aspects of American empire, they agree that it is only enabled through culture.

In the coming chapters, this project will adopt a case studies approach to describe the means that the dissemination of American culture enables American empire[31]. The case studies I will analyze are inspired by a series of cultural studies scholars who similarly analyzed the relationship between American culture and American power. These scholars, writing throughout the late 1980s and 1990s describe specific case studies of American imperial relationships. Just as I will, these case studies build upon Said's ideas—which do not go into great depth when discussing the United States—and introduce some important ideas about the particular nature of American imperialism. Melani McAlister considers how cultural representations support national interest in *Epic Encounters*. She writes, "Culture is an active part of constructing the narratives that help policy make sense in a given moment" (6). It is important to note that this process is reflexive. Not only does culture inform a foreign policy, foreign policy has a hand in shaping culture: "Foreign policy is a semiotic activity, not only because it is articulated and transmitted through texts but also because the policies themselves construct meanings" (5). American culture is the crucial component of public diplomacy. Because of its perceived appeal overseas, it provides the content of the

[31] This work is tangential to conversations about cultural imperialism, the concern that a more powerful nation's culture will displace that of less powerful nations. Many scholars, such as Herbert Schiller, Ariel Dorfman, and Armand Mattelart, argue that cultural imperialism is an important concern of the neoliberal era. Certainly, American mass media pushes out indigenous media and disseminates American ideas abroad. But scholars like John Tomlinson argue that these fears are largely overblown, because there is no direct coercion in these media texts, and they are not directly tied into other systems of domination. Similarly, Armand Appadurai, in his *Modernity at Large*, describes how twenty-first century mass media technologies have given agency to construct their own meanings from received texts. Consequently, this dissertation will only focus on deliberate, government-sponsored forms of imperialism.

deployed messages. In turn, these messages reflect back on what America thinks about itself. Thus, public diplomacy programs are both created by and help to create culture.

Similarly, Christina Klein and Mary Renda describe the means by which American imperial culture is sustained at home and abroad in east Asia and in Haiti, respectively. Mary Renda's *Taking Haiti* describes the beginnings of the complex cultural relationship between the United States and Haiti that begins in a particular imperial moment. The United States began a military occupation of Haiti in 1915 with the goal of creating political stability and of securing strategic and economic interests in the region (10). Renda writes that the occupation not only had a lasting effect on Haiti, it also greatly influenced American culture. Haiti was seen as an "American Africa," an exotic space, just off the coast of Florida, which captured the country's imagination. In this regard, Haiti served a dual purpose – both a location for fantasy, but also an area for a newly-dominant country to test its power. Renda writes: "Exoticism provided at least one solution: incorporate the foreign into American culture, while at the same time inscribing its marginality and otherness. American exoticism toward Haiti thus contributed to an imperial culture organized, in part, around resolving the tension between nation and empire" (22). Thus, the cultural sphere became an important location for a dialogue about American imperialism.

These scholars describe the mechanisms of American empire while underscoring the centrality of culture to that project. While their eras – the early twentieth century and the early Cold War – seem distant, these case studies are relevant to my project. There have not been any significant rhetorical studies of post-Cold War public diplomacy; therefore, Renda, Klein, and McAlister's cultural studies approaches, when grounded in specific policy

rhetoric, will provide a useful template for my study. Their work will provide a means to trace the genealogy of the themes in American cultural hegemony, and my rhetorical analysis will help give weight to what might initially appear trivial cultural exports. For example, in the next chapter, I will describe how the American government's funding of a production of *Porgy and Bess,* George Gershwin's opera featuring an African-American cast, in Europe was a strategic advertisement of a particular image of multicultural America. If, as Renda argues, the American occupation of Haiti allowed America to "incorporate" and inscribe "marginality and otherness" onto that culture, then America's production of *Porgy and Bess* was a chance to show the world how fully America had realized its project. Similarly, in the conclusion, I will begin to analyze President Trump's use of popular culture to leverage his foreign policy activities. In one memorable moment, Trump showed a mock movie trailer to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to encourage a cinematic understanding of the stakes of their summit. Recalling McAlister's assertion that "culture is an active part of constructing the narratives that help policy make sense in a given moment," Trump, to give Kim a sense of the stakes of their partnership, clearly intended to associate their interaction with one of the most indelible of American cultural products, the Hollywood blockbuster.

C. How Public Diplomacy Produces a Particular Knowledge

As in the *Porgy and Bess* and the "Make Chai Not War" examples, public diplomacy and other cultural products work to create a very particular understanding of American culture, one that benefits American political and economic power around the globe. The third conversation I will join and extend explores the tension between the stated goals and actual

effects of public diplomacy. Since the early twentieth century, American foreign policy has had a peculiar preoccupation: an increased reliance on propaganda and other "soft" displays of power as a means of managing international public opinion (Nye, x). This shift has been facilitated by the rise of the mass media, which provide the ability to disseminate messages across national and cultural boundaries with ease. When used to achieve foreign policy goals, strategic broadcasting, publishing, and advertising are commonly known as public diplomacy. The Government Accountability Office defines public diplomacy as the promotion of national interest by informing, engaging, and influencing people around the world (GAO 4). While this characterization is accurate on the surface, it conceals the fact that public diplomacy is a form of propaganda, a strategic communication that seeks to manipulate opinion to favor the communicator (Jowett & O'Donnell 6).

In *The First Resort of Kings,* Richard Arndt, a former United States Information Agency worker, chronicles the 20th century history of American cultural diplomacy. His book – equal parts history and memoir – views the practices of the USIA and similar agencies as required by American culture and liberatory to its targets:

> Our work as cultural diplomats was carried out in a natural and free-flowing style that, without its being altogether clear to us, sought to extend the natural outreach of a highly communicative and friendly nation and a remarkably successful democracy in the culture of which education played a central role. Americans had assumed since the early decades of their republic that sharing with others was a fundamental duty; the idea flowed from a distinctive American idea of stewardship, fed mainly by churches of all persuasions.

> With perhaps too little thought to the ultimate results, we cultural officers were opening thousands of tiny windows into other societies, in some cases piercing thick walls. (x)

Here, in the voice of a career diplomat, Arndt describes the evangelical goals of public diplomacy and, even as he admits that they were often comported without a great deal of oversight or forethought, clearly works from an assumption of American exceptionalism. Throughout this dissertation, I will offer a counterpoint to Arndt's assessment and other similar voices who infuse American public diplomacy with a sense of American exceptionalism.

Similarly, Joseph Nye's 2004 book, *Soft Power,* argues for a greater emphasis of persuasion in foreign policy. In a tone typical of contemporary public diplomacy, he writes that American values themselves are the strongest argument for yielding to American foreign policy goals: "Seduction is always more effective than coercion, and many values like democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities are deeply seductive." Similarly, in a 2003 article written for *State Magazine*, Secretary of State Colin Powell urges his employees to tell America's story: "[Our public diplomacy and public affairs] are essential to conveying our story to the world and to securing the support of the American people for a sustained international engagement" (Powell "Telling America's Story"). In these texts, the U.S. faces primarily an image problem, rather than one of conflicting ideology or resistance to hegemony.

Career diplomats like Arndt, Nye, and Powell acknowledge the need to use American culture to persuade other nations and cultures, especially when it can minimize the need for

more militaristic forms of power. They also assume American exceptionalism, that America will only act as a reluctant superpower. Craig Hayden, in his essay "Promoting America: U.S. Public Diplomacy and the Limits of Exceptionalism" in *The Rhetoric of American Exceptionalism*, reminds us that American exceptionalism still guides contemporary public diplomacy, even if those ideas are under duress:

> Policy discourse regarding U.S. public diplomacy is illustrative of the persistence of American exceptionalism when conceiving necessary or appropriate strategy, including how aspects of American political culture are assumed to be on face persuasive to foreign publics and how foreign policy requires no explicit deliberative standards of justification. Yet the use of exceptionalist tactics -- such as emphasizing the universal values embodied by the United States is evidenced in its actions -- has not proven to be an effective strategy of persuasion through the history of U.S. public diplomacy. (189)

Hayden, writing in 2011, displays some optimism that American public diplomacy practitioners seem to be open to communication strategies that do not rely on those assumptions.

However, I align my research with postcolonial and cultural studies academics who offer a convincing rebuttal to this simplistic idea. We describe public diplomacy programs as a form of propaganda, one that can inflict considerable damage. In her 1999 book, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, Frances Stonor Saunders provides a pointed critique of culture and imperialism. She is among the few critics to turn

specifically to an analysis of public diplomacy during the Cold War. She writes an ambitious history of the CIA's sponsorship of artistic and intellectual ventures in Western Europe after World War II. This propagandizing of U.S. allies was intended to provide a cultural counterpoint to stop the spread of communism throughout Europe. Saunders clearly sees these acts as a rhetorical manipulation: "The individuals and institutions subsidized by the CIA were expected to perform as part of a broad campaign of persuasion, of a propaganda war" (4). Where public diplomacy projects in Eastern Europe are often seen favorably by writers like Nye, Powell, and Arndt, Saunders takes a highly negative view of these programs. She describes how public diplomacy represents a virulent form of government-sponsored cultural imperialism: the forced domination enacted through propagandistic mass media.

In *Archives of Authority,* Andrew N. Rubin builds on Saunders's research in explaining the types of images that public diplomacy tries to produce. Where her work is primarily historical, Rubin incorporates literary theorists like Edward Said to pursue the deeper implications of this hegemonic relationship. Though he is writing about the same era, he is doing so after the War on Terror has begun. Thus, Rubin's book not only looks backward to the history of these programs, he also seems to look forward into their future implications. In his introduction, he writes about programs deployed as part of the war on terror to use culture to strategic ends what he refers to as a "militarization of knowledge":

> The "terrain of operation" becomes a dehumanized place, a topos replete with references, quotations, observations, and citations—essentially figurative constructions that are used to justify and legitimize the exercises of power in

> advance, to establish order, and to provide a logic that transforms the human subject into a "terrain" to be colonized, reworked, and occupied; yet at the same time, it becomes the very means through which violence is avowed or disavowed. (6)

For the most part, career diplomats will uncritically tout the success of public diplomacy programs in shaping opinion abroad. However, Saunders's and Rubin's work provides a useful counterbalance to more benign descriptions of soft power. While Saunders is a journalist and historian and Rubin is a literary scholar and archivist, their nuanced understanding of these programs is crucial. I will build on their work with a deeper analysis of the rhetorical strategies of these programs.

In particular, I will revisit many of the texts that Saunders unearths, to offer an even deeper understanding of the understanding of America that they are trying to promote. For example, her discussion of *Encounter* magazine offers important context for that magazine and its overt goals. I will extend her ideas to analyze the rhetoric of those primary sources. Though their methods differ widely, the rhetorical aims of *Encounter,* a magazine created for Cold War era European elites are strikingly similar to those of *Hi International,* a magazine created for War on Terror era Middle Eastern youth. Taken together, it is clear that those texts are concerned with producing a clear image of America. The public diplomacy of the Cold War era and of the War on Terror seeks to create a particular understanding about America, that we are an exceptional, multicultural, egalitarian, democratic, reluctant superpower.

D. How Public Diplomacy Serves the Goals of Neoliberalism

Once we understand that America wields power in an imperialistic manner and how that power is created through language, returning again to Cicero's *cui bono*, it is important to explore how this exertion of power benefits American interests. Writing as early as the 1950s, William Appleton Williams articulates the scope and aims of American empire. Later, in *Empire as a Way of Life,* he chronicles centuries of active foreign policy. He writes, "Very simply, Americans of the 20th century liked empire for the same reasons their ancestors had favored it in the 18th and 19th centuries. It provided them with renewable opportunities, wealth, and other benefits and satisfactions including a psychological sense of well-being and power" (20). American empire offers benefits to Americans -- both the material and immaterial benefits that Williams describes. Thus, an exploration of public diplomacy rhetoric must understand that, as it enables American empire, it also facilitates benefits to Americans in terms of wealth and well-being.

In *Culture and Imperialism,* Edward Said writes: "Imperialism did not end, did not suddenly become 'past,' once decolonization had set in motion the dismantling of the classical empires. A legacy of connections still binds countries like Algeria and India to France and Britain respectively" (282). These connections, perhaps because they are less overtly political than in the colonial era, rely more heavily on cultural forms in the postcolonial era. For Said, the United States is the most salient example of how imperialism works through culture: "Granted that American expansionism is principally economic, it is still highly dependent and moves together with, upon, cultural ideas and ideologies about America itself, ceaselessly reiterated in public" (289). Thus, while American empire is

motivated and sustained by financial considerations, it relies on the persuasive capabilities of mass culture. Here, Williams and Said precede some scholars of neoliberal economics to indicate the ways that American cultural products support American power.

While contemporary neoliberalism scholars do not often talk specifically about public diplomacy, they do place these machinations of global hegemony in a neoliberal context, where free trade and free markets are quickly changing the dependencies of nations upon one another in ways that preclude military conflict. In his *Brief History of Neoliberalism,* geographer David Harvey describes the complicated transnational relationships that neoliberalism requires. Because governments are now complicit in facilitating corporate interests, he writes, "the neoliberal state needs nationalism of a certain sort to survive" (85). In an idea that echoes Said's argument in *Culture and Imperialism*, American national identity is used to open markets and create an interest in American products.

Even more importantly, these scholars write about how personal identity and citizenship are rewritten to serve the interests of these corporate interests. In her book, *Neoliberalism as Exception,* Aihwa Ong offers a more sophisticated understanding of Harvey's conception of neoliberalism. She writes:

> Neoliberalism—with a small n—is reconfiguring relationships between governing and the governed, power and knowledge, and sovereignty and territoriality. Neoliberalism is often discussed as an economic doctrine with a negative relation to state power, a market ideology that seeks to limit the scope and activity of governing. But neoliberalism can also be conceptualized as a new relationship between government and knowledge through which

> governing activities are recast as nonpolitical and nonideological problems that need technical solutions. (3)

Ong uses the term "neoliberal technologies" to describe the means by which these relationships are reconfigured to become natural and mutually beneficial to all parties. She continues, "Neoliberal decisions have created new forms of inclusion, setting apart some citizen-subjects, and created new spaces that enjoy extraordinary political benefits and economic gain" (5). Not only does neoliberalism shape economic relationships among nations, it also reconfigures the humans within that system and forces them into categories that benefit the system.

Because it participates in Ong's neoliberal paradigm, the contemporary rhetoric of public diplomacy is strikingly similar to that of global development. Rebecca Dingo, in her *Networking Arguments* and in her edited collection with J. Blake Scott, *The Megarhetorics of Global Development,* describes the rhetorical framing of international aid. In *Megarhetorics,* Dingo and Scott illustrate that "'development' means expansion from the outside, through corporate investment, supranational organizations, commodity markets, and conspicuous consumption" (2). These ideas become clear in my fourth chapter analysis of public diplomacy under Obama. For example, that era's "Let Girls Learn" program leverages a constellation of popular culture, celebrity, social media, and corporate sponsorship to disseminate a banal message about female empowerment. Effectively, the work that might have once been performed by the State Department has been increasingly outsourced. As I will explain in the fourth chapter, this exemplary neolibral program benefited profit motives and corporate synergies more than the purported "girls," and the program quickly fizzled out.

In the same manner, the rhetoric of public diplomacy highlights American consumerism as a means of managing transnational relations. In an essay discussing President Clinton's framing of globalization, Jason R. Edwards and Jaime L. Wright note that:

> The myth of the American dream is a narrative that has special resonance for many. It is also a fundamental rhetoric of American identity and yet another instance of the discursive constructions in which Clinton is engaging. Politicians, literary figures, and the general public lace their discussions with talk of pursuing the "American dream." The dream is primarily a materialistic story about obtaining success for one's self, one's children, and one's future generations. (70-71)

They write that Clinton holds aloft the powerful image of the "American dream" as a goal for the entire world. Similarly, Michelle Obama's "Let Girls Learn" program and its concurrent launch with the "U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls" make use of this similar rhetoric to demonstrate aspirational goals for its audience. In this neoliberal era, free market capitalism is deployed as both public diplomacy and a tool for global development. In the rhetoric of public diplomacy, America, its ideas, and its people are all reconfigured into products. These products are sold overseas to individuals, who have been reconfigured as consumers.

To be successful, neoliberalism must portray not just nations and policies in a certain frame, it must also portray the people within its system in specific ways. If America is a democratic nation founded on freedom, then its transnational interventions must be

performed to ensure freedom, not limit it. Similarly, if America embraces its multicultural population, then it cannot act with a sense of cultural superiority, as in traditional colonial relationships. In *Epic Encounters*, Melani McAlister describes how, in the Persian Gulf War, the American military used multiculturalism as a theme to justify their actions:

> As newspapers and television reported the call-up that would mobilize regular duty and reserve forces from communities across the nation, their predominant theme was that the U.S. soldiers were a microcosm of the U.S. population--a heterogenous mixture of all races and ethnicities, drawn from small towns and local communities but all around the nation, and including not only black and white men, but also Latinos, Asian-Americans, Native American Indians, and even women (presumably of all races). (250)

Here, as with the Clintonian rhetoric of the American dream, an idea of what the American people are – multicultural – becomes a crucial aspect of its foreign policy. This theme of multiculturalism is evident throughout American public diplomacy since the beginnings of the Cold War and the production of *Porgy and Bess* and continuing through the "Make Chai not War" comedy tour.

However, one of the great contradictions of public diplomacy are the ways in which its message and its policies are at odds with each other. In her book, *Branded Bodies, Rhetoric, and the Neoliberal Nation-State*, Jennifer Wingard describes how groups (LGBT and immigrants) and individuals (José Padilla and Osama Bin Laden) are "branded" to not just justify, but actually require certain policies towards them. She writes that "branding is a technology that serves neoliberal governmentality. As such, it is central to the construction of

a seemingly unified national identity formed in response to the construction of a seemingly unified national identity formed in response to the shift from liberal governmentality to state policies dictated by neoliberal economics." (xii). Similarly, in his *Good Muslim/Bad Muslim*, Mahmood Mamdani describes how Muslims in America and overseas have been given the choice of whether to be with "us" or with "the terrorists." A complementary work, Sara Ahmed's *Strange Encounters* describes how groups of people are "othered," but not just into simple categories of us and them. Instead, different categories of others are created to identify the known others and the unknown. Ahmed writes about "stranger fetishism," arguing:

> I suggest that we can only avoid stranger fetishism -- that is, avoid welcoming or expelling the stranger as a figure which has linguistic and bodily integrity -- by examining the social relationships that are concealed by this very fetishism. That is, we need to consider how the stranger is an effect of processes of inclusion and exclusion, or incorporation and expulsion, that constitute the boundaries of bodies and communities, including communities of living (dwelling and travel), as well as epistemic communities. (6)

This dissertation takes Ahmed's challenge to examine how public diplomacy furthers "stranger fetishism." Because public diplomacy increasingly creates these images via information technologies, this dissertation will also make use of Jodi Dean's "communicative capitalism," which describes how internet-based communication technologies help disempower individuals and traps them in a neoliberal economic system. In all of these

descriptions, individuals are forced into discrete categories of representation that serve to declare their allegiances in the hegemonic struggles of the neoliberal era.

As mentioned in the introduction, the most important piece of legislation regarding public diplomacy is the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948. The original drafting of that act was meant to put restrictions on public diplomacy. However, the act was modernized in 2012 for a neoliberal era. In the fourth chapter, I will capitalize on the work of scholars like Dingo and Wingard to demonstrate how the Smith-Mundt Act was repurposed to the contrary of its original intent to target a domestic audience. This ostensibly subtle but essentially seismic shift creates a new category of citizenship for many Muslim-Americans, where they alone can be the target of their own country's propaganda. Echoing Mamdani's false dichotomy between "good" and "bad" Muslims, Ahmed's "stranger fetishism," and Wingard's "branded bodies," this shift essentially creates a separate category of citizenship for a group of Americans. Before we get to that point, in the next chapter, we must first look at the emergence of public diplomacy and the original authoring of the Smith-Mundt Act during the Cold War.

This chapter began with a series of four questions that would outline the intellectual underpinnings of the dissertation: A) How is American empire unique? B) How are empires sustained (domestically and internationally) by culture, rather than mere political and military force? C) How does public diplomacy, a so-called "soft power," produce knowledge in international contexts and what type of knowledge does it produce? D) How does public diplomacy incentivize and nurture neoliberal market-based relationships? I will answer these questions briefly in advance of the deeper analysis in the coming chapters: American empire

relies on soft-power in the form of public diplomacy to create a particular knowledge about itself overseas, and that knowledge serves the neoliberal economic interests that support American empire. While this present chapter has begun to describe some of the conversations that must undergird any discussion of public diplomacy, the next chapter will begin to demonstrate how those conversations evolve throughout history.

Chapter 2: Public Diplomacy in the Cold War

This chapter will describe the early decades in which American public diplomacy communications tried to reconcile the great contradiction -- whether American public diplomacy was inherently a contradiction of American values. Despite some initial apprehension to the idea of a propagandizing America, in the decades following World War II, American public diplomacy activities emerged in earnest. While the neoliberal economic goals of the more recent public diplomacy efforts have not yet fully emerged in this era, these efforts clearly use soft power to create a particular understanding of America, often highlighting American multicultural and democratic values against Soviet and communist counterarguments. This chapter will note how the messages of American public diplomacy have evolved (or, in many cases, stayed static) over the decades and how those messages reflect a shifting understanding of the United States and its place in the world. Through departments such as the Office of Strategic Services (later the Central Intelligence Agency), the Department of Defense, and the State Department, the United States government sought to influence foreign publics through strategic deployment of cultural texts. In these decades, the messengers began to identify some of the longstanding tensions within the public diplomacy community, particularly those between impartiality and persuasion and between high and low culture. Then, as now, those programs highlighted certain key aspects of American culture. In particular, they argued for an ascendant American culture, emphasizing that American ideas were not tied to stagnating European traditions. As opposed to

supposedly ossified European ideas, American ideas were younger, more dynamic, and benefitted from our country's intellectual freedom, diversity and multiculturalism. American public diplomacy of this era positioned itself as the primary expressor of these ideas.

The first section of this chapter will look at how those programs emerged and some unique qualities of American public diplomacy, with a particular emphasis on the ethical challenges presented by what is essentially American propaganda. The first and most lasting obstacle the proponents of public diplomacy must face is how to reconcile their propaganda with American values of liberty. To this end, recalling Lipset, they marshall the language of American exceptionalism to justify (and in some cases require) interventionist rhetoric. Then, this chapter will turn to three case studies, offering a rhetorical analysis of how public diplomacy operates in the realm of international radio broadcasting, *Encounter Magazine,* and in a series of more middlebrow cultural programs. Each of these programs will help to illustrate a key facet of public diplomacy and sets the stage for its evolution over the decades. Here, the rhetoric recalls the work of Edward Said and others who explain the role that culture has in fostering imperial goals. All of these public diplomacy efforts strive to perform the trick that Woodrow Wilson perfected: to find a way to further American interests overseas, without appearing to betray American values of democracy and freedom.

Reconciling Public Diplomacy Programs with American Ideals

In order to inform the discussion of its public diplomacy programs, it is important to review America's ambivalent attitude toward imperialism in general. Since the early 20th century, the United States government's rhetorical values have been dissonant with its

proactive foreign policy. Because our country's purported values of freedom and democracy, the United States has found it difficult to justify its aggressive actions overseas. To the contrary of the British empire, where famously the sun never set, Paul Kramer quips that "the United States remained the empire upon which the sun never shone" (Kramer 1353). That is, when America extended its empire, it had to do so cautiously and secretively. Numerous other writers grapple with the internal contradiction of U.S. imperialism. How can America stand for democracy and freedom and still assume the role of the oppressor overseas? To resolve this discrepancy, the U.S. employs the rhetorical ideology of "spreading democracy." That is, if the United States chooses to intervene in another country's sovereignty, it must do so while rhetorically disseminating the ideals of freedom and democracy. As discussed earlier, as early as World War I, Woodrow Wilson explained to congress that the war would "make the world safe for democracy" (Wilson). In this fashion, the U.S. justifies its imperialistic projects. Historian Frank Ninkovich writes:

> Ideology[32] was both a means of disguise and a source of comforting reassurance: disguise, because it concealed the unwelcome dynamics of power and institutional change; false reassurance, because it furnished traditional justification for novel and otherwise questionable activities. It rationalized, legitimized, and concealed underlying political and structural transformations, the existence of which originally gave rise to the need for ideological thought. It allowed the United States to undertake policies that it had to adopt, but

[32] Ninkonovich's use of "ideology" suggests McGee's discussion of ideographs. Ideographs are crucial to public diplomacy because they contain so much symbolic meaning but at the same time are essentially neutral.

could not otherwise justify. To put it somewhat perversely, ideology provided a means of violating American beliefs while continuing to defend them. (179)

Ninkovitch indicates the essential irony of American public diplomacy: In order to assert ourselves overseas, America finds justification in the very ideals it is violating.

While this democratic ideology is captivating in the political sphere, it is spread even more effectively through the mass media. Recalling the work of Said, Mattelart, and Schiller, mass media are crucial to propagandistic communications. Not only can they be easily manipulated to appear democratic, they also suggest a particular Americanness. In her *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion , 1890-1945*, Emily Rosenberg writes that "Liberal-developmentalists thus saw America's free flow doctrines as helping to spread truth and knowledge in an essentially democratic marketplace. Free flow, they argued, was non ideological and anti-authoritarian" (11). As American democracy requires the illusion of the free flow of information, its foreign policy must rely on it, too. Thus, as the U.S. government attempts to export democracy, a critical facet of this effort is the management of mass media information flows, the principal channel of culture.

A consistent justification for public diplomacy is that we must intervene in a country's information channels to ensure the free flow of ideas. Of course, when information flows are managed by an outside government, they can not realistically be considered "free." Here, we are again at the great contradiction in American public diplomacy: How can we, as a nation whose ideology is formed around a shared sense of democracy and freedom, intervene in other nations on behalf of that ideology? Because we imagine ourselves in terms of our freedoms, particularly freedom of the press, we believe ourselves to be uniquely

qualified to foster those freedoms overseas. However, once we intervene to foster those freedoms, we have interfered with another nation's people's self determination. In the next section, I will describe the media environment in which this dissonance must most often be negotiated: international radio broadcasting.

Case Study: International Radio News Broadcasting

The first cohesive American public diplomacy program to make use of popular culture was its international radio broadcasting. In this primary example, we see the early template that future communicators would follow. It is of particular symbolic importance because American mass media evolved simultaneously with the country itself. As we see most famously in Hollywood, but also in our early 20th century press and other forms of mass culture, America is a country that can only be understood in terms of the images it produces of itself. During and after World War II, American public diplomacy emerged in the field of international radio transmissions, following the lead of more established European organizations, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World Service. Initially, he American stations, such as the Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe (RFE), utilized news broadcasts like their European counterparts. These news broadcasts had a twofold purpose: First, they would be able to describe events from an American point of view. Second, they made their impartiality their hallmark. Thus, one of the core American democratic cultural values – the free press – was highlighted in these programs. That is not to say these programs were met with suspicion, both at home and abroad. Domestically, the discussion of these public diplomacy programs mirrored the question of whether America

was philosophically to be isolationist or interventionist. Also, in the years following World War II, the American people and political leadership were wary of the use of propaganda. After seeing the propaganda machines of Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union, and because it seemed at odds with its understanding of itself, America tended to distance itself from what appeared like outright propaganda. Instead, cultural and artistic programs, which appeared innocuous, were favored in these decades. Thus, in the postwar era, certain patterns in American public diplomacy began to emerge. Because of the reluctance to display outright propaganda, American ideas are instead disseminated through educational exchange, music broadcasts, tours of contemporary art, opinion journalism, and the international production of American theater. These hallmarks of American public diplomacy still persist today. In fact, during the early years of the war on terror, the VOA launched a radio station in the Middle East, Radio Sawa, that was remarkably similar to its forebears in the Cold War.

Shortly after entering the war, in February of 1942, the United States launched the VOA. Initially under the Office of War Information, (OWI), its objective was to provide balanced coverage of the war (Krugler). The OWI itself had a broad mission, which allowed it to shape opinion through a variety of means. President Roosevelt's Executive Order forming the OWI requires it to "formulate and carry out, through the use of press, radio, motion picture, and other facilities, information programs designed to facilitate the development of an informed and intelligent understanding, at home and abroad, of the status and progress of the war effort and of the war policies, activities, and aims of the Government" (Roosevelt). This order is one of the first official documents to describe American propaganda efforts through popular culture. Crucially, Roosevelt uses benign,

corporate terminology to describe the effort. The OWI will "facilitate the development of an informed and intelligent understanding." In Roosevelt's proposal, the OWI is only entering this sphere to help ensure that existing understandings are communicated more fully. However, we learn from Said and other scholars that any type of national self-definition is inherently a political act, one that will buttress national hegemony. For Roosevelt, the American government alone is the arbiter of true understanding, a message that is challenging to disseminate. Outright propaganda in news-based programming (as opposed to popular culture programming), because it cannot clearly disguise its message, is more evidently at odds with American values of freedom and liberty. Eventually, these programs learned to make more use of popular culture because it better allowed the government to mitigate the cognitive dissonance between American values and its actions.

While eventually these programs would make more use of popular music, initial OWI broadcasts modeled themselves on the BBC and favored news programming. In the first VOA broadcast, William Harlan Hale set the tone for the station: "We bring you Voices from America. Today, and daily from now on, we shall speak to you about America and the war. The news may be good for us. The news may be bad. But we shall tell you the truth" (quoted in Heil 32). With this statement, the VOA voiced the mission to provide balanced and responsible journalism. While noble on the surface, this commitment to accurate and independent programming was itself a form of propaganda. The implication of this statement, as in Roosevelt's statement before it was that American messages were accurate and without spin, while other messages are inherently suspicious. The VOA used this stance to assert America's authority internationally. In his *Radio Power: Propaganda and International*

Broadcasting, a comparative study of state-sponsored international broadcasting, Julian Hale writes that in American international broadcasting, "the soft line is given the hard sell" (Hale 47-48). Because of the inherent aggressiveness of these programs, after the war many questioned the necessity of international broadcasting in a society at peace.

After World War II, the United States engaged in an internal ideological struggle regarding the nature of these international communications. This postwar aversion to propaganda almost extinguished the VOA. Many in Congress, especially Senator J. William Fulbright, questioned the need for international broadcasting organization in peacetime. To engage in propaganda, they thought, was to contradict America's democratic principles (Cone 166-167). In early 1946, the Associated Press and the United Press, expressing similar fears, both stopped supplying the VOA with news services. The AP explained, "the government cannot engage in newscasting without creating the fear of propaganda" (Krugler 39). Senate debates over the future of the VOA raged until 1953, when the escalation of the Cold War made the utility of international broadcasting more apparent.

In the late 1940s, Fulbright led a domestic battle against the international use of propaganda, especially in the form of public diplomacy. Rather than the bold practices seen during World War II, Fulbright favored a more dialogic approach – through a reciprocal cultural exchange. Arguably the most venerable and respected forms of public diplomacy are the cultural exchange programs, managed by The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State. These programs were first created by Nelson Rockefeller, then the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA) under Roosevelt and his Assistant Secretary of State. Rockefeller brought a group of Latin-American journalists to the

United States in the first iteration of the exchange. Later, he brought musicians to participate in a VOA broadcast called *Viva America* (Cramer and Prutsch). The flagship of these cultural exchange programs is educational exchange, such as the Fulbright scholarship. Through the Fulbright program, students from America and around the world receive a scholarship to study in other countries. The goal of the program is to "increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through educational and cultural exchanges" (Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs). Senator Fulbright favored these programs over entities such as the Voice of America, because the scholarship programs provide the tools for a true dialogue with other cultures.

Throughout his career, Fulbright opposed such seemingly inviolate governmental projects as the Office of War Information and the United States Information Agency. While his efforts to limit international broadcasting were unsuccessful (he was especially frustrated by the establishment of the Voice of America), Congress passed the Smith-Mundt Act in 1948, which at least limited the domestic uses of public diplomacy (Cone 166-177). For decades, until recent years, the Smith-Mundt Act restricted the domestic availability of the texts of public diplomacy: "Information produced by VOA for audiences outside the United States shall not be disseminated within the United States." Senate debates over the future of the VOA raged until 1953, when the escalation of the Cold War made the utility of international broadcasting more apparent. These programs were given some autonomy and security within the newly formed United States Information Agency (USIA) (Krugler 208). The USIA, encompassing more than just international broadcasting, promoted the public

diplomacy mission by sponsoring cultural exchange events and other programs in embassies throughout the world (Jowett & O'Donnell 292).

In 1950, Radio Free Europe (RFE) began broadcasting to Eastern Europe. In 1953, it was followed by a sister station, Radio Liberation (RL), renamed Radio Liberty in 1964, which broadcast to the Soviet Union. Despite this broad reach, the true sponsor of these programs was disguised. While purportedly run by private foundations, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty were actually funded and guided by the CIA (Krugler 136). Where Voice of America was more transparent about its American origins, RFE and RL's role was more strategic than that of the VOA. They were to serve as "surrogate" broadcasters in countries that lacked a free press (GAO 4). According to historian Philo Wasburn, "RFE and RL proceeded from the assumption that informed societies can make more responsible judgments about their own and world affairs, while misinformed societies can more easily be manipulated in directions threatening peace" (Wasburn 28). In short, their goal was to provide counterpropaganda to anti-U.S. messages in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Again it is crucial to indicate the dissonance in fostering a free exchange of ideas in a sovereign nation by transmitting deceptively-sourced messages created by an external government, matching propaganda with counterpropaganda. Because it was so difficult to reconcile this dissonance, radio broadcasts increasingly began to make use of popular culture broadcasts, which, though apolitical on the surface, clearly worked to promote American ideals abroad.

Case Study: International Radio Music Broadcasting

Because, as lawmakers like Fulbright feared, news broadcasts carried a propagandistic stigma, as the Cold War developed, public diplomacy of this era found itself increasingly relying on cultural activities, in particular on popular music programming, to influence opinion overseas. American music held a great appeal for Eastern Europeans. The VOA had a very popular jazz DJ, Willis Conover, who acquired a large audience by the late 1950s and broadcast his programs across the Iron Curtain for decades. Conover appreciated the role that his free-form jazz was having in Eastern Europe: "And when people in other countries hear that quality in music, it stimulates a need for the same freedom in their lives" (Heil 289). The international broadcasts encouraged a favorable opinion by showing the people of Eastern Europe what Western culture had to offer.

Over the airwaves, as broadcasters highlighted its diverse cultural and intellectual life, America appeared prosperous and innovative. As listeners become enamored with American culture, they begin to desire American products. They begin to expect their government to provide access to the albums and the clothes of this new Western culture. By fostering this desire in foreign publics, the United States places economic pressure on a government from within. In a comparison of various international broadcasters, Julian Hale writes, "We come back again to the ambivalent attitude in America to 'propaganda' and 'professional persuaders.' The ethic of free enterprise is such that many Americans, Congressmen very much included, prefer the operation of market forces, whether through multinational companies, sales campaigns, or any other way, to state intervention in the selling of America" (Hale 48). In this era, shapers of foreign policy learned a valuable lesson.

The broadcasting-based public diplomacy efforts served not only to entertain their audiences. Crucially, they were also expected to create a desire for American products that would transcend international boundaries. Here, we begin to see the ways that public diplomacy and neoliberal economics are interrelated[33]. By creating an interest in American ideas and cultural products, public diplomacy also can open up economic markets. The pervasive myth of the Cold War is that the desire for blue jeans and rock-and-roll finally brought down the Iron Curtain. That myth has particular rhetorical power because it describes not just a political victory, but an economic one as well.

For this reason, American broadcasts were most successful when they disseminated popular culture and less successful when providing news. While these stations claimed to produce unbiased news and informational broadcasts, their messages were not without controversy. The first Cold War test of Western international broadcasting objectivity came during the Suez crisis of 1956. This conflict was especially damaging to Great Britain, which sought to manipulate BBC broadcasts to manage its public image. Despite severe pressure from its sponsors in British government, the BBC remained impartial during the conflict. Afterwards, the BBC Arabic service was lauded for its coverage and had its transmission time doubled within a year (Partner 111). Where the BBC succeeded, the American stations often had trouble maintaining impartiality. In 1956, Radio Free Europe aided and encouraged some successful protests in Poland that resulted in the election of more moderate rulers. Hoping to continue a revolutionary wave, RFE spread this news to Hungary and encouraged similar protests. Unfortunately, their coverage was flawed and misleading. The Soviets

[33] Recalling Said's explanation of the relationship between Orientalism and consumerism.

crushed these protesters, many of whom expected American support that never arrived. It took years for the RFE to regain the public's trust (Nelson 70-73). As the Cold War came to a close, many of these programs were discontinued, finally ending with the disbandment of the USIA in 1999. Thus, these early moments in international broadcasting demonstrate the rhetorical power of popular culture programming over the news-based programming of organizations like the BBC. These popular culture broadcasts could exist without appearing political, they highlighted American images, they were appealing to an audience craving American entertainment, and they could begin to open markets for American products overseas. In this era, American public diplomacy moved away from news broadcasts into less transparent cultural efforts. Not only could popular culture disguise the political nature of government-sponsored communication, it also helped create a market for American products as well as American ideas. In this sense, we see the beginning of the neoliberalization of public diplomacy. Instead facilitating a clear exchange of ideas among nations, it instead sold American culture as a product to a new market overseas. Just as that culture could be transmitted by what was perceived as "low" culture like jazz, it also was transmitted by a highbrow literary magazine.

Case Study: Encounter Magazine

As the broadcasting programs attempted to entice audiences across the Iron Curtain with popular culture, the U.S. was also producing a more highbrow intellectual magazine to appeal to perceived elites in Western Europe. This section will describe a second arm of Cold War public diplomacy -- the effort to manage public opinion among intellectuals. While the

information based radio broadcasts were not as successful, state-sponsored magazines like *Encounter* were able to thrive for decades. In all of these efforts, though, these public diplomacy programs foregrounded American culture as an antidote to, not just Communism, but stagnant ideas in Western Europe. Often, the effort to produce these magazines occurred through front organizations, propagandizing our ostensible allies through publications whose real benefactors were unreported. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the CIA and State Department secretly funded a number of artistic and intellectual ventures in Western Europe that were intended to buttress opposition to the Communist governments in the east. Much of this cultural propaganda was performed through a group called the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). The group was founded in 1950, but the CIA was not revealed to be its benefactor until 1967. Run by CIA agent Michael Josselson, the CCF operated in dozens of countries, most prominently in Europe, but also in Africa and Asia. After a brief stint in Berlin, it was located in Paris. The publications and other programs funded and managed by the CCF were intended to provide counterpropaganda to perceived ideas emanating from the Soviet Union throughout the world. The ideas promoted by the CCF were not necessarily conservative, but rather represented the anti-communist left. The CCF brought American writers, painters, musicians, and thinkers to the world. These intellectuals promoted creative freedom as the natural enemy of totalitarianism.

The CCF created a number of periodicals, deployed throughout the world, to promote anti-communist ideas. The CCF's publications included *The China Quarterly* in the UK, *Der Monat* in Germany, *Quadrant* in Australia, and *Black Orpheus* in Nigeria. The most prominent was *Encounter* magazine, which was published from 1953 to 1990 in the UK

(lasting for decades after its CIA sponsorship was revealed) and distributed throughout Europe. It was able to run at a deficit because of the reliable funding by the CCF. Still, the magazine was able to publish ideas from leading intellectuals of the era. The magazine, on its surface, was only mildly partisan, but could be, in the words of Frances Stonor Saunders "as lively and bitchy as a literary cocktail party" (163). Irving Kristol was the political editor for its first half decade. *Encounter* published works by authors such as Kingsley Amis, W. H. Auden, Isaiah Berlin, Jorge Luis Borges, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Leslie Fielder, Robert Graves, Ted Hughes, Arthur Koestler, Philip Larkin, Nancy Mitford, Theodore Roethke, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., C. P. Snow, Hugh Trevor-Roper, and A. J. P. Taylor, and Evelyn Waugh. Notably, the publication also excerpted Alexis De Toqueville's writings on America.

With hundreds of articles published over nearly four decades, a thorough rhetorical analysis of *Encounter* is beyond the scope of this project. Looking primarily at the editorials in the magazine and in critical pieces of cultural products, however, some rhetorical patterns are apparent. As in other facets of American public diplomacy, *Encounter* was preoccupied with defining America and Americanness abroad. Its editors wrote about the hopes and hindrances for democracy, the tensions between high and low culture, and the benefits and drawbacks of a multicultural state. These concerns -- what America *means* and its multicultural identity are constantly revisited in public diplomacy programs throughout the decades[34]. Editor Irving Kristol's ideology was a key precursor to the neoconservativism (often referred to as the "Godfather of Neoconservatism") that found its apex during the George W. Bush administration. Consequently, many of Kristol's questions persist in public

[34] See, for example, the *Writers on America* project of the early 2000s.

diplomacy through the War on Terror. Appropriately, these articles also clearly advocate for the value of ascendant American culture, often at the sake of European allies[35]. Instead, they assume and celebrate the success of the American experiment. In the articles described below, a collective understanding of America -- our "imagined community" -- is clear: This new country is a dynamic, multicultural space that fosters the free flow of ideas.

In the first issue of *Encounter*, published in October 1953, an unsigned editorial titled "After the Apocalypse" sets the stage for the publication:

> After the deaths of the totalitarian leaders (Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin) of World War II, the editors hope: Now, perhaps, words will once again mean what they say, and we shall be spared the tedious sophistry by which despotism could pose as a higher form of freedom, murder as a supreme humanism. Now, perhaps, we shall no longer be plagued by the rhetoric of a messianic arrogance of the spirit which has blithely perpetrated so many hideous crimes against the flesh. ("After the Apocalypse")

Immediately, the publication aligns itself with the literal death of totalitarianism, writing as if a vacuum of power and information is now to be filled with the pages of this magazine. The editors quickly identify the unique characteristic of totalitarianism as "tedious sophistry," the obfuscating language of the despot. Ironically, while declaring this rhetorical battle against elusive powers and propaganda, the editors of *Encounter* are engaging in a remarkably

[35] Often these articles strike a tone similar to neoconservative Donald Rumsfeld, who famously dismissed allies like Germany and France as "Old Europe." That dismissive rhetoric aligned America more closely with the "new" Europe, nations who emerged from struggles for independence from the Soviet Union (Hooper and Black).

similar enterprise. They are writing surreptitiously on behalf of a governmental entity and creating knowledge that supports that entity's agenda.

Later in that same editorial, the editors clarify the mission of *Encounter*:

> Appearing at this time, and amidst these problems, ENCOUNTER seeks to promote no 'line,' though its editors have opinions they will not hesitate to express. The Congress for Cultural Freedom, which sponsors this magazine, is made up of individuals of the most diverse views... What caused them to come together? Two things: a love of liberty and a respect for that part of human endeavour that goes by the name of culture.

While the publication purports to support no "line," it has a clear agenda, which is to portray America as a place where open discourse is welcomed, where free speech and true impartiality are mandated. However, this purported impartiality exists within a narrow spectrum of ideas. Certainly, the most obvious response is that the magazine would never publish articles that condoned communism. In the pages that follow, we will see evidence of that narrow scope. The semblance of free dialogue within that scope serves the needs of the publication and its propagandists. Its message is not one of a particular ideology, but that all ideologies are welcomed. Just as American imperialism often disguises itself as spreading democracy, *Encounter* intends to spread a "love of liberty" to its markets overseas. A close study of *Encounter* is crucial to this dissertation because the ways it transmits a particular understanding of America offers an early template for future efforts of public diplomacy[36].

[36] In the next chapter, in the early years of the War on Terror, I will discuss an effort -- *Hi International* magazine -- that owes an enormous debt to *Encounter,* though one that is a clear extension of these goals into a more overtly neoliberal economy.

Encounter's most infamous early article, "A Postscript to the Rosenberg Case" by literary theorist Leslie Fielder, was a caustic meditation on the couple convicted of espionage and put to death. Fielder's tone in that article is strikingly antipathic. He mockingly analyzes their intellect, their dress, their living conditions, and even the letters Rosenbergs send to each other from prison. His justification for this takedown is clearly the fact that the dominant voice of the piece is anti-communism. However, he closes the article with a plea for mercy that seems incongruous:

> Yet despite all this, because of it, they should have been granted mercy. The betrayal of their essential humanity by their comrades and themselves left the burden of its defence with their opponents. Before the eyes of the world an opportunity was lost to assert concretely what abstract declarations can never prove: that the suffering person is more real than the political moment that produces him or the political philosophy for which he stands. Surely, it is not even a paradox to assert that it is a special duty to treat as persons, as real humans, those who most blasphemously deny their own humanity?

The sincerity and urgency of this plea is immediately undercut by the fact that the Rosenbergs had already been put to death. Fielder's greatest regret in the loss of the Rosenbergs seems to be their propaganda potential: "Before the eyes of the world an opportunity was lost to assert concretely what abstract declarations can never prove." That is, conversely, with their death, America does not have the opportunity to prove that humanity is more important than politics.

In a subsequent issue, Fielder authors another one of the most controversial and tone-setting articles published in *Encounter*. His remarkable essay, titled "The 'Good American'" describes his efforts to represent his country overseas. On his journey, he "was prepared to meet with frankness the Europeans who trotted out the conventional criticisms of our culture: to grant that some of us, many of us, indeed, are smug, boorish, conformist, contemptuous of what we do not understand, virtually cultureless" (51). In reaction, though, Fielder finds himself:

> heated, shouting a little, defending America with a passionate self-righteousness I should like to disown… What was I doing, playing the earnest advocate, the patriot at bay--I who, by temperament and on principle, have always been a critic and dissenter; and who had hoped in Europe to open a dialogue based on fairness and moderation? I cannot say I was not forewarned. Before my departure, several friends had told me of their own experiences, of how they, too, had found themselves for the first time forced into the role of apologists and ambassadors extraordinary.

His travels in Europe are remarkably analogous to the mission of *Encounter:* as a reluctant defender of American ideology. In an precursor to critiques of public diplomacy during the War on Terror, Fielder opines that an over-familiarity with our popular culture is partially to blame, noting that "the Americanisation of cultural life on all levels is a complement to, perhaps a cause of, anti-Americanism" (53). Again, to belabor the obvious hypocrisy here: a publication tasked with expressing American ideas abroad laments the oversaturation of American ideas. Clearly *Encounter* was not a solution to the dissonance of the early years of

international broadcasting, in which ideas are disseminated by a nation in the name of the free flow of ideas. Rather, *Encounter* was just a further extension, one that continues to be extended today.

In one of the few articles in *Encounter* not written by a white man, Richard Wright's "What is Africa to Me?" is similarly a moving meditation of the otherness that Americans feel abroad. What makes Wright's essay especially moving is his desire for, and failure to achieve, connection upon his first visit to Africa. Wright, in anticipating his journey, asks a fundamental question: "Being of African descent, would I be able to feel and know something about Africa on the basis of a common 'racial' heritage? Africa was a vast continent full of 'my people.'... Or had three hundred years imposed a psychological distance between me and the 'racial stock' from which I had sprung?" (22). Heartbreakingly, after a series of awkward interactions with Africans throughout the Gold Coast, Wright seems to conclude this article without finding this connection, writing, "I had understood nothing. I was black and they were black, but my blackness did not help me" (31). For Wright, his status as an American precludes any connection he might have with the people of Africa. Clearly, his experience has different antecedents than Fielder's, but the outcome is the same: His Americanness sets him apart from all of the other people of the world.

Elsewhere in the magazine, other writers assess what happens to American culture and its role in the world, arguing for the superiority of American arts and letters over those of Europeans. In his 1954 essay, "American Blues," Kenneth Tynan ostensibly praises a new generation of American playwrights, exemplified by Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. Over the course of the essay, however, it becomes an assessment of American culture itself.

Tynan writes, “Complementary yet irreconcilable, Miller and Williams have produced the most powerful body of dramatic prose in modern English. They write with equal virtuosity, Williams about the violets, Miller about the rocks. The vegetable reinforces the mineral; and the animal, a dramatic element feared or ignored in the English theatre, triumphantly reinforces both” (19). That is, Miller and Williams have skills that complement each other, but both have what Tynan describes as “the animal” to reinforce both. Something new and powerful animates American culture, securing its primacy over the stodgy cultures of Europe.

Another essay, Lionel Trilling’s “Reflections on a Lost Cause” similarly creates a strawman to represent an perceived opposition to American ideas, arguing that American literature deserves more rigorous study than it has enjoyed in the past. Going further, Trilling writes that the quality of American literature (and, by extension, culture) is quietly overtaking that of England:

> the literature of England no longer holds its old pre-eminence in our minds and our curriculums, and... as time goes on, it will probably be assigned an even smaller place. To take note of this phenomenon is to commemorate a significant moment in the history of the American imagination. It is the moment when Americans conceive of themselves to be living in a fully-developed culture, which is to be described in its own positive terms, not merely by negative comparison with other cultures, which has its own history, its own laws of development, its own tone and quality, its own destiny. (9)

Trilling seems to want to have it both ways here. Moments after arguing that English literature is rightfully becoming displaced in curricula, he suggests that American culture does not need to compare itself to others to enjoy success. This essay is notably forward-looking and optimistic, indicating an emerging primacy of culture and ideology that destined to last for decades.

Even articles that are initially motivated by criticisms of American culture pivot to a celebration of its potential. F. W. Dupee's "*Lolita* in America" begins as an assessment of the domestic resistance to Nabokov's novel. Eventually, though, that essay holds up *Lolita* as the embodiment of American cultural potential, particularly its ability to address the tastes of all of its citizens:

> It has also had the luck to make its American appearance at just the right moment... *Lolita* has both profited by the change and helped to crystallise it. There have been many similar manifestations; but no other novel, no periodical or work of criticism, no group of like-minded writers acting in concert, has done so much... Moreover, those approving circles are not exclusively made up of any of the familiar types into which literary Americanas are commonly said to fall. All the brows--high, middle, and low--are to be found in them, celebrating together.

The American project can only be successful if all of those "brows," high, middle, and low, can be appeased by our popular culture. For Dupee, *Lolita* is the first work to successfully achieve that kind of scope. In his assessment, though, it is merely the first among many sure to follow. Cleverly, this article disguises a profound advertisement of American culture with

a shallow criticism of it. This apparently discrete cultural critique carries a much larger message about American culture: In contrast to the Soviet Union or Western Europe, it is dynamic and viable because it can encompass so many levels of culture, because it is multicultural.

Encounter is peculiar not just for its content. Countless magazines of the era were concerned with defining America and Americanness. Many even engaged in intellectual discourse and produced images of America that were unwaveringly favorable. *Encounter* is peculiar because it was explicitly created to voice those messages to elites in Western Europe. On the surface, *Encounter*'s most obvious analogue in the War on Terror is *Hi International,* the State Department-created magazine intended to target youth in the Middle East and Muslim world. Certainly, both are propaganda magazines intended to entice overseas publics with American culture. As we will see in the next chapter, *Hi International* actually seems to take as much inspiration from Cold War radio broadcasts as it does from *Encounter.* Rather than intellectual discourse aimed at elites, *Hi International* instead chronicled American popular culture to court the youth of its audience. I will discuss the consequences of that discontinuity in the next chapter.

Case Study: The Middlebrow Efforts of American Public Diplomacy

In addition to its work with *Encounter* and other publications, the CIA was also involved in promoting American painters and sculptors in Europe. During this time period, the Museum of Modern art (MoMA) loaned many pieces of its collection (particularly art by American artists) to European museums. Most notably, in 1953 and 1954, the CCF partnered

with the Museum of Modern Art to fund a touring exhibition of abstract expressionist artists, *Twelve Contemporary American Painters and Sculptors* (Saunders 269). The artworks, including works by Jackson Pollock, Stuart Davis, Alexander Calder, Edward Hopper, and Arshile Gorky, toured Europe. The goal of these tours was to demonstrate American cultural innovation and experimentation.

While it may seem incongruous that such avante garde, often inaccessible, art would become part of the American government's understanding of itself, that was precisely the point. President Eisenhower himself articulated the connection in an address to the MoMA: "As long as artists are at liberty to feel with high personal intensity, as long as our artists are free to create with sincerity and conviction, there will be a healthy controversy and progress in art… How different it is in tyranny. When artists are made the slaves and the tools of the state; when artists become chief propagandists of a cause, progress is arrested and creation and genius are destroyed" (Eisenhower, quoted in Saunders, 273). These works were selected because of the fact that they were challenging, not despite of it. As with the radio broadcasts of this era, the art itself was essentially unimportant. Instead, in these abstract expressionist artworks, America was able to display its particular brand of liberty. Again, as with the radio broadcasts, the subtext was that only America has the freedom to produce and celebrate such an unconventional mode of expression. Consequently, this program placed faith in the artists and critics themselves, allowing them to dictate what ideas should be voiced.

In a more middlebrow approach, but one that still celebrated a particular idea of American freedom, the State Department also funded a number of touring concerts (including Dizzy Gillespie) and stage productions (such as *Porgy and Bess*) during the 1950s

and 60s. These productions were intended to highlight the work of African Americans in particular, at a time when African Americans were engaging in well-documented Civil Rights struggles. Here, these programs were intended to whitewash those domestic injustices. More explicitly, though, these productions also emphasized America's multiculturalism and dynamic artistic climate. The difficulty in defining America itself exacerbates the difficulty in reconciling public diplomacy programs with American ideals. Officials wished to ensure that exported cultural texts portray an appropriate vision of America. Penny Von Eschen describes the obstacles that officials faced in promoting tours of jazz musicians in Europe during the Cold War. Congress and the State Department were in conflict over how to promote American culture itself, and whether jazz was a legitimate expression of it: "The story of the cultural presentation programs is a story of pronounced differences in the aims of artists and government officials and an often sharp contestation over American culture" (Von Eschen 164). Von Eschen hints at the larger conflict that public diplomacy must resolve: How does a nation who purports to value freedom and liberty, who values multiculturalism, disseminate a monolithic message about itself abroad?

In the 1950s, the U.S. State Department sent an American production of *Porgy and Bess* to twenty-two nations in Europe. The production eventually made its way to Russia, holding a performance in Leningrad. The production was well-funded and talented, including a young Maya Angelou among the cast. With this production, they wished to prove to the Europeans that America had a rich culture of its own – one that allowed for ethnic and artistic diversity. It also was intended to emphasize a marriage between American high and low culture, a particularly salient example of American democracy in action. To the

Russians, as in the international radio broadcasts, they wished to display the vibrancy of American democracy and freedom.

However, David Monod elucidates what a problematic choice *Porgy and Bess* was for this purpose, noting that it is a complex, violent tale that dramatizes an unfortunate underside of American society. As crucial as the opera was to its time, it was an imperfect, limited, and easily dismissed portrayal of African-American life. Particularly when contrasted with the civil rights struggles that were beginning to gain traction in America in the early 1950s, it seemed to turn a blind eye to so much of our culture. The Europeans do not seem to have gleaned the intended message from the production. Many accounts in the European press characterized the African-American cast as innocent primitives; and because the opera was created from a folk culture, Europeans took this as evidence that Americans had no high culture to export (Monod 308).

Regardless of how they were received, these programs co-opted their African-American performers to further the country that denies them civil rights. The rhetorical power of this hypocrisy precedes ideas voiced in Jennifer Wingard's *Branded Bodies* and Sara Ahmed's *Strange Encounters*. The performers exist only as products, not individuals. The "otherness" of these performers was highlighted in an effort to support the idea that only a country like America could foster the artistic gifts of its citizens of a lower station. Their social and political selves were marginalized in favor of a product designed to enhance America's brand. As African Americans called upon to perform on behalf of America during the Civil Rights era, their "otherness" was crucial to the message. Ahmed writes, "globalisation and multiculturalism involve reproduction of the figure of the stranger,

and the enforcement of boundaries, through the very emphasis on becoming, hybridity, and in-betweenness" (13). Wingard's discussion of neoliberal branding is similarly crucial to understanding the ways these performers are dehumanized to support abstract ideas: "even people who are stripped of human characteristics and the protections of the neoliberal nation-state are placed in the service of neoliberal capital" (9). These productions foreshadow future public diplomacy efforts that more clearly support neoliberal economic goals.

As with *Encounter,* these productions were intended to promote an image of an ascendant American culture. However, their limited success suggests that these types of cultural exchange are somewhat unpredictable when used to propagandize a foreign public. As we will see in the public diplomacy texts of the War on Terror, art and culture are a treacherous diplomatic tool. Because they are often open to interpretation, do not convey a consistent message to all recipients. All targets of rhetoric are beholden to their own Burkian "terministic screens." Regardless of their efficacy, Von Eschen writes, these programs are emblematic of postwar U.S. public diplomacy and foreign policy in general: "Tracing the steps of the artists offers a window into the sheer enormity and originality—as well as the violence—of the U.S. global project of domination by way of modernization and development that increasingly replaced direct colonialism with Western domination in the post-1945 period" (164). Public diplomacy of subsequent decades, particularly the War on Terror, learned none of these lessons. While matching Cold War era public diplomacy for "enormity and originality," these recent programs did not avoid the "violence," either. Instead, as we will see in the next chapter, while they indulge in more popular tastes, as with

Porgy and Bess, they continue to frame America in terms of multiculturalism in ways that extend its neoliberal economic goals.

Chapter 3: Public Diplomacy in the Early War on Terror

Public diplomacy during the Cold War was just beginning to explore its neoliberal potential -- that potential would be fully realized in the years of the War on Terror. In fact, only one aspect of Cold War public diplomacy was not seriously taken up by communicators in subsequent decades: the targeting of intellectual elites in Western Europe. Instead, as I will explain, public diplomacy during the War on Terror primarily confronts the youth of the Middle East and the Muslim world. Other aspects of Cold War public diplomacy -- the ambivalence toward American propaganda, the need to "define" America overseas, and the appreciation for the rhetorical power of multiculturalism, all remain in today's public diplomacy. However, the most pronounced shift in the decades beginning with September 11, 2001, is in public diplomacy's increasing tendency to use and serve neoliberal economic goals[37].

At the end of the Cold War, the use of public diplomacy was in decline. American cultural relevance was no longer something that needed to be argued for -- it was an indisputable fact. Consequently, international broadcasting budgets and staff were cut throughout the 1980s and 90s, culminating with the merger of the USIA into the State Department in 1999. After decades of neglect, the attacks of September 11, 2001 caught the U.S. government unprepared for a full-scale information war (Nye 103-105). The State Department was tasked with rapidly renewing its public diplomacy efforts in the Middle East

[37] That is, goals which value market relationships over human ones. Neoliberal public diplomacy sees America and Americans as a product and overseas audiences as consumers.

[38]. Without time to adequately study their target audience, it turned to previous models of public diplomacy. Based on the perceived, but largely unexamined, Cold War successes with cultural diplomacy, the new programs relied heavily on the seductive aspects of popular culture, such as music and movies.

Where Cold War public diplomacy used a tiered approach (with the complimentary broadcasting of the VOA and RFE, for example), the shift in contemporary public diplomacy is this greater reliance on popular culture, one that is often performed at the expense of responsible news and informational broadcasting, as well as one that better serves neoliberal economic goals. In a 2003 evaluation of public diplomacy policy, the Government Accountability Office wrote that the mass media are important in capturing the minds of the youth:

> Traditionally, U.S. public diplomacy is focused on foreign elites – current and future overseas opinion leaders, agenda-setters, and decision makers. However, the dramatic growth in global mass communications and other trends have forced a rethinking of this approach, and [the State Department] has begun to consider techniques for communicating with broader foreign audiences. (GAO 4)

Existing, news-oriented international broadcasting organizations, such as Radio Free Asia have been dismantled to create pop music stations. While broadcasting in the Cold War

[38] See, for example, *Changing Minds Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab & Muslim World* by Edward P. Djerejian, a Report of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World made for the State Department, which describes the early disarray in public diplomacy after the events of September 11, 2001.

focused on the educated and powerful, the asymmetrical conflict in the Middle East has called for a new mode of broadcasting. In hopes of capturing the youth market, these stations play a mix of Western and Arabic music, with short, interspersed news segments. In this effort, though, youth are targeted for two important reasons. First, after 9/11 and an increasing visibility of terrorist attacks, disaffected youth are perceived to pose a greater threat to Americans. But the second, more important goal, is the fact that these youth represent a great deal of potential buying power. If, as in with Cold War broadcasting, they can be enticed with not just American ideas, but with American products, they can align with our political and economic interests simultaneously[39].

In 2003, the State Department launched a number of public diplomacy programs in the Middle East. *Hi International*, a glossy, youth-oriented magazine spotlighted American movie stars and recording artists, Western educational opportunities, new technology and products, and the everyday experience of youth in the United States. The Al Hurra television network, available on satellite, featured news and cultural programming. Officials intended for the station to compete with perceived firebrands such as Al Jazeera. Also in 2003, the State Department hired Charlotte Beers, a prominent advertising executive, to rebrand the United States in the Middle East. She created the Shared Values Initiative, a series of television commercials intended to soften America's image in the minds of Muslims and Middle Easterners. The program was quickly withdrawn, however, due to a virulently negative reaction in the target markets (Kendrick & Fullerton 297). In addition, the CIA, the Department of Defense, and other organizations are engaged in covert manipulations of local

[39] For example, one of the policy recommendations of the Djerejian report is to encourage "economic growth through private market economies, free trade, and investment."

press in Iraq and Afghanistan (Gerth 2005). These contemporary programs all share a savvy understanding of the ability of mass media – specifically the products of popular culture – to manipulate public opinion.

The following section will look more closely at the years after 9/11, paying specific attention to the appointment of Charlotte Beers and her development of the Strategic Values Initiative. This movement is critical because, as an advertising executive is tasked with creating commercials about America, it is a clear indication that American creators of public diplomacy are increasingly viewing America as a product. Then, I will offer a rhetorical analysis of several case studies which represent the public diplomacy efforts of the early years of the year on terror: the SVI commercials, the *Hi International* teen magazine, the *Writers on America* book, and the new initiatives in broadcast media. Taken together, all of these case studies demonstrate the increasingly neoliberal goals of public diplomacy: America is a product to be sold as a product to consumers overseas. In these decades, America becomes increasingly concerned with the rhetoric of "brands." They adopt the strategies of advertising agencies in producing public diplomacy messages across a variety of media. These corporate strategies move public diplomacy into a more explicit neoliberal frame. The rhetoric of business and marketing are now used to manage geopolitical relationships. Our "imagined community" has become a brand to be enhanced. In addition, these moves are just the first step in a progression. They foreshadow the eventual outsourcing of public diplomacy during the Obama era, an even further extension of public diplomacy into a neoliberal era, where private companies are responsible for creating messages that favor the nation.

Charlotte Beers and the SVI

The events of September 11, 2001 ostensibly indicated an what was perceived to be an image problem, a deficiency in America's brand, overseas. In accordance with a neoliberal era, the terms of this image problem are increasingly understood in accordance with market forces and business technology. Accordingly, in 2001, Colin Powell appointed Charlotte Beers, an advertising executive, as the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. In that role, she supervised the Bureau of Public Affairs, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and the Office of International Information Programs. These entities all focused on the management of America's image (it's "brand") overseas. Beers was not sworn in until that October, though, after the events of 9/11 underscored the need for more focused interaction with the rest of the world. Working for the State Department, Beers would be capitalizing on her extensive career in advertising -- selling such products as power tools and dog food -- to conceive of America as a product to be marketed to the Middle East and elsewhere, explicitly "selling America's core values to the Muslim world" (Kendrick and Fullerton 37).

Speaking of this appointment, Powell himself confirmed the need to reshape America's image: "We are selling a product. We need someone who can rebrand American foreign policy, rebrand diplomacy" (Powell "Telling America's Story"). Here, Powell acknowledges some perceived deficiencies in foreign policy and diplomacy. His solution -- to "rebrand" -- has profound ramifications, all of which indicate the neoliberal shift in public diplomacy, where America and its people are a product to be sold to overseas consumers. For

Powell, the deficiencies in American policies themselves will not be addressed; instead, his efforts will be put toward selling the same product. In these same remarks, in a moment of levity, Powell noted that Beers "got me to buy Uncle Ben's Rice." (quoted in "From Uncle Ben's to Uncle Sam" 70). When you consider the fact that Uncle Ben's Rice is often singled out for its mascot being a racist caricature, Powell's seemingly offhand product endorsement here becomes all the more important. Beers can even persuade him, an African American man, to embrace a product that objectified and belittled African Americans. Aside from that small point, this moment is a profound shift in the nature of foreign policy communications. Rather than being produced by foreign service officers and career diplomats, public diplomacy messages are now created by advertising executives, who see this country, what Benedict Anderson described as an "imagined community," as a brand to be enhanced.

In her new role, Beers conceived a wide-ranging, multi-platform advertising campaign, called the Shared Values Initiative (SVI), to release throughout the Middle East. The SVI called for typical public diplomacy tactics such as speeches by diplomats and other Americans in embassies and "town hall" events in several countries. In one event orchestrated by Beers, Colin Powell appeared in a town hall on MTV on February 14, 2002, dubbed an "MTV Global Discussion." Holding the event on MTV has obvious implications for the audience, which was young, global, and self-consciously "hip." In the event, young people from around the world posed often-difficult questions to Powell, who responded candidly with characteristic charm. For example, Vicas Sharma, a young man from Kashmir, asked:

> Now, I have lost many dear friends. Over 35,000 of my people have died due to the ongoing terrorism problem in Kashmir. Now, this number is a lot more than the casualties of September 11 attacks on the WTC. Now, you ask us to exercise restraint, which has never been your policy. Does this mean that the U.S. has double standards? Also, is a U.S. life more precious than the life of an Indian? (quoted in Powell "Be Heard")

This pointed question received applause from the audience, who already seemed wary of a lack of American military restraint. Powell responded "There is no one life more precious than any other life. An American life is not more precious than an Indian life or a Pakistani life, or a Kashmiri life. That is part of our belief system." He then expressed America's commitment to dialogue, stating:

> And so we are doing everything we can to defuse this situation, and to find a way forward so that we can bring peace to Kashmir in a way that both countries can accept, in a way that brings hope to the Kashmiri people, just as we have brought hope to the people of Afghanistan. And we have indicated to both India and Pakistan we will remain engaged to try to deescalate the situation and get a dialogue going. (Powell "Be Heard")

Here Powell betrays some of the biases that have come to characterize his foreign policy. He uses the plural first person, saying, "we are doing everything we can do." His language implies that America is uniquely qualified to intervene in all conflicts around the world. Here again, never faltering, is the rhetoric of American exceptionalism. Even though his communications are managed by advertising executives for a neoliberal moment, they

preserve the common rhetorical understanding from the early decades of the 20th century, recalling the efforts to reconcile American ideals with its interventionist activities.

Case Study: SVI Commercials

Early public diplomacy efforts such as the 1950s production of *Porgy and Bess* highlighted American multiculturalism by asking African Americans to tour Europe. These efforts, in the midst of a tumultuous Civil Rights era, leveraged America's people as a product. In a similar fashion, during the War on Terror and concurrent injustices faced by Muslim-Americans at home, the State Department worked with the SVI to produce it's most innovative (from a public diplomacy perspective) component, a series of commercial advertisements: a 60-page magazine titled *Muslim Life in America,* a series of newspaper ads, and five television commercials (which the State Department, seemingly in an effort to elide the purpose of these spots, publicly preferred to call "mini documentaries"). Again, it is difficult to imagine the United States producing commercials to air in the Soviet Union during the Cold War. This approach -- the use of commercial advertising techniques to sell a country's brand -- can only be viable in a 21st century neoliberal moment. The program controlled $15 million of the $595 million State Department budget. As they were developing this program, Charlotte Beers and the State Department began to voice concerns that the program would be met with skepticism if perceived to be a product of the United States government. Thus, in the spring of 2002, they asked Malik Hasan, a retired medical executive to assist in creating a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization called The Council of American Muslims for Understanding (CAMU), which would serve as a front organization

for the State Department. The mission of CAMU was "to spread the message of religious tolerance in America to people overseas" (Kendrick and Fullerton 30). That is, the CAMU would purchase advertising time in Middle Eastern markets to tell stories of Americans' religious tolerance. By creating this organization, the State Department hoped to, in an Orwellian turn of phrase common in advertising, "enhance source credibility" (31) and enhance the ethos of the communicator. Ironically, the State Department needed to resort to subterfuge to attempt to repair the image of the US Government. All of the advertisements were produced in English and a number of Middle Eastern languages and dialects. A State Department employee noted of the production: "We didn't pay them. We didn't script them. We just filmed them in their daily lives" (quoted in Kendrick and Fullerton 34). Unfortunately for Beers, the SVI was greeted with significant resistance abroad. The spots began airing in Indonesia on October 29, 2002. However, other countries resisted airing the advertisement, either by asking for too much money or simply refusing to air them on state-run media. The program was quickly discontinued and Beers resigned, citing health reasons, in March 2003. Powell presented her with the Distinguished Service Medal (Kendrick and Fullerton 30). Beers's resignation did not mark the end of an era. Instead, as we will see in the next chapter, it created space for even further movements into a neoliberal economic system.

Below, I will analyze the advertisements themselves. In this project, more than outcomes or effects, I am interested in the intentions of these programs -- how they were designed and what image of America they hoped to portray. In all, five mini-documentaries were produced, each about two minutes long. They were intended to air during Ramadan,

purporting to show "real Muslim Americans." The occupations of the subjects are foregrounded in the short films – each film is referred to by it's subject's occupation. Those occupations are wide-ranging, easily recognizable, and all reflect contributions to a community: A baker, a journalist, a doctor, a teacher, and a firefighter. When divorced from their context, these advertisements are charming. However, they operate in the same way as the production of *Porgy and Bess* during the Cold War. They co-opt the stories of Muslim Americans, carefully manage their narratives and show their everyday successes in America, all to enhance America's brand. In the name of displaying American multiculturalism, the participants in these are called upon to advertise a culture at a time when they were struggling to achieve civil rights goals at home.

The first advertisement, called "Baker," is narrated by Abdul Raouf-Hammuda, a Libyan-born Muslim who owns a bakery and deli in Toledo, Ohio. In the commercial, Raouf-Hammuda describes a welcoming America. He says, "Religious freedom here is something very important and we see it practiced. And no one ever bothers us." His children discuss their educational paths in America. In a particularly affecting sequence, the short commercial features an image of his family in silhouette, kneeling in prayer in front of a Ferris wheel. The juxtaposition of Muslims praying in front of a particularly American amusement clearly expresses the intended message of the commercial: America is not just a place where religious differences are tolerated, they are inseparable from our most cherished practices. Raouf-Hammuda concludes the spot by saying, "America is a land of opportunity, of equality, we are happy to live here as Muslims and preserve our faith" (Raouf-Hammuda).

Figure 1: The Hammuda family prays with a carnival Ferris wheel in the background. (Rauf-Hammuda)

The highest profile subject of the Shared Values Initiative is Dr. Elias Zerhouni, the director of the National Institutes of Health. He stresses the connection between medicine and Islam and discusses his advancement from his village to medical school and work at the NIH. The commercial features President George W. Bush nominating Zerhouni at a press conference and shaking the doctor's hand. As in the other advertisements, Zerhouni says that the United States is a multicultural place where he is free to worship as he pleases, quoting a friend who told him, "We're all immigrants here" (Zerhouni). The implication is apparent: America and its President respect Muslims and their way of life. The subject of the third advertisement is a New York paramedic with the fire department, Farooq Muhammed. He says, "I have coworkers who are Jewish, Christian, Hindu even, all different faiths. We all get along fine. We treat each other with respect. They've been very supportive of me since the 9/11 attack" (ibid, "Firefighter"). Muhammed invokes 9/11, a perceived divisive moment

between the West and the Muslim world, to state that no rift occurred between him and his fellow Americans.

Journalism student Devianti Faridz, the subject of the fourth commercial, discusses her education experience in America. She has enjoyed wonderful professors, on-the-job experience, and a diverse group of classmates. Faridz states, "We should embrace diversity and differences and not be afraid of it. It is nice to know that Americans are willing to understand more about Islam and there is an opportunity for mutual understanding" (Faridz). Finally, teacher Rawia Ismail discusses her relationship with her American students: "[Children] like the fact that both them and their parents are introduced to a different culture." While she says that Islam can be followed as easily in the U.S. as elsewhere in the world, we see scenes of Ismail's children playing baseball, while she wears her hijab in the background. She continues, "My neighbors have always been supportive, truly. I didn't quite see any prejudice anywhere in my neighborhood after September 11th" (Ismail). Again, Ismail asserts that 9/11 did not create any rift between cultures. In her narrative, American Muslims continue to be a respected part of the community.

Figure 2: Ismail cheers her son at a Little League Baseball game. (Ismail)

These five commercials all seem to be responding to a set of perceived concerns in the Muslim world. Namely, they aspire to answer the questions: Is it difficult being Muslim in America? Can you practice your faith in the way that you choose? And, did 9/11 cause tension in your community? In answer, the advertisements feature hard-working Muslim Americans who express how they love America, that they feel respected here. They underscore the fact that they are able to worship as they please and that their community is strong. They embrace America's diversity and access to education. In every response, America is portrayed in a favorable light: it embraces multiculturalism, it rewards hard work, it respects the freedom of religion. These messages have underpinned American public diplomacy since it's beginnings during the Cold War. Today, however, what has been subtext has become text. They are explicitly used in television commercials to enhance America's brand. These commercials, as a product popular culture, are tasked with advancing American

ideals overseas. In a subtle way, for example, by describing most of the participants according to the work they do and the value they provide to the economy, these advertisements highlight the neoliberalization of public diplomacy. The next case study, however, eschews that subtlety to link overseas markets more directly to the neoliberal American market system.

Case Study: Hi International

Another initiative undertaken by Charlotte Beers, one that even more clearly sought to tie its audience into an American market system, was a youth magazine called *Hi International.* The early years in the War on Terror also saw this explicit commercial venture that operated as an advertisement for American ideas and products. On the surface, *Hi International* magazine seems to share much with the *Encounter* publication of the Cold War. Both are instruments of public diplomacy that are tasked with promoting American ideals overseas. However, while *Encounter* was an academic journal targeted at elites, *Hi International* was a glossy lifestyle magazine targeted at youth ("Arab youths wooed"). While *Encounter* endorsed ideas, *Hi International,* authored to support a neoliberal economic system, endorsed products. Just like the other programs of this era, it is created as an advertisement, to draw more people to America's brand.

For a few years, throughout the Middle East and Muslim world teenagers could pick up a single, two-dollar magazine and learn about such diverse topics as actor/wrestler Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, good places to get wi-fi access, Oberlin College, how to conquer shyness, and the state of Florida. *Hi International* had a lot to say about American

culture and people – what they like and how they live. It was a light-hearted publication, going out of its way to avoid controversial topics. While the circumstances of the magazine are certainly curious, its preoccupation with Americana is unsurprising when you consider its creator: the U.S. State Department. In conjunction with a professional publishing firm, the State Department produced *Hi* between 2003 and 2005 with the explicit goal of informing the youth of the Middle East and Muslim world about American culture (Harper).

Hi is a rich text. Its publication and distribution represent the intersection of a number of divisive topics: foreign policy, mass media, propaganda, consumerism, and culture. However, I will argue that it is most instructive as a means to understand the self-definition of the United States. Despite its apolitical overtures, *Hi International* was a deeply political publication, and not just because it was developed by the State Department. For its publishers, *Hi* was intended to showcase the greatness of American culture; thus, it was the perfect distillation of what this country chose to represent about itself to a foreign public. This formulation is an inherently political activity and traffics in the same practices of traditional forms of imperialism. However, by performing these actions under what is understood as "soft power," *Hi* supports a neoliberal economic project, seeking to tie its audience into an economic partnership, rather than direct domination.

To approach the teen market in the Middle East and Muslim world, the U.S. Department of State launched *Hi International* with a $4.2 million yearly budget (Djerejian). It features celebrity interviews, music reviews, lifestyle stories, advertisements for hip gadgets, and other morsels of America. The State Department hired The Magazine Group, professional magazine publishers who also publish titles such as *Package Machinery Today*

and *Diabetes Forecast*, to produce *Hi International*. Its initial issue, in Arabic, appeared on newsstands in the Middle East in July of 2003; a website followed soon thereafter. The Magazine Group boasts the success with *Hi* in a case study on their website:

> By concentrating on issues of cultural interest in a way that is both serious and engaging, Hi is resonating with readers throughout its 20 countries of distribution. The magazine and website have elicited a passionate stream of letters and emails from readers attesting to the need for this type of magazine as a step towards greater cross-cultural understanding. Traffic to the website quadrupled in its first 6 months, and continues to grow. (The Magazine Group)

About a year after its initial launch, *Hi* made its English-language debut on the web at www.hiinternational.com in response to the "many requests" the editors received (*Hi* Editors, "Hi From America"). The editors describe *Hi* as a "web magazine about families, friends, careers, beliefs, sports, music, technology, education, relationships, and most of all, your future" (ibid.). While the "your future" part of this objective may sound Orwellian, the magazine had a serious mission. It constructed a slick, sanitized image and a simulated dialogue to sell the idea of the United States to a target demographic: Middle Easterners between the ages of 18 and 35.

In the contemporary language of the State Department, these imperialistic tendencies enjoy a benign terminology. In an article written for *State Magazine*, Secretary of State Colin Powell urges his employees to tell America's story: "[Our public diplomacy and public affairs] are essential to conveying our story to the world and to securing the support of the

American people for a sustained international engagement" (Powell). Similarly, the editors of *Hi* write that their goal is to: "create a trustworthy window into what life for young people is really like in America and elsewhere, including the best and the worst" (*Hi* Editors, "Hi From America"). While these sources acknowledge that America might have an image problem in certain parts of the world, they agree that America just needs a chance to tell its side of the story, essentially to share its culture.

Like other public diplomacy texts, particularly the cultural programs of the Cold War, *Hi* avoids any expressly political content. While its editors claim to create a meaningful dialogue, nothing of the sort really occurs. True, readers are encouraged to write into *Hi* with their opinions, but only apolitical material appears on the website. The "Ask America" section appears oddly sanitized. Reader Yasser Al Nagi of Sudan asks for information on Presidents Herbert Hoover and Woodrow Wilson. Assem Segheroon of Libya asks about basketball. The editors have not printed any questions about foreign policy or America's current government. The "Forum" section features Americans asking unanswered questions of Middle Easterners. The questions all follow the familiar refrain: "What is [the internet, divorce, personal training] like in your country?" Again, politics are not discussed. Many journalists write that this lack of political content is political itself, as journalist Chris Toensing says in an interview:

> It's ignoring the one thing on which there needs to be genuine dialogue between Arabs and Americans, and so to explicitly ignore that in this magazine is a form of condescension. It's saying to Arabs that we're not going

> to be convinced by anything you have to say in this dialogue anyway, so why should we bother to have the dialogue. (quoted in Garfield)

Hi passes on what could be a good opportunity to create a meaningful, political dialogue, instead focusing on frivolous differences in our cultures. One of the only *Hi* articles to acknowledge potential tensions between America and the Middle East does its best to downplay any real problems. "Secure Borders, Open Doors" discusses the increasing difficulties Middle Eastern men face in acquiring visas to the United States. While acknowledging one additional step in the process, the article ends on a high note: "Despite the increased security in the wake of September 11, the United States remains the land of opportunity for thousands of newcomers every year" (Ghandour). Again, seeing strife in terms of market forces, not individual injustices, the article attributes the 32% drop in visa applications to a poor worldwide economy, not any straining of relations.

When defining America to its audience, *Hi* focuses on three characteristics in particular. First, America's consumerist culture is evident in the pages of the glossy magazine. In this respect, it is telling that *Hi* has taken this form. Magazines seem symbolically American. They are image-conscious, superficial invitations to consumerism; consequently, they suit the purposes of imperialism well. One of the most powerful forms of contemporary imperialism is the promotion of consumerism in other cultures. If we can teach other cultures to desire our products, so the thinking goes, they will always respect us for producing them. This effort not only highlights a sense of American commercial superiority, it also seeks to tie its audience into our neoliberal market system. As noted previously, Said describes a contributing factor to the triumph of Orientalism as "the fact of consumerism in

the Orient" (*Orientalism*, 324). Orientalism thrives when it is hooked into a neoliberal market system.

The product-oriented articles (just as in any American magazine) are little more than advertisements for new technology, cars, music, and so forth. There are articles on expensive spa treatments and baroque fitness crazes. A tone deaf article on the new Corvette seems out of touch with the buying power of its target market: "with prices starting under $45,000, the Z51 gives other hot rods a serious run for their money" (*Hi* Editors, "Wrap Up"). Rather than offering practical product knowledge to Middle Eastern youth, these articles show the breadth of American products and pastimes – as if to advertise on the advantages of capitalism and democracy. The articles tacitly attempt to "hook" the Middle East and Muslim world into Western consumerism.

The second key characteristic in *Hi*'s definition of America is education. Education is another tool that is exploited through imperialism. Said explains: "Imperialism after all, was a cooperative venture, and a salient trait of its modern form is that it was (or claimed to be) an educational movement; it set out quite consciously to modernize, develop, instruct, and civilize" (*Culture and Imperialism*, 223). Education – specifically getting an American education – plays a disproportionately central role in *Hi*. Each month, it profiles an elite American university (Duke and Brown, for example). Other articles discuss the declining value of the MBA and how to prepare for the SAT. The articles broadcast the notion that all Middle Eastern youth yearn to be educated by the West. "The Price of an Education" tells its readers, "an American college degree is still considered the most desirable in the world. But even harder than getting in is figuring out how to pay for it" (Yaqub). The article ignores or

dismisses any concerns about difficulty in acquiring student visas, potential cultural conflicts, or simply the logistical problems of going to school so far from home. Its only purpose is to offer students advice on how to pay for the coveted American education. *Hi* never questions this bias towards American education; instead, it asserts it as a form of imperialism. Again, American education is a product to be sold to overseas audiences.

The final characteristic of American culture *Hi* chooses to highlight is the faith in multicultural arts and activities to bring cultures together. A number of articles on shared culture highlight what the West provides the Middle East, echoing Said's words about the perceived omnipotence of Western culture. "A Small American Village in Egyptian Theater" describes a production of "Our Town" that was performed in Egypt. Perhaps the play itself was successful as public diplomacy, as one audience member reacted: "I did not imagine that the Americans led such a serious and simple life at any time and that villagers knew each other and cared about the lives of their neighbors so much. This play presented spectacular humanitarian aspects of American citizens that we did not know before." Another audience member praised the universality of the production: "This play is appropriate for us as Arabs even though it is American. Its main idea applies to anywhere in the world" (Khalil).

The article, "The Power of Dance: Uniting the World," uses heavy-handed language to describe an American dance troupe that travels the world. The troupe has yet not made it to the Middle East, though. Here, the article takes an overtly Orientalist tone:

> Unlike the West, which inherited the long history of the Greek theater, the Arab World does not have a tradition of theater. Arab culture must also acknowledge the taboo associated with the body and its movements. In other

> words, dance, as it is defined elsewhere in the world, is a new commodity in the Arab World; it still has to grow, explore and test society's values before it will become a staple of the cultural scene. (Bukai)

The article implies that, if the Middle East could get over its backwards prejudices, American dance could help bring out cultural and diplomatic change. Another article describes New York City as the center of the art world, where galleries "feature young, relatively unknown artists from anywhere from Morocco to Minnesota, Dubai to Denmark" (Lane). America, of course, is the place to be for any ambitious artist. An article on a touring exhibit of Islamic art makes it plain that the exhibition serves an educational purpose, to clear up any misconceptions about Middle Eastern culture (Kaplan). The underlying suggestion in all of these articles is that American culture legitimizes Middle Eastern culture by providing it with a voice or a new context. Even Arabic food is not immune to American improvement. "American Mouths, Arab Tastes" describes the Arabic food trend in the U.S. (Strong). While the appreciation is promising, it is doubtful that a hip New York City restaurant's falafel and grilled kangaroo is all that authentic. This facile connection between cultures is framed in terms of a commercial enterprise. These articles have a faith in neoliberal economies to bridge cultural and political divides.

In *Hi*, America is deliberately shown to be a multicultural paradise. The overwhelming majority of both celebrity and everyday American profiles feature people of multicultural backgrounds. Wrestler turned actor, The Rock's "African-American and Samoan roots lend a dark bronze tint to his complexion." The Rock enjoyed a film shoot in Morocco, where "even the guys on camels" knew who he was, according to his co-star,

Brendan Fraser (Sessa). Ghana-born soccer phenomenon Freddy Adu and Japanese-born baseball player Hideki Matsui (a.k.a. "Godzilla") are characterized (the latter as "The Hardest Swinging Immigrant") as foreigners who love their adopted homes and cultures. Even profiled white Midwestern actor Josh Duhamel aspires to visit the Arabic world: "he has his sights set on Egypt's culture and history, especially the Pyramids" (Sessa).

Marah Bukai's profile of El Paso novelist Sergio Troncoso, "Child of the Border: Multiculturalism," begins with dubious hyperbole:

> The United States is perhaps the only country in the world to profess linguistic and cultural pluralism, and to harmoniously accept the distinguished "others"—the millions of immigrants who have landed on its shores, bringing with them diverse colors, traditions, languages, and memories. These have melted together into one unified collective awareness that, despite the mellowing effects of time, still savors the uniqueness of the individual, his heritage and his beliefs. (Bukai)

The article describes a multicultural paradise where there is no institutionalized prejudice and anyone can prosper – a manipulative testament to the mythologized benevolence of America.

*Hi'*s profile on actor Viggo Mortensen is careful to present a multicultural view of the actor. Author Ally Burguieres makes a point of mentioning Mortensen's Dutch father, as well as his travels around the world. His latest film is "Hidalgo," about an American cowboy who competes in a horse race in the Arabian Desert. On the film, Mortensen felt honored to work with Egyptian Omar Sharif in Morocco, not far from where Sharif filmed "Lawrence of

Arabia." Mortensen greatly admires Arabic culture, but is also very conscious of the trappings of cultural imperialism:

> This isn't the story of an American deciding to go and conquer, straightening people out or at the very least educating them about the 'right way' the 'American way' of doing things," Mortensen says. "This is a guy who is invited, who doesn't know what he's getting into and makes up for his ignorance by being curious, which is the first step to being open-minded. (Burguieres)

Mortensen, with surprising awareness, is careful to distance himself and his film from traditional Orientalist texts. Even while trafficking in this hegemonic discourse, *Hi International* distances itself from those unfavorable conceptions of America. Instead, it encourages an understanding of America that highlights its multiculturalism. As a force of public diplomacy, it seeks to ensure that the youth of the Middle East and Arabic world share this conception of Americans: a benevolent, accepting people. Here, recalling the work of Wingard and Ahmed, individuals are branded and othered to support neoliberal economic goals.

In the pages of *Hi International,* America is defined in a flattering light – as a stylish, multicultural sanctuary for technology and innovation. We have seen in Said, Anderson, McAlister, and others that this type of national self definition is a political act. Especially when produced over mass media with a commercial objective, these public diplomacy programs share the goals of traditional forms of imperialism. Here, writers like Aihwa Ong help complicate this relationship. By advertising American products like sports cars,

Hollywood blockbusters, and expensive private universities, *Hi International* attempts to not just propagandize its public. Rather than just convince its readers that America is that "stylish, multicultural sanctuary for technology and innovation," it also seeks to turn its readers into consumers. Products like *Hi International* are successful when they link their readers into an American neoliberal economic system. The extension from *Encounter* to *Hi International* is striking for a number of reasons. In the earlier era, an erudite journal was used to support American ideas overseas. In the intervening decades, though, that hyperliterate, highbrow journal has been changed into a glossy magazine selling Corvettes and other American products to youths overseas. Because it favors market relationships over intellectual ideas and interpersonal connection, this shift indicates the triumph of neoliberal influences on public diplomacy.

Case Study: Writers on America

Given the overt neoliberal goals of *Hi International,* the smaller *Writers on America* program seems like a throwback to a simpler, pre-neoliberal moment. That program, one of the first public diplomacy programs launched in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, was a literary anthology of American writers. Because of the neoliberal context of the SVI commercials and *Hi International,* it appears anachronistic -- a public diplomacy text that was produced by diplomats and foreign service officers. However, it shares important themes with those other contemporary works. In late 2002, *Writers on America*, the most scholarly of the public diplomacy programs, was developed after a suggestion by Mark Jacobs, a working novelist and U.S. Foreign Service Officer. The writers were asked the

question, “In what sense do you see yourself as an American writer?” Pulitzer Prize, PEN/Faulkner, and National Book Critics Circle and other award winners responded with personal essays describing the diverse American experience to this public diplomacy effort. Well known authors such as Michael Chabon, Robert Pinsky, and Richard Ford wrote essays on the diverse American experience. The State department distributed copies of *Writers on America* in embassies throughout the world (Clack). The writers invited to participate in *Writers on America* create more than simple personal essays. Editor George Clack clearly states the agenda of *Writers on America* in the introduction: “The results could illuminate in an interesting way certain American values – freedom, diversity, democracy – that may not be well understood in all parts of the world.” Again, this program is an exercise in self-definition. It seeks to create a specific picture of American values. The writers were seemingly hand-picked from eclectic backgrounds – a Palestinian-American, a Caribbean-American, a Native American, a veteran of the Vietnam war, and a former poet laureate. Again, as in much of public diplomacy from *Porgy and Bess* through the SVI commercials, these writers are selected to advertise a multicultural image of America to these audiences.

The same Orientalist forces of self definition are at work in *Writers on America*. Some other common themes emerge in the collection, a concern with childhood, an immigrant culture, and realizing personal potential. The largely confessional personal essays relate the liberating potential of American pluralism. Editor Clack presented the contributing authors to *Writers on America* with an ostensibly simple question, “In what sense do you see yourself as an American writer?” In defining what it means to be an American writer, writers

naturally must describe what it means to be an American, an act that is inherently political. As further evidence of self-definition as a political act, *Writers on America* was translated into Arabic and distributed to U.S. embassies worldwide, an attempt to connect with writers in potentially hostile environments. These essays invoke the pluralist, democratic worldview of American poet Walt Whitman. He is mentioned in five of the essays. All, like poet Billy Collins hold Whitman in high esteem: "and the first poet to look at America with that naked eye – and, indeed, to appear naked before us – was Walt Whitman" (Collins). Whitman chronicled the diversity and beauty of America: a fitting patron saint for this collection of writers who promote America as a land of multiculturalism and opportunity.

In this collection, as in *Hi International*, the authors present the United States as the land of opportunity. In his essay, "An American Milk Bottle," novelist Charles Johnson pays tribute to his uncle, a prodigious milkman, contractor, and businessman in Evanston, Illinois, during the 1940s and 50s. While Johnson alludes to some vague hardships faced by African-Americans like him and his uncle, this story chronicles the spirit of American ingenuity:

> He understood -- and made us see through his personal example -- that while black people had endured often mind-numbing oppression, America was founded on principles, ideals, and documents (the Declaration of Independence and Constitution) that forced it to be forever self-correcting. That, he knew, was the ground that nurtured black Americans. The opportunities denied him would be there for us, he said. But only if we were educated and hard-working. (Johnson)

Johnson neglects to discuss any specific racial injustices that his uncle may have faced during that time, instead highlighting his faith in America – a "self-correcting" land of opportunity for all.

In her essay, Palestinian-American writer Naomi Shihab Nye praises the variety of American writers that have inspired her. These writers all have achieved success on their own terms. Like Johnson, Nye also touts the potential for opportunity in America:

> Everything was possible in the United States. This was not just a rumor, it was true. He might not grow rich overnight, but he could sell insurance, import colorful gifts from around the world, start little stores, become a journalist. He could do anything. (Nye)

Public diplomacy capitalizes on the image of America as a land of opportunity. This message attempts to persuade overseas audiences to partake in the riches of a country where the hard working can accomplish anything. Here, even in public diplomacy that closely mirrors the efforts of the Cold War era, the underlying message suggests a neoliberal desire to tie its audiences into an American economic system.

Other authors seem wary of the wholesale adoption of this vision of America. In his intriguingly titled, "The Compulsory Power of American Dreams," essayist Sven Birkerts, the son of Latvian immigrants, describes the process by which he learned to criticize the accepted definition of America. He writes, "in buying the American Dream, which I did with such zealous intensity, I was really buying a fantasy spun for me by Madison Avenue" (Birkerts, 2002). Rather than a land of wealthy, Western European whites, Birkerts learns that America is really about multiculturalism: "I like to think that whatever I now

comprehend as American has everything to do with notions of ethnicity and diversity (obligatory buzz-phrase though it is)." A point that eludes Birkerts, however, is the extent to which America's image of a multicultural paradise is constructed as well.

Other writers in this collection echo Birkets's linking of American strength to its multiculturalism. David Herbert Donald, a historian of American civilization, writes, "within that diversity there is, I think, a hidden unity, which is also distinctively American" (Donald). In his essay, poet Robert Creeley voices a similar notion: "It's been the genius of this country to have made a lyric poetry of unique diversity and power" (Creeley). *Writers on America*, *Hi International*, and other tools of public diplomacy benefit from this view of America. How can one disparage a land where all peoples of the world can emigrate, work hard, and enjoy prosperity?

The immigrant experience is especially prevalent in this collection. The authors present their accounts as success stories in which they reconcile their immigrant heritage with the great multiculturalism of America. In editor Clack's words:

> For the writer with recent immigrant roots, it seems there are two rites of passage: first, recognizing both one's longing for and differences from the American mainstream, and then discovering the integrity of one's own culture. (Clack)

Born in the Dominican Republic, writer Julia Alvarez describes her feelings of otherness and cultural dislocation upon arriving in America. With great difficulty, she attempts to choose between becoming American or retaining her heritage. Eventually, after discovering the poetry of Walt Whitman and Langston Hughes, she discovered that American was a place of

diversity. Echoing Hughes's poem, "I, too, sing America," she concludes her poem, "Yo también soy América/ I, too, am America" (Alvarez).

While many authors are content to maintain an ethnic voice, Calcutta-born author Bharati Mukherjee discusses the difficulty that she has had in defining herself as an American writer:

> That's the reason, perhaps, that I have clung so fiercely to the notion of my un-hyphenated, mainstream place in American writing. Perhaps it's too great a stretch for critics and reviewers to see me, and writers like me, as anything other than "Indian," "Indo-American," or "Asian." (Mukherjee)

In fact, these texts argue, American culture has evolved to encompass all of these ideas. While these authors come from a variety of cultures and choose a variety of terms to define themselves, they are brought together by an American sense of purpose. While the neoliberal goals of *Writers on America* are not as explicit as in *Hi International,* it does work in a very similar way to enhance America's brand.

Case Study: Broadcast Media

Just as *Hi International* is a neoliberal reimagining of *Encounter,* broadcast media of the War on Terror is a neoliberal reimagining of broadcast media of the Cold War. In this era, these programs are increasingly focused on selling American products -- music and televisual entertainment to the Middle East and Muslim world. Beginning in March 2002, the Broadcasting Board of Governors began revisiting its broadcast media efforts towards advancing American ideas overseas. First, the BBG retooled its Voice of America in the

Middle East to form Radio Sawa. Sawa, Arabic for "Together," operates 24-hours a day, seven-days-a-week in Arabic. It differed from its Voice of America forebears in its attempts to target a youth market. Sawa and its Iranian sister station, Fardi, attempted to accomplish this goal by broadcasting an "upbeat mix of Western and Arabic pop music" along with news and features on a wide variety of political and social issues (2003). The radio programming originated in Washington and was broadcast across the region, using a combination of AM and FM transmitters, digital audio satellite, shortwave, and the internet. Generally, Sawa's goal was to attract an audience through popular music, and then inform that audience about U.S. policies. The largest public diplomacy broadcasting program in the Middle East during this era was Al Hurra satellite news, launched in February of 2004. Al Hurra (Arabic for "The Free One") was a commercial-free Arabic-language satellite television channel for the Middle East, showing predominantly news and information. In addition to reporting on regional and international events, the channel broadcasts discussion programs, current affairs magazines and features on a variety of subjects. It was designed to compete directly with Al Jazeera and other satellite news agencies in the region, whose programming does not always present a favorable view of American foreign policy.

During the Cold War, the primary targets of international broadcasting were educated elites in regimes hostile to the U.S. In that era, broadcasts of RFE and RL strove to provide them with the tools they would need to foster change in their countries. During the War on Terror, the conflicts in the Middle East have taken a different form. With few exceptions, the regimes in this region were not deemed outwardly hostile to the United States. Rather than the political elites, who were generally amenable to American ideas, the young,

disadvantaged people within those countries posed the potential existential threat to American hegemony. In the years after 9/11, these individuals were perceived to be at risk to become insurgents and suicide bombers (Fuller vi-vii). Studies in the early 2000s by The Pew Research Center showed a negative, declining perception of the United States throughout the Middle East. A Zogby International poll, however, concluded that: "Arabs and Muslims generally hold a favorable view of American movies, television, science, technology, and education, but have generally unfavorable views of the United States when it comes to its policy toward Muslim countries and Palestinians" (GAO 7-8). This poll provided some insight into the motives of contemporary public diplomacy. If the target audience already enjoys American movies and music, the thinking went, why not adopt these products to fulfill political goals?

Apart from responsible journalism, part of the historical appeal of Western public diplomacy broadcasts has been entertainment and popular music. Many believe that this influx of culture was integral in bringing about the end of the Cold War:

> Yet, while historians may consider it regrettable, there is no doubt that for Eastern Europe's younger generation, rock music's anarchistic rhythms and message of individualism and personal freedom signaled a rejection of the entire fabric of state socialism, with its stodginess, its censorship and prohibitions, it bogus proletarian culture, its elevation of political reliability over merit and imagination. (Puddington 135)

After 9/11, because of the rush to prepare a public diplomacy strategy for an entirely new region, this Cold War model was seemingly accepted without much analysis.

That said, unlike in *Hi International, Writers on America,* and the SVI commercials, these radio and television broadcasts were not easily accessed in the United States. Because those primary texts are difficult to locate, we can only begin to understand them through their local reception. While public diplomacy rhetoric is designed with a particular audience in mind, it does not often acknowledge how that message is received (Kendrick & Fullerton). American ideology alone is often credited with persuading audiences during the Cold War. However, that ideology is not accepted uncritically in the Middle East and Muslim world. The BBG managed to report an early success in its ratings research. Radio Sawa replaced the VOA Arabic service, which, according to the GAO was "poorly performing" and "had listening ratings at around 2% of the population" (Ford 8). Since that replacement, BBG survey research claimed in 2004 that Radio Sawa is reaching 51% of its target audience. The BBG also suggested a positive correlation between listenership and favorable attitudes toward the U.S. While these results were promising on the surface, they certainly failed to suggest a clear victory in the ideological struggle. Simply reaching the audience was only part of the goal. As the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World wrote in their report: "This result was to be expected, since any listener to a U.S. sponsored station is likely to be favorably disposed to the United States. A better question would be whether Sawa had changed listeners' attitudes toward America" (Djerejian 31). It is important to remember that production of American ideology does not exist in a vacuum -- individuals interpret it outside of the influence of those who create it.

While the reaction among the target audience was difficult to predict, reaction in the press was clearer. A number of Middle Eastern journalists and opinion writers came out

strongly against America's broadcasting efforts (*Syria Times*, 2004). These authors are quick to recognize the efforts as propaganda. In general, this aspect of the broadcasting angers them, but they are more exasperated by another aspect. By expecting current affairs or entertainment programming to create opinion change in the Middle East, the American government overlooked the real problem: American foreign policy in Iraq, Palestine, Israel, and elsewhere. An *Al Ahram* writer describes the situation:

> The campaign appears to emanate from an egocentric world view which makes the American way of life the substance of its message despite the fact that, as most U.S. observers who follow the Middle East acknowledge, this is not what the Arab or Muslim populations of the region take issue with. (Sami)

If these editorials were an indication, the people of the Middle East did not object to American culture or the American people. America did not suffer from a simple image problem in the Middle East; instead, it had a real problem as a consequence of its policies in the region.

Muslim clerics were even more vehemently opposed to the American broadcasters. Many engaged in a counterpropaganda to characterize the influx of new media as part of a Manichean battle of good and evil, often matching the rhetoric of the Bush administration. An *Arab News* article described a cleric's reaction to Al Hurra television:

> Sheikh Sudais denounced a "war of ideas" being waged by parts of the Western media with the aim of imposing particular cultural and intellectual patterns and dictating specific reforms in the name of globalization, openness and freedom. The U.S. government-funded Al-Hurra Arabic channel was

> aimed at sowing doubt among Muslims, especially women, about Islamic teachings and discrediting Islamic principles. "It spreads intellectual chaos and destroys the correct thinking of the Ummah and its cultural heritage," he said… Modern information technology must be harnessed to promote the right Islamic concepts, he added. (Ghafour)

On one hand, Sheikh Sudais condemned international broadcasting for spreading "intellectual chaos." At the same time, though, he seemed to admire the technology it represents, adding that information technology "must be harnessed." As a fellow propagandist, he appreciated how mass media can be an essential method of persuasion.

While Sheikh Sudais and other clerics framed the international broadcasting in the harshest of terms, other opinion leaders in the Middle East had an interesting, more sober reaction. Hani Shukrallah wrote: "Hurra, Sawa, and *Hi* have not been giving me sleepless nights, just yawns of boredom. The ludicrousness of the American cultural invasion (or, if you will, aggressive marketing drive) is equaled only by the ludicrousness of the Arabs' and Muslims' paranoid conviction that a cultural invasion is actually afoot" (Shukrallah). Notice that Shukrallah is not convinced by the idea that American has begun a "cultural invasion." Instead, he recognizes American public diplomacy as an "aggressive marketing drive," trying to tie its audience into a neoliberal economic system.

Shulkrallah's boredom is precisely the point. Certainly, the U.S. in this era needed to open lines of communication with the Middle East; however, this approach failed to create a real dialogue. The commercials, radio programs, and *Hi International* were all one-way communications. They did not create a meaningful discussion or even allow for audience

feedback, all the while avoiding a very important issue: America's foreign policy. The creators of the initiatives made no effort to solve the problem of source credibility – one of the most significant problems all persuasion efforts face. Unlike the more secretive programs during the Cold War, these intended recipients knew that the programs are American in origin, from a region with a manipulative political agenda. This immediately created a deficit in trust that was difficult to overcome. We learn from the governmental reports, Kendrick and Fullerton, and local editorials that the audience perceives these efforts as propaganda messages from a manipulative world power.

In addition to failures of dialogue creation and source credibility, organizational challenges worked to impede the success of America's public diplomacy efforts during the early years of the War on Terror. Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Charlotte Beers, the advertising executive tasked with rebranding America, resigned quietly in March 2003. She was replaced with Margaret Tutwiler, a Washington insider and former Ambassador to Morocco. Tutwiler had an even shorter tenure, holding the post for only six months, soon accepting a position as an executive at the New York Stock Exchange. Her replacement, public relations executive, Karen Hughes similarly failed to achieve any measurable success. Regardless, the creators of public diplomacy have taken a clear lesson from this era. Hiring corporate advertising and public relation executives was an important step in the move to a neoliberal public diplomacy. As I will discuss in the next chapter, subsequent administrations, seemingly tired with unsuccessful executive control of public diplomacy efforts, privatize these efforts even further. They change their strategies to decentralize and even outsource America's public diplomacy.

Chapter 4: Obama Era Public Diplomacy, the Smith-Mundt Act, and Neoliberalism

The hiring of advertising executive Charlotte Beers to manage American public diplomacy was neither the beginning of neoliberal influences into the discipline, nor was it the end. Even during the Cold War, public diplomacy often saw its country and citizens as a brand to sell overseas and attempted to open up new markets in those countries. However, the decades since her term in office have seen an exponential increase in not just the marketing strategies adopted by public diplomacy, but also the corporate partnerships it adopts. In the early years of the War on Terror, public diplomacy was increasingly authored in terms of advertising methods. That move to a more business and marketing based model only foreshadowed the drastic neoliberal shifts -- especially those corporate sponsorships and an increased reliance on social media -- that were to come during the Obama administration. In this chapter, I will discuss the policy shifts and communication initiatives that changed public diplomacy in the years immediately after the George W. Bush administration. At this time, the emergence of new media technologies meant that Cold War models of communication were increasingly met with skepticism. The rise of social media in particular signified that governments could no longer count on the ability to unilaterally disseminate their ideas. In 2010 alone, events ranging from the release of classified State Department diplomatic documents on Wikileaks to the earliest effects of the Arab Spring indicated that governments around the globe were increasingly vulnerable to messages that were outside of their control. The anxiety of this moment, the looming threat of decentralized

communication, creates a profound shift in public diplomacy. In these years, the effects are twofold: First, the U.S. Government amended the 54-year old Smith-Mundt Act to allow itself to propagandize its own people. Second, the State Department and other organizations increasingly adopt new media strategies and partners with new media organizations to voice its ideas overseas. These two shifts work together to allow for American public diplomacy to link its targets more fully into a neoliberal economic system, one that advertises America and its people as a product and sees its audience as consumers. By leveraging advertising strategies, corporate sponsorship, celebrity culture, and social media, contemporary public diplomacy even more explicitly attempts to connect its audience to the American economy.

That first shift, the most prevalent reshaping of official policy is the 2012 "modernization" of the Smith-Mundt Act. The original 1948 Smith-Mundt Act enabled the State Department and other governmental agencies to create public diplomacy messages. In order to deny those departments the ability to propagandize their own people, the act explicitly limited those messages to overseas audiences. That Act's 2012 "modernization," however, undit that last provision and allowed for those agencies to distribute those messages domestically. The second profound shift is the increasingly neoliberal tendency to "outsource" public diplomacy efforts to private companies and organizations. Particularly under Obama, international communications since 2008 have increasingly relied on corporate sponsorships, attached themselves to celebrity culture, and made use of third party social media platforms.

At the same time as these programs are increasingly privatized, relying on the branding, messaging, and technology of non-governmental organizations, laws have been

adjusted to allow for an even broader audience. Not only do these public diplomacy programs propagandize a foreign other, they have now been called upon to influence a domestic audience. This deceptively simple revision actually underscores the neoliberal goals of these programs. The targets of public diplomacy, in other times foreign elites seeking intellectual engagement, are now merely viewed as consumers. The following sections will feature a series of case studies in the shifting nature of public diplomacy during the Obama years. First, I will analyze the so-called "modernization" of the Smith-Mundt Act in 2012, and then I will proceed to discuss a series of case studies from the Obama administration that demonstrate the increasing privatization of these public diplomacy messages. By privatizing these messages and marking certain individuals as "other," these messages fulfil neoliberal obligations to objectify individuals and seek only relationships that are economically beneficial.

Case Study: The Smith-Mundt Modernization Act and Domestic Propaganda

As discussed in the Cold War chapter, in the years following World War II, the United States was not only in the midst of the ideological battle of the Cold War, it was also in a battle with its own values. How could we simultaneously adhere to our own open and democratic values and counteract Soviet propaganda overseas? The sheer volume of Communist propaganda answered that question in the early years of the Cold War. In the fall of 1947, a joint House and Senate committee visited U.S. diplomatic establishments in Western and Eastern Europe, in an attempt to assess the situation. The diplomats they encountered all described an onslaught of disinformation from the Soviet Union, which was

damaging public opinion of America throughout the region. A French diplomat described the Soviet Union's messaging as a "tremendous symphony orchestra" (quoted in Ninkovich 131). Smith-Mundt's proponents in the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations argued the act was crucial because America was locked in an ideological battle and needed to combat "the weapons of false propaganda and misinformation and the inability on the part of the United States to deal adequately with those weapons" (Senate Committee on Foreign Relations quoted in Pirsein 138).

Thus, In May 1947, then-Representative Karl E. Mundt (R-SD) introduced what would eventually become the United States Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 (more commonly known as the Smith-Mundt Act) into the House. The act passed the House in June and the Senate in January of 1948. President Harry S. Truman signed it into law on January 27, 1948. Most importantly, it authorized the U.S. State Department to distribute messages throughout the world using a variety of media.While the State Department was already performing some of these activities, the act codified those processes. The second provision, which was to be removed in 2012, was to explicitly ban the domestic use of any propaganda created for overseas use. With the atrocities enabled by totalitarian propaganda a recent memory, the authors of the 1948 Smith-Mundt Act wanted to ensure that the United States could never propagandize its own people. There was some resistance to putting this power in the hands of those in the State Department. In fact, in the years preceding the act, members of Congress were suspicious that members of the State Department might have Communist sympathies (Pirsein 138).

It is important to read the text of the original Act and its "modernization" carefully, to see the subtle ways that American attitudes about propaganda have shifted. The text of the Smith-Mundt Act begins as follows:

> The Congress hereby declares that the objectives of this Act are to enable the Government of the United States to promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries, and to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. (Smith-Mundt Act)

The language is careful to differentiate itself from the propagandistic efforts of the Communists. Instead of shaping opinion, American international messages seek to "promote a better understanding." We see that same notion continue through all American public diplomacy. Only a decade before, Colin Powell argued that we just need to "tell America's story." Other nations merely lacked adequate messages about America. We would not need to embellish the truth, only counteract the misinformation created by other countries.

The language of the act continues to authorize "an information service to disseminate abroad information about the United States, its people, and policies" and "an educational exchange service to cooperate with other nations." While its rhetorical aims are more complex, politically, the act sought to strengthen international relations, not advance American interests. For example, the act sought to highlight America's activities in partnership with the United Nations: "In carrying out the objectives of this Act, information concerning the participation of the United States in the United Nations, its organizations and functions, shall be emphasized." In addition, the act encourages the types of reciprocal

cultural exchanges favored by Senator William Fulbright, with a large section outlining the "Interchange of Persons, Knowledge, and Skills." That said, the act, embodying the fears of Communists working within the State Department, allowed for a "Loyalty Check on Personnel." It stated: "No citizen or resident of the United States, whether or not now in the employ of the Government, may be employed or assigned to duties by the Government under this Act until such individual has been investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and a report thereon has been made to the Secretary of State." While the language is a bit obtuse, this clause rhetorically expresses the contemporary anxieties around maintaining an ideological purity: Every person tasked with creating these messages must be thoroughly vetted by the FBI. It is important to remember this clause as the act and public diplomacy are increasingly privatized in our current neoliberal era, where humans are seen primarily in terms of their economic value, not their ideological inclinations.

While it came to symbolize the banning of the domestic uses of State Department propaganda, the Smith-Mundt Act does not explicitly limit those messages. Instead, it authorized the State Department's activities in the following manner:

> The Secretary is authorized, when he finds it appropriate, to provide for the preparation, and dissemination abroad, of information about the United States, its people, and its policies, through press, publications, radio, motion pictures, and other information media, and through information centers and instructors abroad.

At the conclusion of that sentence, which authorizes a host of activities, the word "abroad" is crucial. Though it designates these activities for an international audience, it does not

explicitly ban their use here. Instead, it does describe the means by which they will be available:

> Any such press release or radio script, on request, shall be available in the English language at the Department of State, at all reasonable times following its release as information abroad, for examination by representatives of United States press associations, newspapers, magazines, radio systems and stations, and, on request, shall be made available to Members of Congress.

While not clearly banning these messages, this passage outlines the means by which certain members of the press and Government might deliberately find access to them. Interestingly, the language that gets closest to an outright ban is voiced as a reluctance to interfere with corporate broadcasting entities:

> In authorizing international information activities under this Act, it is the sense of the Congress (1) that the Secretary shall reduce such Government information activities whenever corresponding private information dissemination is found to be adequate; (2) that nothing in this Act shall be construed to give the Department a monopoly in the production or sponsorship on the air of short-wave broadcasting programs, or a monopoly in any other medium of Information.

That is, the State Department must reduce these activities whenever there is "adequate" "private information dissemination" from corporate media entities. Also, the State Department must be careful to not compete with the domestic media companies. Here, because areas with a vibrant, multimodal media environment would not need propaganda

messages authored by the U.S. government, the original act requires the State Department to avoid stepping on the toes of corporate media organizations. Again, this language indicates a profound shift in this Act's "modernization" and implementation in the decades since the War on Terror. Today, not only does the State Department disseminate messages in places with robust media environments, it also partners with other corporate communications platforms to even further confuse the relationship between state-sponsored and privately-produced messages. By leveraging those corporate partnerships, it becomes easier for American public diplomacy to disguise its origins and thus to amplify its voice in overseas media environments.

Over the subsequent decades after its inception, though, the Smith-Mundt ban was made more explicit. In 1965, *Years of Lightning, Day of Drums,* a U.S. Information Agency film on the life of John F. Kennedy, was released to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In the sympathetic climate in the years after his assassination, the Center had rights to distribute the film within the United States. In the resolution granting permission, Congress was careful to designate this as a special case (Sager). The resolution stated, "It is further the sense of Congress that the expression of congressional intent embodied in this joint resolution is to be limited solely to the film referred to herein, and that nothing contained in this joint resolution should be construed to establish a precedent for making other materials prepared by the United States Information Agency available for general distribution in the United States" (Joint Resolution To Allow…). That resolution continued to make it clear that no future similar documentaries would be produced without Congressional permission: "Any documentary film which has been, is now being, or is

hereafter produced by any Government department or agency with appropriations out of the Treasury concerning the life, character, and public service of any individual who has served or is serving the Government of the United States in any official capacity shall not be distributed or shown in public in this country during the lifetime of the said official or after the death of such official unless authorized by law in each specific case" (ibid). Even in the years after Kennedy's assassination, the act restricted not only the distribution of a film honoring his life and legacy, but any potential future films that might describe the character or service of any public official.

In 1972, Senator James L. Buckley requested that another film produced by that USIA, *Czechoslovakia 1968,* be broadcast in the United States. Worried that this broadcast might set a precedent, a group of senators led by Senator Fulbright drafted a blanket resolution banning this type of programming. The Foreign Relations Authorization Act of 1972 formally banned the broadcast of U.S. Government-produced materials in the United States but also allowed for access by academics. In 1985, Senator Edward Zorinsky amended the Smith-Mundt act to further strengthen the prohibition on domestic propaganda (Sager). While this adjustment might seem arbitrary, it is crucial to note that in this era, the bar was raised ever-higher for the types of messages that the U.S. government could distribute to its own people. While occasionally contentious, the understanding that these messages were not for domestic audiences stood largely intact for the second half of the 20th century. In this era, in the decades before neoliberal economic goals justified relaxing these restrictions, public diplomacy was primarily concerned with influencing only overseas audiences, not concerning itself with potential domestic threats.

In the last years of the George W. Bush Administration, though, thought leaders began to criticize the Smith-Mundt Act for its outdated understanding of global flows of information. Telecommunications technology, the internet, satellite television, and other transnational media made instantly made messages available globally. The thinking went, if our enemies could communicate directly with Americans within American borders, why should the U.S. Government be hindered from doing the same. In 2007, Policy Analyst Juliana Geran Pilon authored a report for *The Heritage Foundation,* arguing that "in this age of instant and global communication, expecting to prevent such public information from reaching Americans is unrealistic and technologically impossible." Her argument centered around the fact that "American generosity is virtually unknown at home and abroad." That is, most of the world is unaware of our largesse, particularly foreign assistance. "Instead of shielding Americans from learning about how their government assists and communicates with foreign publics," Pilon argues, "Congress should ensure that taxpayers are made aware of those efforts." This assertion -- that the U.S. Government should message its citizens with news of its benevolence -- seems to be in direct opposition to the checks that lawmakers like Senator Fulbright intended to place on the government's ability to propagandize itself. Fulbright, keenly aware of the threat of totalitarian governments, was averse to any sort of propaganda, even asking for restrictions on international news broadcasts during the Cold War. To alter the act to "ensure that taxpayers are made aware" of these activities is contrary to the original intention of the act, which was to prevent the American government from propagandizing itself.

In 2012, Representatives Mac Thornberry and Adam Smith introduced legislation to repeal Smith-Mundt's ban on the domestic dissemination of information. The bill, the Smith-Mundt Modernization Act of 2012, was written to allow the Government to distribute information throughout the United States. That language is presented as a clarification of the original act:

> Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the Department of State or the Broadcasting Board of Governors from engaging in any medium or form of communication, either directly or indirectly, because a United States domestic audience is or may be thereby exposed to program material, or based on a presumption of such exposure. Such material may be made available within the United States and disseminated, when appropriate. (Smith-Mundt Modernization Act)

While this language clearly allows for the unfettered distribution of Government-produced information. Still, the act, even as it seems unequivocal in its language, adds this curious caveat: "No funds authorized to be appropriated to the Department of State or the Broadcasting Board of Governors shall be used to influence public opinion in the United States." It is difficult to reconcile these two ideas. Even if Congressmen wish to avoid referring to these communications as "propaganda," failing to recognize their intent to "influence public opinion" seems willfully obtuse.

In a 2012 press release on the introduction of the bill, Congressman Mac Thornberry describes a specific need for the act's "modernization:" "For example, in 2009 the law prohibited a Minneapolis-based radio station with a large Somali-American audience from

replaying a Voice of America-produced piece rebutting terrorist propaganda. Even after the community was targeted for recruitment by al-Shabab and other extremists, government lawyers refused the replay request, noting that Smith-Mundt tied their hands" (Thornberry). It is important to see that Thornberry argues for the benefits of domestic propaganda. He is implementing these changes because he perceives a threat from new forms of internet-based mass media, especially at they threatens the primacy of twentieth century media, such as VOA and radio. The original Smith-Mundt Act and its immediate clarifications was careful to avoid this paternalistic understanding of media environments. More egregiously, Thornberry has identified a particular group of Americans (Somali-Americans) whom he portrays as in particular need of affirmative information about America.

The monumental shift from Cold War era public diplomacy is crucial. After decades of resistance to domestic propaganda, this "modernization" of the act dismantles the fire wall constructed to protect the American public. Of course, the great irony is that, at the same time that these programs portraying the United States as multicultural and meritocratic, public diplomacy programs are actively deployed inside the borders of the United States. The restrictions on when it can do so—to target Muslims who might receive anti-American messages at their mosques or online—are in line with other neoliberal programs that effectively create a second class of citizenship. More alarmingly, the increased power of the executive branch and its desire to circumvent traditional public diplomacy channels allows these injustices to occur without intervention. Put simply, this modernization gives more power to the propagandists to reach not just audiences overseas, but those at home as well. As we will see in the following section, this move is couples with an increase in privatization

of public diplomacy messages, which also allows the government to disguise itself when voicing ideas overseas. Together, these moves reduce the government's accountability and allow it to take more political and economic advantage over the targets of public diplomacy messages.

Case Study: Public Diplomacy 2.0 and the Democracy Video Challenge

A key facet of the current neoliberal era of government in general and public diplomacy in particular is the increasing privatization of governmental activities that were once the purview of the public sector. At the end of the branding-focused George W. Bush era of Public Diplomacy, Karen Hughes resigned from her post as Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Global Affairs in 2007. She was replaced by James K. Glassman, a former chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors. Though he was only in office a few months, Glassman was the first Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Global Affairs who truly grappled with the need to reimagine communications in, what was then referred to as Web 2.0, the rise of social media. As Glassman himself explains, "We have arrived at the view that the best way to achieve our goals in public diplomacy is through a new approach to communicating, an approach that is made far easier because of the emergence of Web 2.0, or social networking, technologies." Early in his tenure, Glassman would meet the emergence of Web 2.0 by calling for what he termed "Public Diplomacy 2.0," international communications that purported to empower anti-totalitarian and anti-terror voices overseas and otherwise create a dialogue with foreign publics. Nicholas Cull of the Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism described the profound shift that the internet requires of

foreign policy communications: "The point, as Glassman knew and Karen Hughes perhaps realized at the very end of her tenure, was that the [State] Department could no longer expect to control its message, but merely offer the message to the world and be open to subsequent discussion, which it would not own either" (Cull "The Long Road"). That is, in this era, efforts at public diplomacy must contend with the rise of social media, a double-edged sword that simultaneously empowers the dissemination of ideas while it allows for those ideas to be criticized in real time.

On December 1, 2008, Glassman gave a speech to the New America Foundation in which he described a new approach to public diplomacy, what he called "Public Diplomacy 2.0." For Glassman, the previous iteration of public diplomacy was merely a monologue, where the United States was merely disseminating its values overseas. He observes, "the view by others that we don't respect their opinions, that we do not actively listen and understand." In this new phase, "Public Diplomacy 2.0," he says, "we in government act as a facilitator or convener." Here, we see rhetoric that recalls many previous public diplomacy efforts, such as Senator Fulbright's efforts in educational exchange. Yet, in stark contrast to those earlier programs, because of information technologies, exponentially more voices overseas are waiting to be heard and offer a rebuttal to state-sponsored communications.

Accordingly, to accomplish this goal to make the government a "convener," Glassman advocates a neoliberal approach to public diplomacy: he will lean heavily on social media and corporate guidance to disseminate ideas around the world. This approach is neoliberal because it expects corporations to fill in the gaps of knowledge-creation that the government cannot meet. Referencing an experience with a young Colombian man who

started an anti-FARC Facebook group, Glassman expresses the need to empower individuals in their own countries and communities to fight terrorism. This practice recalls Jodi Dean's idea of communicative capitalism, which "designates the strange merging of democracy and capitalism in which contemporary subjects are produced and trapped. It does so by highlighting the way networked communications bring the two together. The values heralded as central to democracy take material form in networked communications technologies" (22-23). That is, information technology, Glassman's "Web 2.0," creates the appearance of democracy while instead binding subjects into market relationships. Dean describes how "communicative capitalism materializes and repurposes democratic ideals and aspirations in ways that strengthen and support globalized neoliberalism" (17). In accordance with Dean, Glassman is clearly speaking in the pre-Trump era, when social media platforms are seen as enablers of free communication, not corporations who often overlook extremist views. Glassman asks, "Could these young people both undermine pernicious ideologies and find a productive outlet, a way to create positive identities through a global network that promotes peace and freedom rather than death and totalitarianism?"

Glassman's answer is a common one in the neoliberal era: Yes, but with corporate partnership. He describes a conference that brought young fighters of extremism to New York. That conference, The Alliance of Youth Movements Summit, met once a year for three years: in 2008 in New York, 2009 in Mexico City, and 2010 in London. The purpose of the conferences was "to explore ways to advance grassroots movements seeking positive social change through 21st century technology and tools" ("Alliance of Youth Movement Summit"). The conferences were sponsored by a host of new media companies: "Google,

MTV, AT&T, Howcast.com, Access 360 Media, Columbia University, and Facebook itself." Corporate involvement in these efforts of public diplomacy went beyond simple sponsorship, though.

Glassman's first new media project was the Democracy Video Challenge, a contest, launched in 2008 to encourage participants around the world to create viral videos about democracy. His explanation is worth quoting at length:

> A few months ago, we formed a partnership – with such private-sector organizations as NBC Universal, the Directors Guild of America, and the Tisch School at NYU -- to launch what's called the Democracy Video Contest. Entrants make their own three-minute videos, posted to a site on YouTube, with the topic, "Democracy Is…" Winners will be determined by a vote of the public over the Internet. While we did set a few rules – no pro-terrorist or pornographic videos – it is certainly possible that the winner of the contest will espouse views not completely shared by the U.S. Government. And today, our Education and Cultural Affairs Bureau launches a similar video contest, in partnership with the Adobe Foundation, with the theme, "My Culture Plus Your Culture Equals…" (Glassman)

This passage is especially notable for its assumption that corporate involvement in these enterprises is a value-neutral proposition, that corporate sponsorship. In reality, that corporate involvement sets a completely different set of expectations (not just that they not be "pro-terrorist" or "pornographic") on what are expected to be videos showcasing democracy. In the most visible example, YouTube's sponsorship of the Democracy Video Challenge is a

crucial part of the competition's branding: Even the award trophy itself, a white triangle against a red background, clearly recalls the YouTube logo, the site which sponsors the contest and hosts the videos (Figure 4).

Figure 4: YouTube screenshot, Farbod Khoshtinat receives the Democracy Video Award from U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, September 2010. (Democracy Challenge)

It is easy to see the State Department's use of a social media platform like YouTube as a pragmatic compromise to reach a wider audience. The truth is more complicated, though. By leveraging the brand and its iconography, the State Department further confuses the divide between government-sponsored and publicly-created communications. The impact of these privatizations are twofold. First, they allow for the government to partially disguise its activities by sharing responsibilities with a popular, democratizing social media brand. Also, though, as we learn from Dean, partnering with information technologies commodifies democratic activities to serve neoliberal economies.

Case Study: Layalina and "Private" Public Diplomacy

A handful of other, similarly-inspired diplomatic efforts emerged during the Obama administration, seeking to use new media to empower overseas voices. As early as 2002, an editorial in *The New York Times* by public relations executive Michael Holtzman argued that "To be effective, public diplomacy must be a function of publics, not governments; its messages must be real, not abstract" (Holtzman). In this article, Holtzman dramatically reimagines the definition of public diplomacy, which, since its first imagining, was always by definition state-sponsored communications. Yet, many public relations practitioners over the past decade have continued this reimagining of public diplomacy, encouraging a privatized approach to the craft. A series of private public relations firms have taken it upon themselves to repair relations between the U.S. and the rest of the world. In the coming pages, we will see how these firms, divorced from the mandates of professional foreign service officers, increasingly see public diplomacy through a neoliberal frame: America and Americans are products to sell and foreign publics are consumers to court.

In many cases, these media organizations work outside of the purview of the U.S. Government, what is known as "Private" Public Diplomacy. For example, Marc Ginsberg, the Ambassador to Morocco during the Clinton Administration, founded Layalina Productions, an American-based non-profit producer of television programming for distribution in the Middle East. Ginsberg, in an article written for *The Huffington Post,* stated that the goals of Layalina were to address "U.S. image challenges in the Middle East." While not operating as an official governmental organization, Layalina seeks to shape the Middle

Eastern perception of America, in particular to counteract shows like "the Jerry Springer Show, Dallas, Baywatch and ancient game shows that collectively provide Arab viewers not the most favorable image of Americans and their national values and aspirations." An early effort of Laylania coordinated in the summer of 2008 with the Sundance Channel to air a reality series called "On the Road in America." The company has also produced other reality and comedy shows that intend to bridge the perceived cultural divide between the United States and the Middle East.

The most important concern is that Layalina is among other corporations who are forwarding a foreign policy agenda outside of the U.S. government's purview. As Ginsberg writes, "Layalina, along with other like-minded private sector ventures engaged in 'private' public diplomacy, are part of the new "soft power" that will be needed to help a new president win the battle of hearts and minds in the Middle East." Layalina also produces a monthly opinion publication called "Perspectives," which, according to their website, "provides a forum to contextualize and analyze salient topics, concepts and developments that are of interest to the public diplomacy community as well as to Arab media followers." Here, though they are not funded by the American government, the producers of "private" public diplomacy have adopted the practices of publications like *Encounter.*

For all of its failings as deceptive propaganda, *Encounter* was at least helmed by experts in international communication who were given a specific task: demonstrate the strength of American democracy. Private public diplomacy has no such mandate, nor any oversight. While this point may be obvious, it bears repeating. For all of its problems, perhaps because of all of its problems, public diplomacy needs to be beholden to a higher

power for direction and oversight. The practitioners of private public diplomacy are only held to their own consciences. Often, those consciences allow for abuse of power. For example, in the decades since his 2002 *The New York Times* editorial, Michael Holtzman has advocated for what he might think of as sports-related diplomacy. As a public relations representative, he represented Qatar in its successful bid for the 2022 World Cup. That bid, and Holtzman in particular, has been criticized for corruption (Montague and Panja). Here we see one of the most straightforward risks of increased privatization: a lack of oversight. As these programs are moved away from career diplomats and into the influence of corporations and private organizations, they are more susceptible to exploitation, to become beholden to the market demands of neoliberal economies.

Case Study: Let Girls Learn

Even if we learn the lessons from Layalina Productions and rely on government-initiated public diplomacy, the results are still bleak. In this era, even when public diplomacy originates within the government, it still has a potentially troubling relationship with private actors. The culmination of Obama-era synergy between foreign policy and corporate branding (with a healthy dose of celebrity culture may have occurred on James Corden's "Carpool Karaoke," a segment of CBS's *Late Late Show* where celebrities ride shotgun with Corden and sing along with their favorite songs, often creating viral videos in the process. On a special episode in July 2016, Corden's guest was First Lady Michelle Obama. In the segment, Corden pretended to be a White House visitor, entering the grounds through the front gates, saying he was arriving for an afternoon tour. Once he made it

through security, Obama hopped into his car and announced that she would be his tour guide that afternoon. His in-studio audience met that moment with tremendous, excited applause. Obama's star power, particularly in this era, is undeniable. Much of the American public admired her and her taste, and seeing her engage with popular culture was a savored treat.

Once they got rolling, in a tidy circular route on the White House grounds, Obama and Corden made their way through charming banter and a pair of tasteful pop songs: Stevie Wonder's "Signed, Sealed Delivered I'm Yours" and Beyonce's "Single Ladies." Then, James Corden inquires, "Now you've launched a Snapchat. What made you launch… What made you want to get on the old Snapchat?" Obama responds, describing her new "Let Girls Learn" initiative to encourage girls' educational programs worldwide. Citing the fact that "62 million girls worldwide" "aren't in school for a variety of different reasons," she argues, "So much could be corrected in the world if girls were educated and had power over their lives." The program, inspired by a 2013 White House visit by Malala Yousafzai, would support a variety of programs around the world through a coordinated effort among the Peace Corps, the Department of State, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the White House, and the United States Agency for International Development. According to the USAID site announcing the program, "the initiative will elevate existing programs, including in areas of conflict and crisis, leverage public-private partnerships, and challenge organizations and governments to commit resources to lift up adolescent girls worldwide" ("Let Girls Learn"). Those "public-private partnerships" were crucial to the program, or as Obama confronts the challenge of communicating with a global network of girls on "Carpool Karaoke," "Snapchat was a good way to kinda hook them in."

After some banter in which Obama and Corden make goofy suggestions about the President using Snapchat filters, the pair come to a third song. As the brassy opening notes of the song begin, Obama exclaims “This is my song!” She means this literally. The song is a collaborative product intended to be sold to worldwide publics. Obama commissioned the song, “This is For My Girls,” as a charity single to support her Let Girls Learn initiative. The single features vibrant young stars like Kelly Clarkson, Janelle Monáe, Kelly Rowland, Zendaya, and Missy Elliott. As the opening verse arrives, Corden and Obama sing along with joy:

> This is for my girls all around the world
>
> Stand up, put your head up
>
> Don't take nothing from nobody
>
> This is for my girls stand up and be heard
>
> This is for my ladies, my sisters, all over
>
> This is for my girls (Late Late Show)

Missy Elliott herself shows up to assist with her verse and then her own “Get Ur Freak On,” much to the studio audience’s (and this writer’s) delight. The entire fourteen minute segment is inarguably entertaining.

Figure 5: YouTube Screenshot: Michelle Obama, Missy Elliott, and James Corden Sing "This is For My Girls" (Late Late Show)

After the segment, Corden reminds his audience to follow the First Lady on Snapchat and to buy the song -- produced by AOL's makers.com -- on iTunes.

This policy initiative's synergies among corporations and celebrity culture do not end there. Actresses Meryl Streep and Freida Pinto joined Obama on her trip to Liberia and Morocco to tout activities of the Let Girls Program. Obama blogged about that trip on HelloGiggles.com, a site founded by musician and actress Zooey Deschanel but recently purchased by Time Inc (Obama). *In Style* magazine had a special issue devoted to Obama's project (Pulia). On an episode of reality show Project Runway Jr., the First Lady appeared to announce that the contestant who won a particular challenge would be given the opportunity to design a backpack to be sold at Land's End ("Project Runway").

Let Girls Learn is a crucial example of what public diplomacy looks like in this era. While the goal (empowering young women around the world) is laudable and centrally driven, it makes use of countless privatized media channels, the star power of celebrities, and

corporations to disseminate its message. Forgetting Marshall McLuhan's maxim, "the medium is the message," social media platforms are leveraged as if they do not shape the messages that they contain. Instead, again recalling Dean's communicative capitalism, these partnerships with social media companies sublimate democratic ideals to serve market goals. In reality, the celebrities and corporations that give Let Girls Learn its glossy veneer also become the message itself. The excitement around the program became the story, not the program itself.

After Donald Trump took office, CNN released an internal memo suggesting that the program would be quickly discontinued, without a great deal of public outcry and nary a celebrity tweet (Liptak). Though firmly in a neoliberal economic reality, the transition to the Trump era does not capitalize on these same paradigms. In the years since the Cold War, public diplomacy has become increasingly neoliberally-minded. Especially under Obama, public diplomacy was increasingly privatized, leveraging corporate partnerships to disseminate public diplomacy messages abroad. The Smith-Mundt Act was revised to allow for the country to propagandize people within its own borders. The trend of all of these efforts is to allow for less oversight for public diplomacy messages. In accordance with this lack of oversight, increasingly in this era, public diplomacy supports neoliberalism in three key ways: it sees its country and its people as a product and its audience as consumers; it empowers private corporations to make decisions about the messages America produces about itself; and it minimizes individual liberty for the sake of maintaining market-based relationships.

As I bring this dissertation to a close, it would be reasonable to expect this trend to continue in a similar vein during the Trump era. Clearly, Trump encourages and benefits from neoliberal economics[40]. With his business-friendly policies and faith in business to solve most problems, one might assume that he would outsource public diplomacy in a similar way to Obama. However, in the Trump administration, the role of public diplomacy is not as clearly orchestrated. As one can imagine from a reality show host and insatiable Twitter user, the interrelationship between popular culture and foreign policy communications gets even more obscure. As in previous decades, he clearly appreciates the potential of American mass media. Yet, as we will see, in his one clear departure from past administrations, he is the first president to devalue American multiculturalism. While previous eras of public diplomacy hold America's multiculturalism as its key strength, Trump undercuts this idea, using the fear of the other to shape his foreign policy messages.

[40] See, for example, Daniel Bessner and Matthew Sparke's "Don't let his trade policy fool you: Trump is a neoliberal" in *The Washington Post*.

Conclusion: Trump and Moving Forward

This dissertation began with the question: How has public diplomacy rhetoric changed since the War on Terror and what is the meaning of that change? The previous chapters have addressed this question at length, offering case studies of key programs. To the existing scholarship, this dissertation contributes a greater understanding of the rhetorical shifts in public diplomacy over the previous decades, particularly in how they increasingly use popular culture and social media to create a particular image of America that benefits neoliberal empire. This chapter will summarize those changes and describe how those same changes have emerged during the Trump era. While the case studies in this chapter will not go into as much depth as those in the previous chapters, they will offer a sense of the discontinuities and, more often, the continuities in Trump-era public diplomacy. For all of the radical departures of the Trump administration's most visible communication methods, its public diplomacy efforts are actually largely consistent with those of his precursors. Before I discuss Trump's approaches, I will briefly synthesize the work of the previous chapters.

Public diplomacy found its maturity during the Cold War, at a time when America was locked in a clear ideological battle against communism and the Soviet Union. Consequently, the messages of this era were more clearly ideological and based in traditional media. The messages worked to counteract messages from the other side of the Iron Curtain, to assert America's cultural value, and to express the superiority of a capitalist worldview. American uses of public diplomacy since the events of September 11, 2001 have largely perpetuated this model. Today, as during the Cold War, public diplomacy messages are

concerned with asserting American cultural ideas and the benefits of free market capitalism. However, this dissertation has identified some important changes, particularly along four key areas.

First, public diplomacy messages have shifted to focus more explicitly on race and identity. While Cold War era public diplomacy acknowledged racial diversity as an asset[41], public diplomacy has only prominently foregrounded racial difference since 9/11[42]. Second, popular culture has become an increasingly more important vehicle for these communications[43]. Third, while broadcasting and publications still have a place, public diplomacy has slowly begun to make use of the internet and social media, allowing for more targeted messages to specific groups[44]. Finally, the level of NGO and corporate sponsorship in these programs has increased drastically[45]. It is important to analyze these changes because the shift in rhetoric mirrors some key shifts in American culture of the past two decades. An increased prominence of corporate-sponsored popular culture[46] and social media inform more conversations about the role of race and identity[47] in our lives. Many of these changes have become even more pronounced during the first few years of the Trump presidency.

The past four years, since the end of the Obama administration, have seen radical change in the style of the new Chief Executive, Donald Trump. While, in many senses, the changes to public diplomacy policy have been similarly radical, in truth they are a logical

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[41] The 1950s traveling production of *Porgy and Bess*, for example.
[42] The Shared Values Initiative commercials were a key example of American public diplomacy explicitly naming racial difference as an asset. Also, the Smith-Mundt Act was "modernized" to address a perceived racial threat.
[43] *Hi International,* in particular.
[44] The YouTube co-sponsored Democracy Video Challenge, for example.
[45] Millennium Challenge Corporation and others' co-sponsorship of Let Girls Learn.
[46] This change is apparent in many aspects of culture, but most prominently of the commodification of news over the past three decades.
[47] Particularly in the Black Lives Matter movement, the #MeToo movement, and LGBTQ+ awareness efforts.

extension of the previous administrations. Just as Bush's and Obama's foreign policy communications did, Trump's public diplomacy has foregrounded race and identity, made use of popular culture, information technologies and social media, and leveraged corporate sponsorship. However, Trump is unique in one particular area: He uses race as a means to insight fear[48].

If Ronald Reagan was our first president who came from a background in 20th century mass media, Donald Trump is the first president to fully realize the potential of 21st century media platforms, particularly social media. While Trump has styled himself as a billionaire financier, his greatest cultural relevance comes as a television personality. He emerged into the public sphere first as a talking head on business and political matters, often using the same racially-charged rhetoric[49] that he would use in his communications on foreign policy. Eventually, he emerged as a master of reality television and Twitter. Trump's legacy in political communication lies in this final iteration. Demonstrating an extension of Vanessa Beasley's description on the unitary executive, his presidency demonstrates what happens when policy communications become completely unencumbered by traditional channels and are directly authored by an image-obsessed president over social media.

In the coming pages, I will analyze a few key communications from Trump and his administration. Because a holistic analysis of public diplomacy of his presidency would be

[48] For example, see the 2018 *The New York Times* article "Trump and G.O.P. Candidates Escalate Race and Fear as Election Ploys" by Alexander Burns and Astead W. Herndon or the March 2020 article,"Trump Defends Using 'Chinese Virus' Label, Ignoring Growing Criticism" by Katie Rogers, Lara Jakes and Ana Swanson, also in *The New York Times*.

[49] Trump's first forays into political communications were racially charged, particularly in his uncompromising and racist response to the Central Park Five. At the time, he used inflammatory rhetoric to attack the falsely-accused young African American men. He also took out a full page advertisements in newspapers, calling for New York state to adopt the death penalty in the wake of the crime (Ransom).

impossible even in 2020, these case studies will demonstrate the continuities and discontinuities with public diplomacy of the past. What is clear is that the Trump administration has not voiced their public diplomacy goals as prominently as previous presidents. If one of the trends observed in the Obama administration's public diplomacy was decreased oversight, that trend clearly is perpetuated here. There have been four different Undersecretaries for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs under Trump, three of whom never emerged past the "acting" phase of stewardship. Public diplomacy scholar Matt Armstrong reported in August 2019 that the role had been unfilled 89.4% of its days during the Trump administration[50] (Armstrong, "The Undersecretary..."). Instead of leaving his foreign policy messages to the expert, Trump seems to prefer to voice them on his own, or under the influence of a few trusted advisors. Trump, more than any previous president except possibly Ronald Reagan, is comfortable engaging with popular culture and using it to help his ideas gain traction. Thus, because of this facility with popular culture and his unilateral actions, the case studies that follow -- Tweeted support of an arrested rapper, disinformation voiced over social media, a racial-fear-mongering video, and a diplomatic overture disguised as a movie trailer -- do not bear the professional tone of other public diplomacy programs. However, a careful analysis indicates the ways that these messages echo public diplomacy of the previous decades. As in Michelle Obama's "Let Girls Learn" initiative, these public diplomacy messages enjoy attaching themselves to celebrity culture. As in the production of *Porgy and Bess* and the SVI commercials, these public diplomacy messages sacrifice individual agency to enhance America's brand. As in Cold War radio

[50] Compared with 37.2% under Bush and 21.8% under Obama.

broadcasts and in *Hi International,* they demonstrate an understanding that the products of American popular culture are inherently superior to those of other cultures. As in Glassman's Public Diplomacy 2.0, it seeks to leverage internet-based communications to shape messages while obscuring its own responsibility. Finally, Trump-era public diplomacy serves neoliberal goals that favor market relationships over individual liberty. For Trump, as for Obama- and Bush-era programs, America's strength is in its brand, just as other countries are appealing because of the consumers to be found there.

Case Study: Fake Social Media Accounts to Monitor Potential Immigrants

Trump's use of social media was foreshadowed by Glassman's Public Diplomacy 2.0, which sought to use social media companies to aid in bringing democratizing messages to its audience. However, for the Trump administration, social media is not only a useful tool for the chief executive to distribute information, it is also provides a method for gathering information. In a memorandum dated June 4, 2019, the State Department updated its U.S. visa applications to require applicants to submit "social media identifiers," such as usernames. The forms list a series of social media platforms to help guide the applicant. The memorandum notes that "National security is our top priority when adjudicating visa applications, and every prospective traveler and immigrant to the United States undergoes extensive security screening" ("Collection of Social Media Identifiers…"). While the increase in governmental collection and surveillance is cause for concern, it is outside of the scope of this dissertation.

What is germane is that this effort is another step that the Trump administration has taken a further step in managing private social media accounts. In August of 2019, the Department of Homeland Security posted a report online, which withdrew a ban on U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services officers creating social media accounts under false names. That is, the report enabled USCIS officers to set up fake social media accounts to monitor applicants for green cards, visas, and citizenship. While not explicitly, that policy change gives USCIS the ability to pose as individuals and distribute information over social media. The potential to abuse this power, the ability to propagandize without oversight, is evident. This move is similar to the modernization of the Smith-Mundt Act. Loopholes in existing laws are exploited or created to allow for the government to target certain types of immigrants, exploiting a fear of the other to allow for a wider range of governmental activity. The modernization of the Smith-Mundt Act allowed for public diplomacy to be deployed to target Muslim Americans. This policy shift similarly allows for the government to spy on certain groups, under a veil of anonymity. Matt Armstrong, public diplomacy scholar at King's College London, explains the irony:

> All of this is ironic if you know the purpose of Smith-Mundt: to counter Russian and Communist propaganda through open and truthful dialogue. Further adding to the irony, as noted above, the programs authorized by the act were to be quickly available to the U.S. press and Congress, and generally the public, to provide additional oversight over and awareness of the programs. (Armstrong, "DHS, Social Media, & the Smith-Mundt Act")

Much like *Encounter* magazine in years past, this policy change undermines the efforts of public diplomacy by obscuring the creator of the message. Rather than create any sort of meaningful dialogue, it only produces more obfuscation. In this sense, it is clearly linked to the Obama-era revision of the Smith-Mundt act. Both policies are especially transgressive in the way that they other a certain group of people, using racial fears to support political goals.

Case Study: Bracamontes Video Shared Over Social Media

Of course, much of Trump's activities over social media use racial fears to support political goals. On October 31 of 2018, in advance of the midterm elections, Trump tweeted a video with the caption "It is outrageous what the Democrats are doing to our Country. Vote Republican now!" (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Trump Tweets video about Bracamontes (@realDonaldTrump, "It is outrageous...")

The video, likely timed for Halloween, argued that Democrats were allowing fearsome immigrants such as Luis Bracamontes to enter the country. As in much of public diplomacy this video makes use of a popular culture vocabulary. It recalls a trailer for a zombie movie, where an undifferentiated horde descends upon a group of people who falsely assume that they are safe. The video, as blatantly fear-mongering as the infamous Willie Horton advertisement produced during the 1988 George Bush campaign, used horror movie tropes to chronicle the horrifying story of Bracamontes, a convicted murderer. In a courtroom,

Bracamontes makes terrifying confessions to murder and threats against other police officers. The video then pairs the footage with images of hundreds of Latinx migrants breaching a border fence, making their way north. While those migrants are actually coming from Guatemala into Mexico, that point is never made clear. The juxtaposition of those images suggests that Bracamontes was only the first of hundreds of violent criminals making their way to our country. With this simple tweet, Trump employs a rhetoric of fear to gather support for his foreign policy goals.

As much as the Willie Horton advertisement is associated with George H. W. Bush and his campaign manager Lee Atwater, it is important to remember that that video was produced and distributed by a third party -- the Americans for Bush arm of the National Security Political Action Committee (NSPAC). Even if Bush or Atwater commissioned the ad, they maintained some distance from its airing, even criticizing the ad once it became a campaign issue (Baker). On the other hand, Trump seems to believe that he can personally gain from this message. He himself tweeted out the similarly race-baiting video from his personal account, vociferously linking a policy to his political opponents.

While not an effort of public diplomacy, this communication falls into a larger umbrella of foreign policy communications. In that sense, it is notable because it seems to subvert all of what we have understood about American self-definition since at least the beginning of the twentieth century. Especially in public diplomacy since the Cold War, one of the most consistent themes of American public diplomacy are in the ways America defines itself: as a country whose multiculturalism is its key strength. That is, America's racial diversity was almost always hailed as an asset in official public diplomacy communications.

The articles of *Encounter* highlighted our diversity. Touring exhibits of abstract expressionist art were intended to evidence American free thought that came from multiculturalism. *Hi International* and *Writers on America,* working in low and high culture respectively, both highlighted American multiculturalism as its key strength. In most of those programs, America's immigrants are its key strength. Trump's tweet about Bracamontes is a radical departure from that idea. While Trump certainly acknowledges American racial diversity, he instead uses the idea of an increasingly multicultural America to stoke fears of immigrants coming from South America and Mexico to alter the American way of life.

Case Study: A$AP Rocky, Sweden, and Trump

A key moment in Trump-era engagement with popular culture and foreign policy demonstrates the obsession with celebrity seen under Obama, as well as the ways that certain individuals have branded and othered as described by Wingard and Ahmed. While undoubtedly trivial when compared with other of Trump's foreign policy efforts, the fleeting episode involving Rakim Athelaston Mayers, the rapper known as A$AP Rocky, and his legal troubles in Sweden is a symbolic moment where the Trump era intersections among popular culture and foreign policy are clear. This case is a useful introduction to Trump's foreign policy rhetoric for two reasons. First, it demonstrates the way that Trump leverages celebrity culture to shore his political rhetoric. Second, it displays his uninformed but decisive and unilateral communications, in which he positions himself as the only solution to any perceived injustice. In July 2019, Rocky was arrested for assault, after a fight in Stockholm at the end of June. Quickly, Rocky's music industry friends leapt to his defense.

Kanye West, a media mogul who frequently has the president's ear, contacted Trump himself to alert him to Rocky's arrest. While it may be surprising that Trump took the call at all, it is even more notable that he pledged action in a tweet (Figure 6).

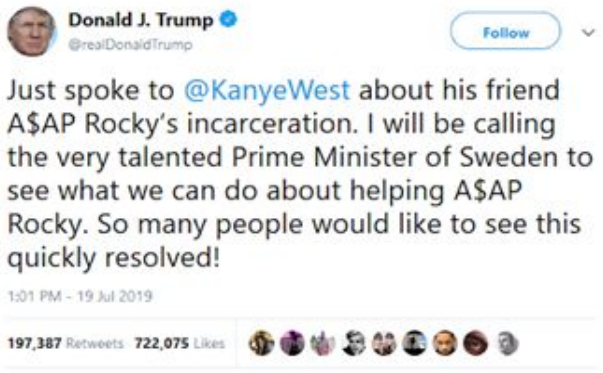

Figure 6: Trump's initial Tweet about A$AP Rocky. (@realDonaldTrump, "Just spoke…")

After Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven declined to intervene, Trump sent his special presidential envoy for hostage affairs, Robert O'Brien, to Sweden to help negotiate Rocky's release. In an deeply ironic article about the incident, *The New York Times* notes that "Mr. O'Brien has spent his tenure trying to free Americans from places like Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya and Syria" (Jacobs, Goldman, and Rogers). By sending O'Brien, Trump escalates Rocky's arrest to a hostage situation, one requiring national attention. Eventually, after Rocky was freed, Trump celebrated with another tweet and a few puns (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Trump Tweets about A$AP Rocky's Release (@realDonaldTrump "A$AP Rocky…")

This action is not surprising for anyone who has paid attention to the president's use of Twitter and his haphazard foreign policy, but it bears scrutiny. What is the benefit of escalating a celebrity's assault charge in a foreign country to an international incident? More importantly, whom does it benefit? As in his other adventures over Twitter, Trump's co-option of the A$AP Rocky incident seems clearly intended as a celebration of the president's power and political cachet. As Trump has never had much success in garnering support from African Americans and the youth, this incident seemed to offer an opportunity to reach out to both groups of people.

That said, the event did not have the success he hoped for. Yahoo! reported in late August, 2019, that Rocky had not offered any gratitude to the president (Walker). It is tempting to write this incident as a trivial episode, for opponents of the president, a fun story that illustrates Trump's failure to court an African-American celebrity. Instead, it reflects public diplomacy efforts that use popular culture and a sense of multicultural America as a vehicle of political power. Trump, by leaping to the aid of A$AP Rocky and successfully securing his release home, projects a certain image of America overseas. In a way, this move

is similar to the showcasing of *Porgy and Bess* in the 1950s or the SVI commercials in the early 2000s. A$AP Rocky was valued not for his humanity, but for what his image lended to America's brand. Trump defended an American, but also, crucially, an American cultural product, against a sovereign legal system on a very public social media account. This episode has some key similarities to more organized public diplomacy efforts of recent decades. For example, it also bears several similarities to Michelle Obama's Let Girls Learn program, which leveraged rapper Missy Elliot's celebrity power to create change in sovereign governments. These efforts share not only an obsession with celebrity, but also the idea that Americans are valued only as they can be commodified, as they can be used to sell a product or to gain political capital.

Case Study: North Korea Summit Movie Trailer

As much as Trump tries to stoke racial fears in certain situations, it is ironic to notice the respect he pays to political strongmen from across the globe. An earlier video tweeted by Trump drew upon popular culture idiom in an even more audacious fashion. In June of 2018, President Trump embarked on a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore. On that visit, he shared a short video with Kim and the media. The National Security Council created the video, intending to demonstrate to North Korea the potential benefits of openness and cooperation. Both that message and the medium of the video, which emulated a film trailer for a Hollywood blockbuster, warrant close examination. A close reading of Trump's video, titled "A Story of Opportunity," offers some insights into the relationship between popular culture and empire. The video is a direct heir to many

prominent public diplomacy programs. Just like *Hi International,* it makes use of a popular form of mass culture to make an imperial message more palatable. Interestingly, the video flips the traditional gaze of public diplomacy. While most public diplomacy allows for the nation who creates it to define itself overseas, this video actually defines the target nation. That is, as we learn from Benedict Anderson, a nation becomes an "imagined community" in its public discourse. Rather, this video offers North Korea a chance to choose between two conflicting definitions of itself, one that favors American interests and one that goes against them.

The video begins with a title purporting to be a "Destiny Pictures Production" (Figure 9), written over a desolate landscape (The White House "A Story of Opportunity.")

Figure 9: North Korea Summit Video Title Screen (The White House, "A Story of Opportunity")

Echoing the once-omnipresent "In a world…" trailer trope, the first lines describe the epic stakes for this summit:

> Seven billion people inhabit planet Earth. Of those alive today, only a small number will leave a lasting impact. And only the very few will make decisions or take actions that renew their homeland and change the course of history.

From there, the video proceeds to show positive images of a globalizing world, featuring flattering, even nationalistic images from North Korea. Dire scenes from the past are represented in black and white, while hopeful images of the future are represented in vibrant color. We see marching troops, impossibly large flags, and other military personnel:

Figure 10: North Korean flag in "A Story of Opportunity."

Yet, those nationalistic images quicky fade into images of the two men at stake, Kim Jong Un and president Trump:

Figure 11: "A Story of Opportunity" Continues

Eventually, the two men are featured in a single frame (Figure 12), though not in the same photograph. Trump is on the left, seemingly in power of the situation, offering a reaffirming thumbs up. As the voiceover explains two scenarios, expressed through an endless series of rhetorical questions: "Will this leader choose to advance his country and be part of a new world? Be the hero of his people? Will he shake the hand of peace and enjoy prosperity like he has never seen? A great life? Or more isolation?" The overt message of this trailer is that, if North Korea can act properly, to open itself to American influence, it will benefit from America's favor.

Figure 12: Trump and Un Share a Frame in "A Story of Opportunity."

While that overt message of the film is straightforward, the images and tropes it calls upon are unusual. Trump and the video's creators emulated a movie trailer format, capitalizing on a particular understanding of how American power is reified through its cultural exports. Over what appears to be a title card for a new film, the voiceover explains the stakes for this meeting: "Destiny Pictures presents a story of opportunity. A new story, a new beginning. One of peace. Two men, two leaders, one destiny." One can imagine this as the tagline to an upcoming Hollywood blockbuster. In addition, the video suggests the economic prosperity that will stem from North Korea's partnership with America. As the threatening missiles return to their silos, we see feats of technology and architecture. In one moment, we see a view of Korea at night. Slowly, the lights of North Korea come alive to indicate the success of full cooperation.

Figure 13: North Korea in "A Story of Opportunity"

For all of the silliness of this video, it displays the fundamental understanding that American power comes from, at least in part, its cinematic production of myths. In a photo featured briefly in the video, we see Rocky and Rambo actor Sylvester Stallone palling around with President Trump in the Oval Office (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Trump and Sylvester Stallone in "A Story of Opportunity"

This image, which Trump echoed in a 2019 tweet (Figure 10), in which his head is superimposed over Rocky's body, clearly references American cultural exports to reinforce the perceived power of the president and his country. After all, Rocky (as did Rambo) became emblematic of American national power in the last years of the Cold War.

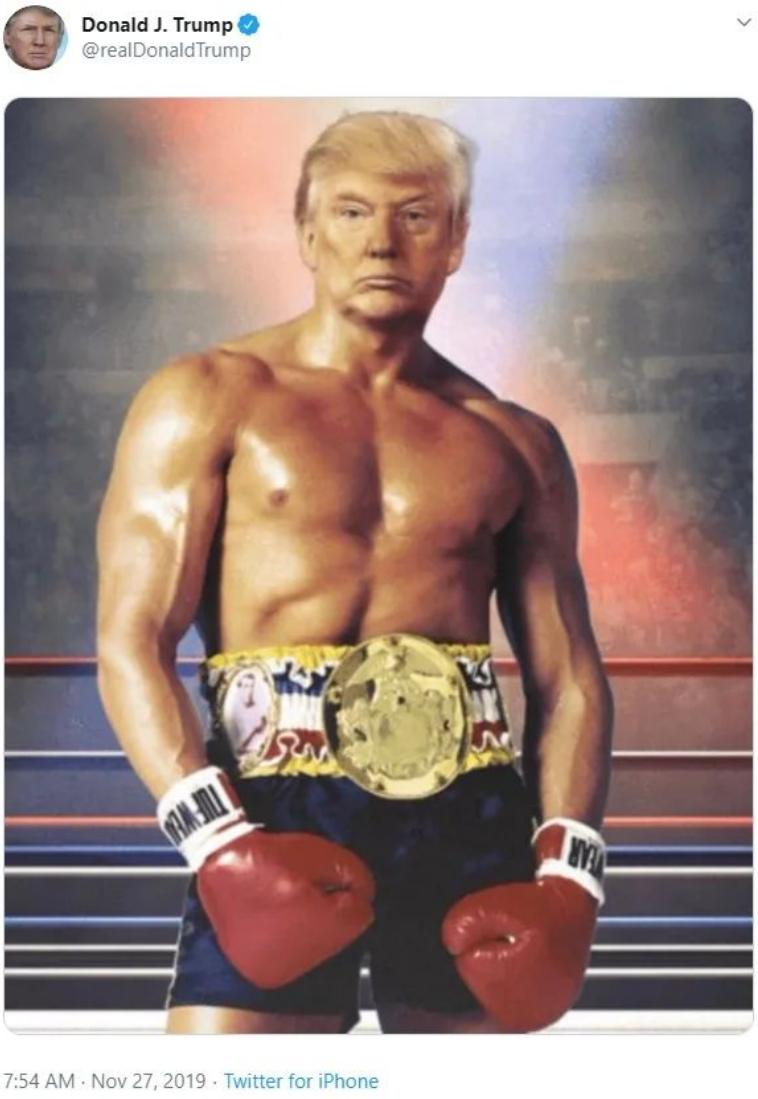

Figure 15: Trump Tweets a Composite Image of Him as Rocky Balboa (@realDonaldTrump, Rocky Balboa composite image.)

But this appreciation of the cultural cachet of movies also displays an understanding of its audience. This video seems to take a cue from longstanding North Korean approaches to propaganda. Kim's father, Kim Jong Il, for example, once kidnapped a South Korean actress to appear in his state-sponsored films. The family famously shares an appreciation for American films, and, as the rationale seems to suggest, might be susceptible to this use of foreign policy rhetoric. While the video was not initially tweeted out by the president, as in many other foreign policy moves, he showed it to Kim Jong Un on an iPad. Later, The White House posted the video to its official Facebook account page, indicating an understanding of the power of these images and the ability of social media to enable that power.

At its heart, this video attempts to reframe an international conflict in a way that benefits American interests. Following the work of Said and Bacevich and other scholars of neoliberal empire, it invites North Korea to participate in the American economic system. As in publications like *Encounter* and *Hi International,* the images it highlights are about transnational economic partnerships, industrialization, and shared technologies. It makes use of popular culture idiom to appeal to the nationalisms of both countries. And, yet, it always assumes the primacy of American ideology.

Consequently, this moment in public diplomacy reminds us much about where we began just as it indicates new directions that are enabled by new technologies and personalities. As in other iterations of public diplomacy. Trump's North Korea video takes the superiority of American culture for granted. However, its language is surprising, because it does not make much of American democratic ideals as public diplomacy of the Cold War or of American multiculturalism as in the early years of the War on Terror. When speaking to

an infamously insular and authoritarian nation, one might expect propaganda to highlight the inverse features in America. On the contrary, the message of this video is never about self-definition ("here's what America is") it is instead about salesmanship ("here's what America can do for you"). Trump's video clearly extends the Obama era's neoliberal faith in commerce to fill the gaps in American foreign policy. However, Trump takes Obama's subtext and makes it text. Trump makes the media the message. The bright future this video displays for North Korea is not one that comes from ideological agreement, from the open exchange of ideas. Rather it comes from economic partnership.

Trump-era foreign policy communications do not clearly adopt all of the same neoliberal strategies as Obama and George W. Bush. They do not follow an advertising model or offer a cohesive idea of the American brand. They do not explicitly partner with private corporations to outsource the creation of these messages. Regardless, they are clearly designed with economic benefits in mind. His North Korea Summit video uses the rhetoric of American film trailers to advertise an economic partnership. Of the many things that make this video unusual is that it has a purported target audience of one: Kim Jong Un. Consequently, because it does not seem to be intended to reach a wider public, it cannot be considered public diplomacy in the same way that these other case studies are. Instead, it is something even more ominous: it is a view of how a President sees himself and his country and another president and his country. Trump sees himself in this video, as in life, as a deal maker. His country is best represented in the language of Hollywood blockbusters. And North Korea is an emerging market, aching to benefit from our partnership. So, despite his seemingly rudderless foreign policy, the instability in Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy

and Public Affairs, and the absence of a coherent expression of American ideology, Trump aligns himself with previous presidents in one key, typically neoliberal manner: He sees America as a product to sell and foreign publics as consumers to impress.

Conclusion

That point -- that America has increasingly become a product to be sold -- is the primary contention and contribution of this dissertation. While this transformation in public diplomacy has not always happened in predictable ways in the decades since the end of the Cold War, it is clear that the ideological exchange favored by people like William Fulbright has been sacrificed for relationships that benefit neoliberal economies. I was in an undergraduate English class at Rice University when I encountered Edward Said. His *Orientalism* was the first critical text that invited me to consider the ways that culture transmits power; and I have carried that consideration with me ever since. Clearly, his work informs my understanding of public diplomacy and its exchanges of power. I approached this project assuming that my focus would be on the political power enacted by public diplomacy. Over the course of my research, I have instead been increasingly impressed with the scope of the neoliberal economic power that is enacted over public diplomacy.

Consequently, to intervene in that conversation, this dissertation has grappled with both the political rhetoric of public diplomacy and its economic consequences. This project has been fascinating and challenging because it has required a facility with so many areas where knowledge and power are intertwined: empire studies, American exceptionalism, mass media studies, postcolonialism, transnational feminism, and neoliberalism. It has been a joy

to apply these analytical schools onto primary texts as diverse as popular music, intellectual journals, commercials, presidential tweets, literary memoir, abstract expressionist painting, speeches, magazine articles, and one bizarre fake film trailer foreign policy overture. It has been a unique challenge to create a narrative to make sense of all of these moving parts.

It would be facilely nostalgic to say that, in the decades since World War II, American public diplomacy has simultaneously moved from an ideological battle to an economic one, that it has moved from one reliant on ideas to one reliant on images. The true narrative is much more complicated than that. Of course, during the Cold War, as America was concerned with defining itself overseas, public diplomacy highlighted its democratic freedoms and multicultural strength. But it also sought economic ties and trafficked in simplistic images of our country. That said, especially since the War on Terror, those economic ties and simplistic images have moved from subtext to text. As popular culture and internet-based media become more central, public diplomacy messages have lost nuance and work more explicitly to create economic benefit for American interests. Simultaneously, social media and the Smith-Mundt Modernization Act have worked to spread state-sponsored messages to limitless audiences outside of America's borders, but also within them. As these messages are undertaken by non-governmental organizations and a capricious chief executive, there is even less oversight on their consistency and coherence. It is impossible to presume what will happen next in the intersections of popular culture and public diplomacy, but we should not expect these changes to be undone at any point in the future.

This dissertation has attempted to chart a path through these changes. By taking an interdisciplinary cultural studies and rhetorical analysis approach, this intervention has

offered a timely and multifaceted analysis of a wide range of American public diplomacy messages. We learn from Said that all aspects of culture can carry nationalisms and reinforce political power. Consequently, any definition of our nation overseas will necessarily adopt a variety of channels and any intellectual engagement with that definition must be prepared to analyze them. Indeed public diplomacy is enacted over speeches, newspaper articles, magazines, radio, the internet, social media, and countless other forms of communications. Any approach to studying twenty-first century nationalisms must be prepared to engage with high and low intellectual culture, to show the same facility with formal policy documents and ideas voiced in social media videos.

Trump's approach to extending American neoliberal empire might seem haphazard on the surface, but it actually follows the models begun early in the Cold War. However, the nature of Trump's individual extension has yet to be adequately analyzed. There is a significant challenge in being a politically-minded academic during the Trump presidency. In retrospect, it was easy to challenge Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush, for example, because they ground their ideas in a particular philosophy. Challenging Trump, on the other hand, is more difficult because his worldview seems haphazard and capricious. For example, even with all of the objections voiced here against Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy Charlotte Beers, at least George W. Bush had an Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and strived for a coherent communications strategy. In contrast, that office has been vacant for almost 90% of Trump's presidential tenure. The vacancy of this important, if often misguided, office indicates the lack of value Trump has placed on these organized forms of communication.

Moving forward, however challenging, studies like these must continue to closely analyze the rhetoric of our government, whether organized or seemingly arbitrary. Likely, that will involve finding ways to engage with the effects of Trump and his successors' policies when the intellectual basis for them is elusive. Future scholars who hope to make sense of this administration's seemingly chaotic, but still borrowing from historical precedents, approach to foreign policy will need to draw from all aspects of American culture, to be prepared to analyze American rhetoric in all of its forms. Even the most subtle or seemingly innocuous communications -- a photograph of a Corvette in a magazine, a comedian touring Pakistan, a YouTube-sponsored video contest, a rap song on Cuban radio -- can be leveraged to encourage audiences to buy into the American way of life. Neoliberalism is pernicious and determined. Scholars of rhetoric must continue to read these cultural texts closely, to challenge their ability to exploit audiences and reify hegemonic structures of power.

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